Trek The Sahyadris

Harish Kapadia



THIRD EDITION



Salher

Sahyadris, with its rugged topography, historic hill forts, rocky mountains and pinnacles, huge lakes and extensive forest region is a virtual paradise for trekking, climbing and camping. Sahyadris provide a wide choice of enchanting spots which could be reached by delightful routes, easy or difficult, to suit one's taste.

Trek The Sahyadris contains practical directions to hundreds of trekking routes in the Western Ghats. It guides about travel route, treks, climbing possibilities, camping places and walks. This guide will be of great help to all the lovers of outdoor life—the trekker, the climber and the nature lover.

This, the third edition, is thoroughly revised. It includes many new places, up-date on information about all the places, nine new maps and over 50 new illustrations. This is the only book of its kind on the Western Ghats, based on the personal experience of the author.



Cover photo:
Trimbak range (Igatpuri region) and Upper Vaitarna lake.
L to R: Utwad, Basgad, Fani Dongar, Harihar and Trimbakeshwar.



Inset:
Approaching Dhodap (Nasik region)

Amita

Trek The Sahyadris

Harish Kapadia



THE MOUNTAINEERS
Bombay

49



Rajdher

91



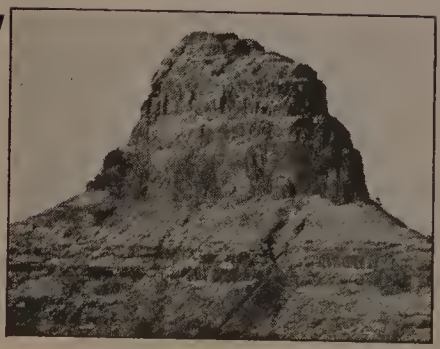
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Avandh

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Andhra valley



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Tak-Mak

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ઘટમાં ઘોડાં થનગને, આતમ વીંઝે પાંખ;
અણદીઠેલી ભોમ પર યૌવન માંડે આંખ.

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FOREWORD

The Latin tag, literally translated, says 'The unknown is always thought to be magnificent' and this is true enough in my case. For instance, motoring to Khandala in the early 1930s we used to be fascinated by the hill between Kalyan and Chowk which we learned was called Prabal. To us it was the Magic Mountain because so elusive. In the monsoon it was often only partly visible through the rain and mists and approached from the apparently nearest point on the road for many weeks we failed to reach the inhabited plateau and it was more weeks before we found the way to the top. But if this book had been available we should have quickly learnt to approach from the back. So it was with most of my trekking –travelling hopefully rather than arriving.

But in these days achievement is more valued, and Harish Kapadia's book will be a boon to all who live on or near the Sahyadris. As he has rightly said, it is a paradise for trekkers of almost any age or competence, with its hills, woods, rivers, lakes and views.

R. E. HAWKINS

PREFACE

A need for the new edition of this book was felt due to various factors. First of all there were many inquiries from trekkers and friends. Since the publications of the last edition a few things have also changed in the Sahyadris.

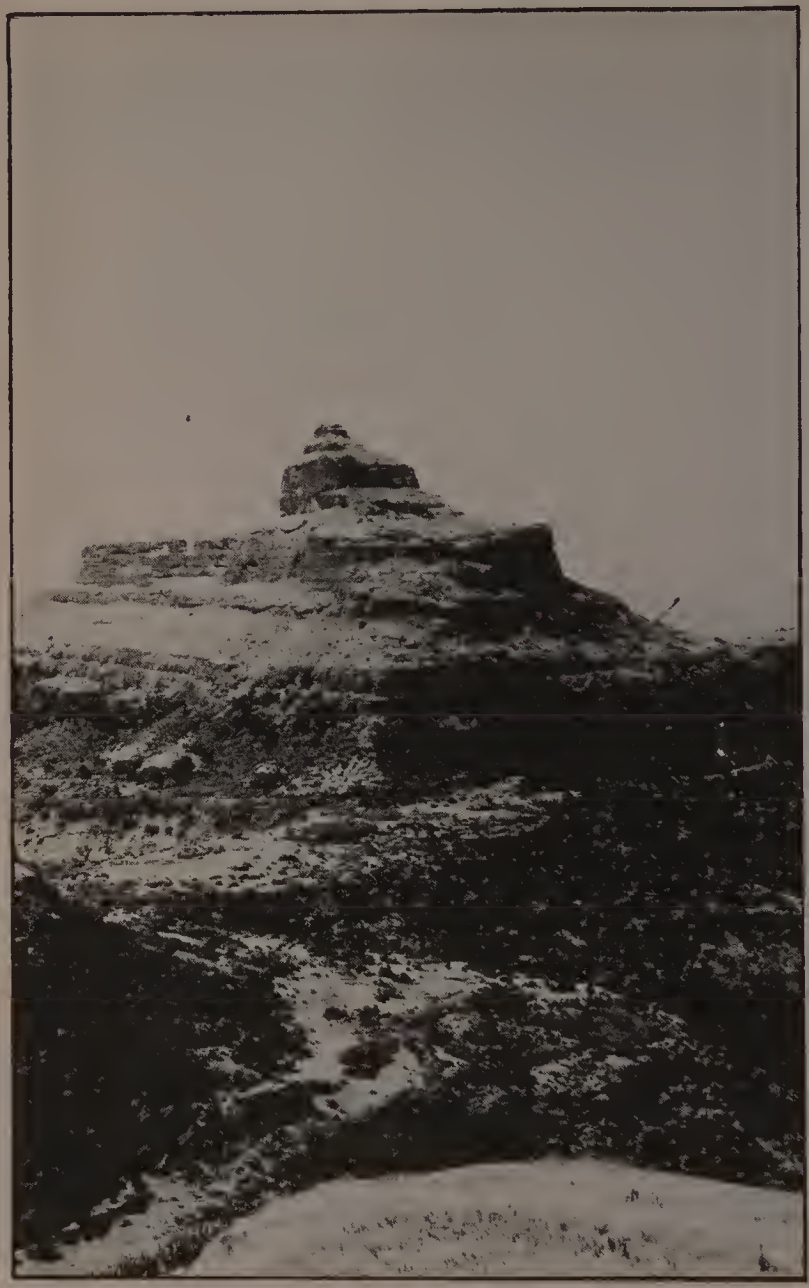
New roads have approached the base of the forts and peaks. New lakes and dams have been constructed. Many new places were visited and records up-dated about the old ones. This has led to the addition of a number of new hills and pinnacles. All these additions have been incorporated in the text and on the sketch maps. All the regions are revised, rearranged and information added.

Many thanks are due to all my hiking companions, both past and present, who have helped in the research and inquiry. Old friends have continued pushing me with suggestions and support. Younger friends have matched the enthusiasm and created a spirit of camaraderie. The book is a result of their companionship—most certainly. I am particularly happy for the contribution from Jagdish Nanavati (from whom I learned the art of trekking) and for the Foreword by R. E. Hawkins (from whom I learned the art of writing about it!). It is an honour to be associated with them all. The sketch maps, a prime source of reference for any trekking guide, are meticulously drawn by Arun Samant. It was possible only due to his dedication and long standing trekking background. Almost all the photographs are newly added. Only thing that has not changed is the grandeur of the Sahyadri and the fun of trekking!

As always, a trekking book is never complete. Energetic trekkers are bound to discover new hills and climb pinnacles. Any suggestions and new information are always welcome. A lot of health, fun and enjoyment lie in these ranges to those who will respond.

Happy trekking!

HARISH KAPADIA



Dhodap

INTRODUCTION

FOR a guide book of this nature, it is practically impossible to cover each and every hill. There are innumerable hillocks and pinnacles which are of little importance. Thus, though the list is exhaustive, it can never be complete. All the places included are based on a personal experience of last 28 years and each place has been visited or a first hand information obtained. However, there are plenty of other routes to be undertaken and new places to be discovered.

The guide books are generally are of two categories. Some give full details with all the places and paths mentioned, including even where the tea shops are! The other gives a general outline and have minimum details, leaving a lot to the personal initiative. The latter method is followed in this book firstly because all the details were not available and secondly, it was felt that too many details takes away the joy of discovering things for oneself. However, if one judiciously follows the directions, it should not be difficult to trek to any of these places.

HOW TO USE THE GUIDE BOOK

Select the region you would like to visit, then refer to the map and the text and find out which place sounds appealing. Wherever possible, different combinations are given. Thus, sometimes, it is advisable to visit nearby places also, as for many a remotely situated region, it may not be possible to visit them often. It will also depend on the availability of time. Make your travel plans, consider the season and plan the hike accordingly. One may do a gruelling seven-day trek, or just one to two mountains enjoyably. Even a good camping site near a lake can be an enjoyable family outing. All the other names of peaks and places in the text should be referred to for a complete information about the region. Consider the following points in planning:

Situation

Along the western coast of India, few kilometres from the seashore, rise the rocky walls and mountains of the Western Ghats or the Sahyadri mountains. They hold the western edge of the great Indian

Peninsula jutting out into the Indian Ocean. The strip of land between the Arabian Sea and the base of the Western Ghats is known as the Konkan region. The ghat region is around elevation of 650 m, forested and cooler, while Konkan is sometimes hot but has many transport connections. Considering this, it is advisable to travel to Ghats to begin an outing and descend to Konkan plains for the return journey.

Seasons

Monsoon

Almost in all the mountain regions world over, rain means bad weather. While in Sahyadris it is great weather! One of the finest time to trek —a unique phenomena in the trekking world.

The summer months generate strong winds from the Arabian Sea towards the western coast bringing moisture-laden clouds which quench the summer heat. The monsoon clouds first hit the barrier of the Western Ghats by mid-June and discharge most of their contents over the Konkan and the adjoining hill regions. Numerous waterfalls drop over the mountain walls and hill sides. Rushing streams flood into rivers. Warm weather and heavy rains are ideal for abundant growth of tropical vegetation which cover the country with thick forests. Monsoon brings greenery all around. The mountain scene becomes exciting with change in atmosphere and clouds in the sky. Mountains appear to play hide and seek among the clouds. Hiking during the monsoon has a special charm which no other season can provide. The drop in the temperature, settling of the dust, freshness of the green all over the land and above all, the showers of rain are of great delight to the hiker. Even an ordinary country walk is a pleasure during the rainy season. However, access to certain regions by road is affected during heavy monsoon. Some bus services are suspended as the road condition is affected or there is recurring flooding in certain regions. The hiker should inquire before embarking on a monsoon hike in such regions. Anything involving rocky patches is also to be avoided.

Winter

The rains recede by the end of September and after a month of October heat, the cooler season sets in, rendering clear skies. November to March are the best period for long hikes and treks in the Western Ghats. The after-monsoon freshness pervades the mountain scene. Here, fit in long hikes to remote regions.

Summer

April, May and June are hot months and are not congenial months for hiking. However, very early morning and the late evening or even night hours are preferable for trekking during a summer hike. The day is otherwise too hot for enjoyment. It is advisable to stick to rock climbing, small outings or camping near lakes.

Travel

For each region, different routes of travel are suggested in the beginning of each chapter. Confirm train and bus timings. Usually, night trains and buses are preferable, as they allow hikes to begin early morning next day. Check return timings. During holidays and festivals, there may be a rush, so consider reservations by bus or train. Many long hikes can be frustrated if the bus timings are not properly checked out.

Routes

The Western Ghats have innumerable hills and pinnacles. Many of them have temples or forts on the top and as such are regularly visited by people. These places are conveniently reached by following the beaten path. A trekker is advised to follow such a route. The hill forts have only one or two entrances on the top which are reached by the traditional paths. The sides are generally precipitous with no easy access.

Guides

The hill regions of Western Ghats are fairly accessible by rail and road to reach the point of commencement of the hike. Proceed towards your objective by following the paths connecting villages on the way, as given on the map or from information collected. If in doubt, check your route by asking any villager you may meet on the way. Better still, engage a local person as a guide. This is particularly advisable for remote places to avoid losing the track and spending excess time. Usually such local guides are available, except during a few festive occasions. The guides are to be paid by prior agreement and given some food. The villagers are generally helpful, friendly and hospitable. Respond to their goodwill by respecting their way of life and without causing offence to them in any way. They always respond to any warm greetings on the way.

Maps

The relevant series of maps covering the Sahyadri range are as under:

Survey of India: Scale 1: 253,440 (Quarter inch series)

Map No.	*Area*	*Region in the book*
46H	Surat to Nasik	Nasik Region
46L	Dhulia, Satana, Manmad	
47E	Nasik to Bhimashankar	Igatpuri Region Malshej Ghat Region
47F	Bhimashankar, Lonavla, Pune, Wai, Bhor	Karjat Region (part) Lonavla Region Pune Region
47G	Mahabaleshwar, Koyna, Warna, Ambe Ghat	Koyna Region (part)
47H	Ambe Ghat, Kolhapur, Phonda Ghat, Sawantwadi	Koyna Region (part)

Army Map Service (USA): Scale 1: 250,000
(Quarter inch series, coloured)

Map No.	*Area*	*Region in the book*
NF43-14	Dhulia, Satana, Manmad to Nasik	Nasik Region
NE43-2	Nasik to Bhimashankar	Igatpuri Region Malshej Ghat Region
NE43-6	Rajmachi, Lonavla, Pune, Bhor, Wai	Karjat Region (part) Lonavla Region Pune Region
NE43-10	Mahabaleshwar, Koyna, Satara, Warna	Koyna Region (part)
NE43-14	Ambe Ghat, Kolhapur, Belgaum, Phonda Ghat, Terekhol	Koyna Region (part)

A general road map of Maharashtra and a tourist map of Maharashtra should be a useful reference.

Sketch Maps

The sketch maps at the end of the book are based on the above maps and drawn to a scale of 1:250,000 (marked on each map). Though most available information and the matter printed in the text are incorporated on these maps, it is obviously not possible to include all the details. These sketch maps are for general guidance and reference to plan a hike, identify peaks from the valleys and mountain tops. But do not depend on them *fully* while on the terrain. Local information and guidance must be sought or a guide engaged in case of remote valleys. The various symbols used on these sketch maps are given on these sheets.

Symbols

Before every item a symbol is printed which signifies the nature of the trek to the particular place.

○	Easy	Generally possible for all, route known or even motorable, no terrain difficulties.
□	Medium	Trek well defined and the place regularly visited but it will take a good physical effort to complete the hike. Terrain needs planning and knowledge.
△	Difficult	Remotely situated, terrain unknown, trek is difficult of climb or route finding not easy. Previous experience required.
★	Technical	To complete this climb specialised equipment and training is required. **Do not attempt the technical portions without proper training and equipment.**

These symbols are for a general guidance and obviously they will differ in the context of each party, its leader, number of persons, their experience and expertise. But beginners and large inexperienced parties must adhere to the easier or medium grade only.

Shelter

For all the overnight hikes, one can spend nights in a village or on a fort. At every village, you will find good accommodation for a small party in the village temple or school. People are friendly and, in need, will gladly accommodate the party in their houses also. On many forts, caves are a thrilling places to spend a night. To enjoy cross-country walks, one may carry a tent or a small outer.

Equipment

No elaborate equipment is required for most of the places. Wear any thick-soled rubber shoes. Loose clothes in summer and in winter a pullover will be advisable. Cap and water bottle are a must. Change of clothes, a plastic sheet to sleep on, sleeping bag or shawl, swimming costume, torch, pen-knife are the only few other things which will be essential. A complete check list is at the end of the book for reference.

For places and pinnacles involving rock climbing; rope, sling, karabiners, pitons, hammer and other things will be advisable.

Food

One has to carry enough food with oneself, as almost nothing will be available from the villages. Carry plenty of fruits, plan your meals and carry what is liked the most. If carrying utensils, carry tea, coffee, soups, condensed milk or milk powder and sugar. By experience, one will know the best suited items. Glucose and lemon powder can be enjoyable. Some suggestions are at the end of the book.

Medicines

For small or long hikes, one must carry a small packet of medicines. It should include Band-aid for cuts, antiseptic cream, tablets for stomach ailments, headaches, vomiting and other small ailments. Consult your doctor to form a small packet for permanent use. A general reference list is at the end of the book.

Conservation

The increasing magnitude of human economic activity has commenced to encroach upon the ecological balance of the mountain regions. Forests have become the first prey of unmindful development. Vast areas of land and hillsides have been deforested causing accelerated loss of valuable topsoil due to forces of the elements. Silting up of streams, lakes and rivers cause floods. Increased siltation reduces the life span of hydro-electric projects. Deforestation in turn endangers the flora and fauna of the region.

Weather conditions are affected. The ecological balance is seriously disturbed causing harm to the man in the long run.

Mountains and forests are the prime joy of the trekker. He should be the first to work for the conservation of wilderness areas and spread greater awareness on this vital aspect. In doing so, the trekker will not only aid to preserve what he loves but be of service to the country. Leave all camping places clean and do not pollute water cisterns or ponds. The forts and caves are historical monuments and are dilapidated. No further damage should be caused to these sentinels of history. If possible clean the tanks and educate parties against spoiling them.

Caving

Sahyadri has many long tunnels and caves. There are local legends about historic possibilities that these were used for various purposes. An exploration of such caves and developing caving as a sport is a possibility. This is a special branch and one must train and equip fully before embarking on a caving trip.

Rock Climbing

Sahyadri offers many places and pinnacles for a rock climber. The rock is generally loose and one has to be careful. Few excellent climbs have been done, as per the record at the end, but a lot remains. Various suggestions are given in the text. A separate chapter gives details of regular sites around Bombay.

Safety

These ranges are friendly in a sense that unlike the Himalayan range it does not cause many objective dangers. It is evident from the record of accidents towards the end of the book, that they have happened due to human failures or by wrong attitudes. Mainly the accidents happened while attempting a serious climb or a pinnacle.

Remain generally careful and nothing should go wrong. Not many snakes have bitten a trekker or a tiger has attacked ever, if one is not looking for trouble specially. Villagers are generally honest and we should not tempt them by leaving our valuables around to steal. If stranded, one can always find a shelter and help in a nearby village. A lot of common sense is all that a trekker needs. In case of the mishap or trouble contact Police Patil, village Sarpanch or the nearest police post for help.

Hiking in Sahyadri offers opportunities for many other studies and pursuits.

History

Most of the forts witnessed many historical battles. If one cares to study the Maratha history, it gives an insight to how the topography of these ranges was fully utilised by Shivaji to defeat a much stronger enemy. Those invading forces left a strong religious and ethnological influence which still reflects in the life of people and folklores. It is fascinating to relate those historical events practically from top of the forts and valleys and imagine the strategy and study their monuments now after centuries.

A select Bibliography of relevant books is given at the end.

People

Living in Sahyadri are various groups of people. Their way of life, language, religious festivals, economic links with cities, traditions, agricultural occupations, merit many deep studies.

Geography and Geology

The general trend of Sahyadris, its intermingling with Satpura in the north and Nilgiris in the south, its effect on weather, its origin, and other allied studies are possible. Many rocky walls and pinnacles are of special interest to the geologist.

Other interests

One can develop interests in many allied subjects like bird-watching, astronomy, map reading, flora and fauna, and photography. This can be done while on a trek and in special relation to the Sahyadris. There are many specialised societies and books available for furtherance of such interests.

If all the above points are considered, a hiker should have little difficulty in organising interesting hikes, and with experience one will be able to formulate a plan which suits all individual needs and interests.



THE ART OF TREKKING

Jagdish Nanavati

THE love of nature and the pursuit of the unknown have eternally drawn man to shed the comfort and security of his home to venture beyond the blue ranges on the horizon and to discover new valleys, forests, rivers and high mountains. The quest of a mountain lover is for the freedom of the hills, to be at home in the high wilderness, with no barriers he cannot pass, no danger he cannot avoid with due caution and proper knowledge. This is the essence of enjoyment sought by the trekker and the climber.

Trekking is undoubtedly of value to physical fitness but its aim is not to produce athletes. It is an activity which should develop real love for the mountain regions and appreciation of their grandeur. Trekking leads to a closer interest in plants, trees, birds and animals, indeed in all forms of nature study. It inculcates the virtue of sacrifice, the value of physical exertion, sometimes to the limit of endurance, and above all, the spirit of comradeship. A sense of adventure adds excitement towards the fulfilment of the goal.

Trekking is an art which any healthy and young minded person can learn at any age. But it is best to start early in life to get the most out of it. Trekking does not demand great strength or immense wealth but merely a desire and willingness to accept certain rough with the smooth. Once initiated into trekking, one soon learns that in order to enjoy one must minimise his wants on the trek. Yet, there is no compromise with safety. Mere survival is not the freedom of the hills. There is no greater oppressor than wild nature in the raw.

A sound trekker is mindful of his own minimum needs. Trekking inculcates qualities of self-reliance, keeping fit and a willingness to help. A trekker therefore, carries on his back—in miniature—his entire home, bed, kitchen and other needs on the trek. To achieve a sense of freedom the trekker must give up certain comforts and avoid burdening himself with the non-essentials. For, the trekker has no other power of locomotion but his own legs. He learns the campcraft to make himself comfortable outdoors.

The Beginning

One must first learn the art of enjoying long walks. The main consideration is the conservation of energy. The walk need not be too fast. It should be comfortable and acquire a certain pace and rhythm, a swing that comes naturally. Each person has to discover for himself the pace that suits him the best. Avoid being out of breath by reducing the pace. Keep going for a period, say an hour, and halt for a rest of ten minutes. You will reach your destination in reasonable time and what is more, fresh enough to attend your needs at the camping place. The movement of the feet should be precise, avoiding jerks and spring action of the toes alone. Set the whole foot on the ground for greater balance, which helps conserve energy and mascular effort. On steeper slopes move sideways in a zig-zag manner to reduce the effort and to avoid breathlessness. Another method to achieve the same result is to take smaller vertical steps wherever possible. Bend a little forward while climbing uphill. On descent, the effort may appear less, but there is a greater jerky movement that tires the knees and the toes. Avoid jerks by correct placement of the foot and gentler shift of body weights to the next downward step. Land on your heels if the ground is soft.

Footwear

An experience of a long walk points to the importance of the correct footwear for the comfort and protection of the feet, without which the enjoyment of a trek is ruined. Correct footwear shields the foot from sharp objects and lends support to the ankle for greater balance in movement. A walking shoe should combine a rugged rubber sole and a flexible upper, preferably of strong canvas or soft leather covering upto the ankle. A pair of well fitting socks would prevent internal abrasion, which causes blisters on the tender foot. The shoes should not be too tight which may cause the foot to slip-in. Ideally the shoe must be felt as part of the foot and yet allowing some free movement of the toes. The toe-nails should be cut short.

Sound footwear is priority investment for the trekker. Before going on long treks get used to the new shoes by wearing on shorter walks. Such trials would eliminate chances of erroneous fitting which later cause bilsters.

Three principal factors determine what items a trekker may need on a trek and carry them in his rucksack; firstly, the weather, secondly, the terrain or region and lastly, the duration of the trek.

Clothing

A trekker needs to pay attention to his clothing. On a short trek it is a good policy not to carry more than one item of each clothing that one might require. Clothing protects against wind, cold, rain, and sun. It should be such as to meet varieties of conditions in a single day. It should be light and durable against rough use. A thin fabric does not protect the body against frequent abrasion to which it is so much exposed on a trek.

On week-end trek one can always find a shelter at the end of the path at a village, in a school or a temple. Or during fine weather you may stay out just under the open sky near a stream or a water point. A ground sheet and a sleeping bag would be an ideal possession to have for the night in the open where there is likelihood of low temperature and cool breeze. In the absence of a sleeping bag one additional woollen sweater and balaclava with woollen blanket would serve the purpose. Improvised sleeping bags made from woollen blanket are worth the effort as they prevent cold leaking through the air gaps.

Rucksack

The size and type of a rucksack will depend on the bulk and the weight you have to carry for a given trek. A week-end outing will seldom need more than a schoolboy size rucksack, enough to carry a lunch box, water bottle and a roll of ground sheet and cover. A longer trek away from habitation, would involve more items to carry and consequently, greater weight. A loaded rucksack that pulls backwards is of poor design. The shoulder straps should be broad and sponged underneath. The modern backpack is designed to fit the shape of a man's backbone with a lower support spreading the weight on the upper part of the hips. It is amazing how much more load one can carry with comfort, in a well designed rucksack. A trekker is well advised to buy a good rucksack for on it depends how well he will enjoy the treks that he may undertake. A good rucksack is an investment of maximum return.

Food

Next to the clothing is the need for nourishment of the body. Walking and climbing consumes energy and the body fluid quickly. This must be carefully replenished at proper intervals. Always have a good breakfast before the start of a march. If consumed energy is not replenished, exhaustion may result. During longer halts take greater fluid intake. A water bottle is a must for each trekker and should be kept filled with clean water at every opportunity.

Food for a longer trek will involve cooking at least one meal in a day. A folding kerosene stove or a gas stove is a help for quicker cooking or for preparing tea or coffee. In the absence of a stove, dry wood can be used for fuel. Food items to be cooked should be easy to carry. Light aluminium vessels or pans would be needed along with some other cooking tools to suit one's need.

Accessories

A trekker may need to carry a few more nick-nacks such as compass, books, maps, knife, torch, first-aid kit, pieces of twine cord, candles, match box, toilet requirements and tools for pursuits of his allied interests; photography, bird-watching, botany and other subjects of nature study. If the trekker is also interested in rock climbing he would fill the rucksack with a host of many more items. But those are beyond the purview of an average trekker.

Routine

Trekking is best enjoyed with an early morning start. A normal day's march may cover a distance of 12 to 20 km which should be covered by early afternoon, allowing some time for a pack-lunch break on the way. The march should not leave the trekker completely exhausted at the end. The whole purpose of enjoyment would be lost. Bear this in mind while planning the route and the stages on a trek. Let not the trek merely be a long trudge from morning to evening. Provide for time to relax and absorb the feel of the place at the end of the march.

Companions

With all the material wealth that a man may possess, he is poorer if he is without the warmth of human companionship. Man is in search of peace and quiet joy in the wilderness, yet it adds a new dimension to share these pursuits with a few like-minded companions.

More often than not a spirit of comradeship pervades the whole effort during the trek and thereafter. A companion is indeed the friend in need during a trek to meet any unforeseen difficulty. However, it is best to enjoy trekking in a small group rather than in the crowd. Adjustments and understanding are easier in a small group and lead to lasting bond after the common pursuit in the mountain region is over. Sharing a long journey through mountains with a few companions reveals human personality which safety and comfort of civilization often conceals. Faced with the hardships of the mountain trek the man's true self is exposed. For many such a trek could indeed be a self-discovery.

Planning

One of the charms of trekking is in the planning of a trek long before one sets out. The pouring over the maps for information on alternative treks and collection of details for available sources, is a pleasure to be experienced. Finally, the trek is selected and details are worked out, materials collected and the journey embarked, only to find later what is in store for the trekker. New situations crop up many a times to change the well-laid schemes of the trekker. So many factors beyond one's control appear to have their sway over the plans. And yet things do work out somehow and the trek completed after having endured the wind, the cold and the rain, through remote valleys, over passes and often, over a hill top. If you are a keen observer, you will not fail to notice the flight of the birds that soar high above in the deep blue sky, the flowers on the mountain sides blooming in gay delight. The cool air refreshes the body and stimulates the senses. And above all, you will feel with inward vision the great unity of all things around.

Reward

Returning home, one looks back with deep satisfaction of a dream accomplished, forgetting the hazards or the hardships that were encountered. This lingering joy for one's memory, affords the greatest delight of trekking. The reward begins when accomplishment ends, the arduous effort is followed by a warm spreading aftermath, in which physical pleasure becomes a transcending happiness.

In pursuits of trekking and mountain climbing, persons find a philosophy of living. If you do, you and the mountains will be inseparable through life. You will always respond to the call of the mountains, for you have fallen under their spell.



SAHYADRI INVITES YOU

Prof Ramesh Desai

TREKKING and climbing around Bombay or in Maharashtra, inevitably means trekking and climbing in the Sahyadri which, with its many easy or difficuit, but all delightful routes, is a veritable paradise for a trekker as well as a climber. The Sahyadri provides a rich choice of enchanting spots away from the smoke of factories and suffocating crowds.

Intermingled with historical tales, prehistoric, mythology-based legends still haunt a number of peaks and float on the streams emanating from them. Pinnacles particularly sanctified by Shakti or the Mahakali sect shrines still excite superstitious awe in the minds of simple aborigins who dwell in the valley beneath them. The holy sites and temples on the tops of the Sahyadri hills and the sacred shrines on the banks of its streams, are the gifts of the Sahyadri to Indian culture. The region is literally studded with hundreds of such spots, each sanctified by some legend and considered holy. Long before the establishment of these centres of pilgrimage, they must have become popular centres of religious worship or even rigorous penance.

The Sahyadri has been correctly identified with the northern portion of the great escarpments of the Deccan called the Western Ghats in modern cartographical literature. Geologically these appear to be dead sea-cliffs. To the north, the Sahyadri hills bound the southwest corner of Khandesh. The Sahyadri, strictly defined, extends from the west flowing Tapi to the creek of Terekhol, a length of about 960 km along the crest, covering a north to south longitudinal distance of about 630 km. The northern prop, the Satpuda, is geologically continuous with the great central belt to which modern geographers confine the name Sahyadri. Geographically, the Sahyadri forms the main watershed of the peninsular region between the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal.

The trend of the Sahyadri is southwards with an average elevation

varying between 760 m to 1070 m, with occasional peaks over 1430 m and three over 1520 m (Kalsubai, Ghanchakkar and Salher) above the mean sea level. Though the general trend of the range is southwards, the occasional bends enhance the length. The north-south longitudinal backbone of the Sahyadri leaves to the west a very narrow coastal belt of an average width of hardly 30-40 km known as Konkan and develops the Deccan plateau, known as Desh to its east. The Desh plateau is in the main, built up of nearly horizontal sheets of basaltic lava, called trap geologically. The Sahyadri, thus, forms in effect the western edge of the plateau from the littoral regions of the Koṅkan. Thus the immediate right flank of the Sahyadri stands in physiographic contrast to its left. It appears in steep gradient rising to a great elevation, all of a sudden within a short distance of just 4-5 km when approached from the Konkan. In contrast, the eastern slopes are gentle, gradually descending to the Desh. Besides this main range, numerous east-west spurs of wild ranges of hills and striking isolated peaks rise on both its sides.

The main range of the Sahyadri is without a break in its entire longitudinal expanse except for the innumerable low altitude cols, which are used as passes for communication between the Konkan and the Deccan plateau. Most of these passes, practically between every alternate hill, are mere foot tracks. But, there are a few passes that allow vehicular traffic, prominent among them is the Bhor pass between Karjat-Khopoli and Khandala, the Thal pass between Kasara and Igatpuri, Kumbharli, Amba, Phonda, Varandha, Malshej pass between Murbad and Otur and others. All these, and specially those which prohibit vehicles, being precipitous, are very interesting from the trekking and climbing point of view.

The mountainous backbone of the Sahyadri throws out several east-west transverse spurs of different lengths. Some of them are far more than mere spurs and can be identified as separate sub-Sahyadrian ranges. An interesting feature in topography is that all such ranges emanate from the main range in the neighbourhood of its higher altitudes. As the main range has provided a natural boundary between the Konkan and the Desh the sub-ranges have formed the natural boundaries between various districts and even sub-divisions.

Nasik Region

The Sahyadri meets the Satpuda at right angles in the northwest corner of west Khandesh as well as of Maharashtra, the narrow gap in between used by the river Tapi, which is a decisive geographical

feature. This northern most terminus of the Sahyadri throws out two minor branches of Selbari and Dolbari ranges, emanating from the vicinity of Salher (1567 m), the second highest peak and the highest hill fort of Sahyadri.

To the south of these ranges, the mighty Ajanta-Satmala or Chandwad range branch off from the main range in northwest of Nasik. It runs eastwards for about 80 km, in a series of basalt pinnacles and ridges of frightful gradient apparently defying the law of gravitation. Besides the beauty of its western peaks, the extremely interesting feature of the Satmala range are the rock-cut Buddhist temples and monasteries of Ajanta-Ellora, one of the selected few places manifesting the alliance between art and history. Satmala was practically the northern border of an early Maratha realm and its strategic importance was recognised by history as can be seen from the string of forts.

Igatpuri Region

South of Satmala, surrounding the main range, lies an extensive group of Trimbak hills, somewhat intricate at first sight, but grouped with a certain symmetry, presenting the forts of Trimbak-Brahmagiri, Harihar and Anjaneri. Trimbakeshwar is a religious centre famous all over India and enjoys a twin significance. It is one of the twelve most select abodes (or Jyotirlingas) of Shiva as narrated by Rudra-Samhitas and in the adjoining hill of Brahmagiri, is the source of the river Godavari, mythologically, Gautami Ganga, the elder sister of the Himalayan Ganga. The Sahyadri is privileged to house three Jyotirlingas, the other two being at Bhimashankar and Ghrishneshwar near Verul-Ellora.

After Anjaneri, the crest of the Sahyadri upto the Thal pass, Igatpuri, is conspicuous by the absence of any marked high peak. This region, mostly covered by Mokhada and Jawhar subdivisions, has no well-defined boundary between the Konkan and the Desh. Kalsubai (1646 m), the queen of the Deccan hills, is the highest point of the Sahyadri. The top of Kalsubai is crowned by a small shrine of the goddess Kalsubai.

After Kalsubai, the easterly range takes a northeast bend towards pinnacled Avandh. Most probably, such pinnacles in history, were used as watch-towers of the surrounding forts. This range and the region is an all-time obsession for a trekker.

Malshej Ghat Region

Towards the south of Kalsubai, from the magnificent fort of

Ratangad, emanates the Baleshwar or Balaghat range. East of Ratangad, is a series of lofty mountains and the range runs along the southern semi-circular periphery of the Bhandardara lake. The range jutting out from Ratangad and traversing in southeast direction, has the grace and the grandeur. The fort of Harishchandragad with its rich rock images is one of the best of the Sahyadri. After Harishchandragad, the range further consists of a chain of hills and forts. On one such hill, near Junnar, is situated the historically important fort of Shivneri, the birth place of Shivaji.

South of the Baleshwar range, are the twin passes of Malshej, which allows vehicular traffic and Nane Ghat, which once enjoyed prime importance when the nuclei of civilization and urbanization were located near the coastal Nalasopara, Kalyan in the Konkan and near Paithan and Junnar on the Desh.

After Nane Ghat, along the main range as we move to the south, we are greeted by the imposing hill of Dhak, one of the high peaks.

Lonavla Region

South of Dhak is Bhimashankar, a celebrated place of pilgrimage, yet another combination of Jyotirlinga and the source of holy Bhima or Chandrabhaga.

The region around Khandala-Lonavla, easily accessible due to rail connection, is practically congested by the hill forts, the rock cut caves and the chain of huge man-made lakes.

Pune Region

The spur immediately south of Pune-Khadakvasla is known as the Purandhar or Bhuleshwar range and includes the formidable and historically well-known forts of Torna and Rajgad, the pre-coronation capital of Shivaji. South of Bhor, the region is dominated by huge high altitude plateaus of Raireshwar and Mahableshwar (1438 m), the highest hill resort of the Sahyadri and Panchgani. Here flat summits, terraced surfaces and mural slopes characterise the landscape of the Sahyadri. The huge densely forested plateau of Raireshwar is adorable, owing to the tiny temple where the teen-aged Shivaji and his companions took the initial vow to establish 'Swarajya'. The Raireshwar-Mandhardeo spur running eastwards for about 32 km ends in north-south bifurcation in the temple of Mandhardeo and the fort of Pandavgad respectively. To the north of Raireshwar, a little beyond Varandha ghat, in a gorge on the Konkan face of the main range, is the Shivthar cave, which was sanctified by the stay of Shivaji's spiritual guru, the saint poet Ramdas. His epic 'Dasbodh' is supposed to have been written at

Shivthar ghal. The proximity of the fort of Raigad, which was Shivaji's capital for about 15 years, has added to the sanctity of the region.

Koyna Region

The southernmost prominent sub-range of Sahyadri, emanating in the vicinity of Mahabaleshwar runs for about 100 km towards Satara in southeast direction, is named after the well-known Shaivaite temple of Shambhu Mahadeo, also the deity of Shivaji's Bhosle family on Mungi ghat hill in Man sub-division at Shikar Shingapur. The region receives the maximum from the southwest monsoon and can boast of one of the thickest forests, now mostly around the Koyna reservoir.

South of Mahabaleshwar, the range is lower in height, reaching to a maximum of 1100 m. The city of Satara, the last capital (since 1699) of the Maratha kingdom, is almost in the midst of the hills. 10 km west of Satara, near Parli village, is the old hill fort of Aswalgad, which Saint Ramdas renamed as Sajjangad. The rock-caves of Agashiva, near the old township of Karad, are interesting in the sense that the ancient university of Magadha had a branch here.

The common border between Ratnagiri and Kolhapur (with an exception of about 16 km with the Warna river source and fort Prachitgad, in Sangli District) is defined by the Sahyadri till the range reaches the Terekhol separating it by the Sattari ranges of Goa. This can be treated as the southernmost portion of Sahyadri. The region is dissected by the spurs of Panhala, north Dudhaganga and the south Dudhaganga range. On an east-southeast spur emanating from Vishalgad, at about 45 km, is situated the fort of Panhala which has asserted its importance during medieval, historical and even the present age. The spur further extends to about 12 km and ends with the site where the well-known temple of Jyotiba is situated. The range connecting Vishalgad with Panhala is historically well-known due to the siege of Panhala by the last major Adil Shahi general, Siddi Johar, Shivaji's escape to Vishalgad and the unparalleled valour and sacrifice by Baji Prabhu defending the Ghodkhind, afterwards known as Pavankhind.

This simple topographical and other description just covers an eagle's eye-view of Sahyadri. The problem with the Sahyadri caves and forts, is that they are far too many. According to historians, about 75% of caves and at least 25% of the forts in India are in the Sahyadri. What an entire country like Italy or Egypt possess by way of rock sculptures, is held in a single complex like Ajanta-Ellora. An

unusual feature is that most of the Sahyadri hills were formerly fortified. Though most of these hill forts were built either during the Shilahars of Kolhapur-Panhala in the 12th century or the Brahmani in the 14th century, it was left to Shivaji to exploit their strategic position to the maximum. Shivaji, perhaps the last great fort builder, was reputed to have built 180 new forts, repaired about 50 old forts and possessed at least 240 forts. However, in the matter of fort architecture, both Brahmani and Maratha, a strong foreign influence can be perceived. As a matter of fact, the important position occupied by the forts in the geo-politics of the 17th century, decayed progressively during the 18th and 19th centuries with the use of long range guns and easy angle changing device. In the 20th century, with the advent of long distance flying machines, fort impregnability has become meaningless.

To describe all the aspects of the Sahyadri would fill volumes of Sahyadrian dimension. The range is of special interest to trekkers in Bombay and Pune, since they are ideal for a few days of trekking, camping or climbing holidays. Once a man has found a track in the Sahyadri, he can never keep away for long.





Bhairi Pinnacle.



Kondana Cave

THIS is the most popular area for trekking around Bombay. Regular and frequent local trains connect stations upto Karjat, and the area is very accessible. In particular the Matheran range receives a growing number of trekkers in all seasons. For one day outings, this area offers the best opportunities. For convenient reference, the area is divided into four sections, as per the major starting points or hills.

THE THANE AREA

○ Mama Bhanja

A group of hills, seen from the main highway as one passes Thane. Proceed to Wagle Estate by bus from Thane station. A good route leads to a dargah on top of the hill. It has excellent rock climbing areas on the east and west.

○ Mumbra (Parsik)

Behind the Mumbra railway station a broad high ridge runs parallel to the railway lines. These are some of the most interesting and

convenient areas for rock climbing. It is also inviting for plain hill walking in the monsoon or winter. You can also do some advanced climbing in a day or even half a day. For details see chapter on Rock Climbing.

○ **Dudha Lake**

A small lake in the Parsik range within a short distance from Mumbra station. Walk on the main road for about 1 km towards Panvel. From the Jain temple on the west (right), follow a track leading to the col where electric wires cross the ridge. The lake can be seen at the bottom on the other side. It can also be approached from the opposite side of the Parsik range by road from the Thane–Belapur road. Turn to the east (left) near the Richardson Hindustan factory.

○ **Belapur Fort**

A small ruined fort near New Bombay at a place known as Ulva bunder. It is on a small hillock at the confluence of Panvel and Thane creeks. Till the 18th century it was a strategically situated stronghold protecting entrances to the Portuguese enclaves.

THE MATHERAN RANGE

○ **Haji Malang** (790 m —2595 ft)

A prominent landmark in the vicinity of Kalyan, with the dargah of Baba Malang halfway up the mountain. Buses ply regularly from Kalyan to the foot of the hill from where a broad path leads to the dargah. This path may be crowded and dirty, so one can climb up by a ridge alighting from the bus a stop earlier. It can also be approached by traversing from Tavli. Above the dargah, there are many opportunities for rock climbing.

○ **Kakuli Lake**

A beautiful lake with a bungalow on its shores and mountain ranges in the background. From Ambernath station, reach the old temple, which is famous for its carvings and underground ling of Shiva (2 km) A little before reaching the temple, follow a cart track, along telephone lines on the the south (left), to reach the dam (5 km). A pleasant walk in the monsoon but one has to cross a nala. An outing could be made to Tavli cave, or a long cross-country walk along the shores of the lake. Now a motorable road leads within 2 km of the lake. Follow the old Pune road, and ahead of Mumbra, at Shil Phata, turn on the road to Kalyan. After about 5 km turn to right and proceed 10 km along the pipe line. Here it joins the track from Ambernath. The lake is 2 km to the south.

△ **Tavli** (790 m —2594 ft)

A prominent group of 3 pinnacles seen from Kakuli or Badlapur station. Two of the sharper pinnacles are locally known as *Dahud* and *Baman*. These are difficult to climb and involve rock climbing. A flat top, near the pinnacles is known as Tavli. The other top on the south is Badlapur Hill. Both are connected by a saddle (600 m). There are two principal approaches to the saddle. One is from Kakuli lake. After walking southwards along the shores of the lake, reach a prominent wide gully at the base of the hill. The route goes up the gully and then through thick forest on the right. A short climb to the connecting saddle which leads to the top. The second approach is from Badlapur, via villages Shirgaon, Saroli or Dahile (6 km) to reach the base. Steep route up to the connecting saddle. No water anywhere. A connecting traverse to Haji Malang from the lower plateau, below the saddle is possible and easy.

○ **Tavli Cave** (*c.*730 m — *c.* 2400 ft)

This is a cave situated at the base of the Tavli pinnacles. Excellent view, but tricky and exposed to reach. From Kakuli lake proceed towards the pinnacles via a ridge which comes down from the base of the pinnacles almost to the shores of the lake. Climb this ridge to the top. A little descent and the base of the pinnacles is reached.

After a traverse of about 1 km on the Badlapur side of the pinnacles, the cave is reached. A second approach lies from the connecting saddle on Tavli. An exposed traverse at the base of the pinnacles leads to the cave.

□ **Badlapur Hill** (738 m —2420 ft)

As in Tavli, reach the connecting saddle by either of the two routes, traverse to the south to reach this flat topped and forested hill. No water and the ridge continues in the southwest to Navra-Navri.

○ **Khandara**

Opposite Badlapur station on the east this is an isolated hillock with a temple. It is 3 km away and overlooks Ulhas river.

○ **Bhoj Lake**

An artificial lake in enchanting surroundings at the base of Navra-Navri. From Badlapur station, on the east a bus road leads to village Javli (3 km). About 2 km ahead is the dam and the lake (via village Dahivli). The Navra-Navri ridge can also be climbed or traversed. Near the northern shores of the lake (right) there is a temple of *Kundeshwar*. It is under a huge overhang and worth a visit.

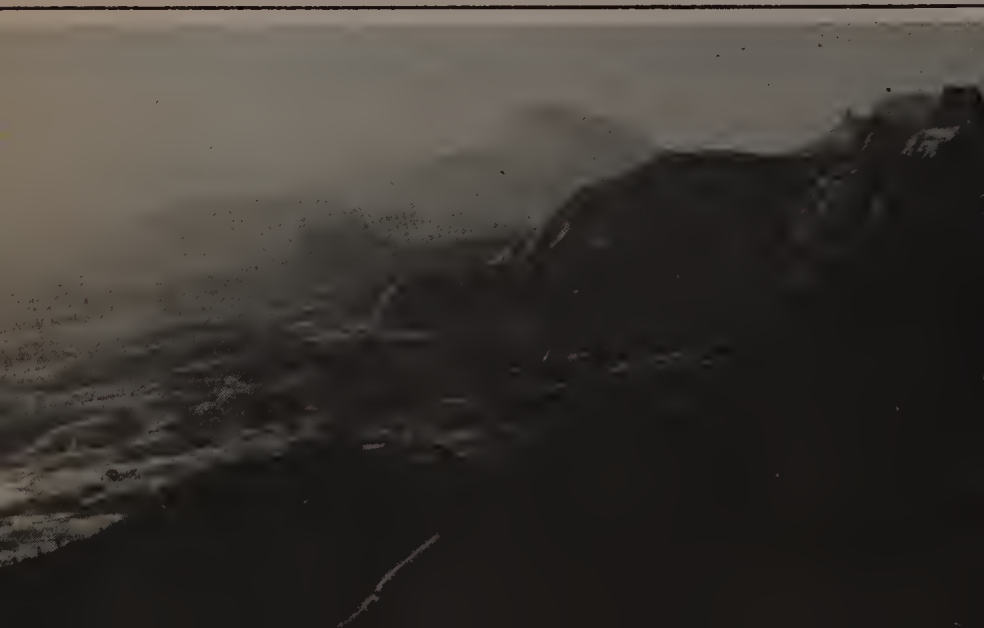
☐ **Navra–Navri** (613 m —2011 ft)

A long ridge connecting Badlapur Hill and Mhasmāl is the ridge of Navra–Navri. It has about 10 to 12 scattered pinnacles in a line and all of them are about 15 to 25 m in height. However, they all consist of rather loose rocks and are full of scree. From Bhoj lake, proceed amongst the forest to the col between this ridge and Mhasmāl. Turning right do a ridge walk, by-passing the pinnacles at the base. No water anywhere. An alternate and a slightly tougher route would be to proceed from Badlapur station to villages Kharvai (3 km) and Thakurwadi (2 km) to reach the base. Then through a prominent dry waterfall, climb steeply to the top of the ridge.

★ **Mhasmāl** (713 m—2339 ft)

This is a prominent landmark in the area. It is a group of 4 pinnacles, exposed and difficult to climb. The best period to attempt it would be after the monsoon, when the upper scree would have settled. Three of the pinnacles are in a group and one, a little lower. No water anywhere. From Vangani station, walk back on the road along the railway lines for about 3 km to the second crossing gate at village Goregaon. Then by a cart track through fields to village Chinchli (6 km). Climb a spur behind the village to enter the forest. A track leads to join a nala on the left. Follow the nala to reach the col between Mhasmāl and Chanderi. The route is over boulders and along the nala. For Mhasmāl climb to the north (right) from the col

Matheran range : Haji Malang, Mahasmal, Nakhind and Peb fort



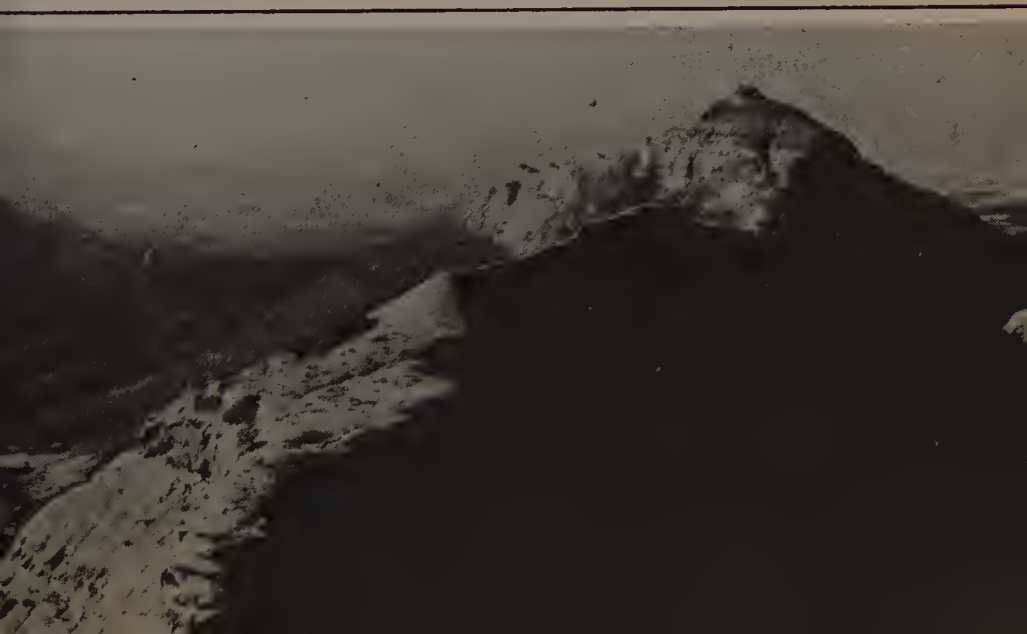
to the base of the pinnacles. Going around, reach a narrow col between the 2nd and 3rd pinnacles. Climb over scree and rocks to the top of the 2nd pinnacle (30 m). A descent of 10 m on the other side and a final climb of about 15 m leads to the top of the highest pinnacle. One should be very careful while descending.

★ **Chanderi** (790 m —2592 ft)

A fascinating and intricate fort. It has plenty of water and provides a very enjoyable outing. Its solid square massif is clearly visible even from Bombay. From the col of Mhasmāl–Chanderi, climb on the south (left) to reach the base of the massif. A good cave is situated here. An exposed and tricky traverse leads to the centre of the massif and on to a small ledge with a water tank. A rocky staircase (partly blown off) leads to the top on a very exposed route. Plenty of opportunities for rock climbing. Fantastic view. The second route is from Vangani station to village Vaghachiwadi (3 km) and hence to the saddle between Chanderi–Nakhind (3 km). A tricky traverse over scree leads to the ledge at the centre of the massif. Same route ahead to the top. The second route is not in use.

☐ **Nakhind** (704 m —2311 ft)

This gentle hill is excellent for leisurely monsoon walks. It has a long summit ridge which can be easily identified by a hole in the northern end. Either from Vangani, Shelu or Neral station, proceed to the centre of the hill (6 km) which has a dargah. Easy route from here to the top. A complete traverse from the top to Peb fort would be interesting.



☐ **Peb Fort** (474 m —1554 ft)

A small hill fort adjoining Matheran which is very popular for hikes and outings. From Neral station walk back towards Bombay for 1 km on a cart track. A small track branches from here to the west (left) and leads to the base of the fort and further climbs up gradually to the saddle. (first from Peb). A sharp ridge leads to a cave at the base of the fort. Ahead lies an easy rock climb of about 10 m near or on the fort wall. One then reaches the grassy top. From the cave, an exposed track traverses the fort at the base and leads on the railway line of Matheran under Panorama Point.

○ **Matheran** (767 m —2516 ft)

A well-known hill station and a paradise for hikers, particularly in the monsoon. It has many routes and one can always spend an enjoyable hiking day. The main route is from Neral (11 km) via short cuts, which is now motorable. Other routes are: (a) From Bhivpuri climb to Garbat plateau (13 km), (b) From Chowk via village Varosa to Shivaji Ladder (10 km), (c) From Vangani to Porcupine Point, via Panvel lake (19 km), etc. Many such combinations are possible. A party can climb up from one route and descend by another. There are many enjoyable walks in the thick forest at the top.

○ **Bhivpuri Hill** (634 m —2081 ft)

A small hill adjoining the Garbat plateau of Matheran. From Bhivpuri station an easy walk leads to the flat top (6 km). No water. One can directly proceed to Karjat (13 km), Matheran (5 km), or across the valley to Chowk (19 km).

○ **Panvel Lake**

A small artificial lake at the base of Chanderi and Matheran. It has many approaches and provides excellent opportunities for cross-country walks in rain. From Vangani station proceed to village Vaghachiwadi (3 km) and over the saddle of Chanderi-Nakhind to village Dawla (6 km) on the other side. The lake is nearby. Other approaches are (a) Over the saddle of Nakhind-Peb fort from Neral (10 km), (b) Descent from Porcupine Point of Matheran (3 km), (c) Traverse at the base of Matheran from Chowk village to the lake (13 km), and (d) Bus road from Panvel to village Nere (26 km) and 6 km walk to the lake.





Irshal

THE CHOWK AREA

★ **Irshal (Vishalgad)** (370 m — 1213 ft)

Travellers to Pune cannot miss seeing this weather–beaten peak above Chowk village. It has a peculiar forked shape with sharp ridges and a prominent hole in the centre. Reach Chowk from Karjat or Panvel. A 3 km uphill track leads to Vishalwadi at the foot of the final climb. From the village, the route lies over the extreme left ridge in the northerly direction and then from behind the hill to a small gap above the hole. Water is available here. Straight ahead is a 10 m rock climb to the loose scree above. A very exposed scree traverse from the left leads to the small grassy top. One should be very careful on descent, as any slip would be difficult to check. An enjoyable traverse from Vishalwadi to Prabal can be made by a connecting ridge.

☐ **Prabal** (707 m —2318 ft)

A huge flat plateau with forest, parallel to Matheran. In fact, Prabal was to be developed as a hill station, but for the shortage of water. It can be seen from Matheran and all the nearby forts. Travelling on the main road from Chowk to Panvel, get down at Poinje village phata, 6 km before Chowk.

From the road Poinje is 2 km Climb up a small spur to the middle plateau. The Irshal-Prabal ridge runs northwest to southeast. From the plateau move north along the base of the wall. Climb up southwest gully of Prabal on the right. This is the first gully on the traverse. Route enters through a dilapidated fort wall. A lake, water tank (on extreme southern end) and huge thickly forested plateau on the top.

Another route comes from the northern end following a steep rocky staircase. It approaches from the village Shedung (near the highway) and climbs to the col with the triangular pinnacle on the north.

From the middle plateau a connecting ridge leads to Irshal, or one can also proceed across an old landslide, descend to the valley to village Varosa (6 km). From Varosa, one can walk to Chowk (6 km) or climb Matheran via Shivaji's Ladder (10 km).

○ **Bhilavle Lake**

On the main road between Karjat and Chowk there is a small mud road (6 km from Karjat) which leads to this artificial lake. It is about 1 km from the main road. Get down at village Bhilavle (if you catch a bus from Karjat to Chowk) and proceed on an unmetalled road. A small dam and a few trees around form the right setting for spending an enjoyable day.

○ **Kalote–Mokashi Dam**

A small dam and lake off the main Bombay-Pune highway. 8 km ahead of Chowk and before Khopoli, this small lake is flanked by hills on the three sides and is a good camping site. The lower col behind the central village leads to Palasdari while the northern ridge, if crossed, descends to Bhilavle.

○ **Donvat Dam**

On way to Pen from Khopoli, after 10 km, this is a dam and a lake off the main road near village Donvat.

○ **Nadhal Lake**

A small beautiful lake at the foot of Irshal. 2 km before Chowk,

bifurcate to the left. The lake is about 2 km at the foot of the ridge dropping from the mountain.

○ **Pazar Lake**

A bigger lake off the main road 2 km before Chowk on the Pune highway. Forested and in backdrop of Irshal.

□ **Manekgad** (572 m —1876 ft)

This dome-shaped hill fort stands isolated, opposite Irshal across the Pune highway to the southwest of Chowk. It has water tanks and huge grassy plateau. It commands a grand view and is enjoyable trek particularly in the rains. From Chowk, walk or take a bus 10 km on the road to village Vadgaon, via Kolbhe. On the way the river Patal Ganga is to be crossed over a bridge. A short climb to a ridge behind the village and then a long traverse in south to the base of the fort. The final climb circumvents the massif on west to reach the open top. A short cut would be to descend steeply to the Talasri village from the col from where the final climb begins.

○ **Savna Lake**

A lake west of Manekgad. Proceed from Chowk to Vadgaon at the base of the fort. Cross the ridge behind the village and descend on the west to the shores of the lake. Can also be approached via Pen to Apta road and walk to 6 km to village Savna near the dam.

★ **Karnala** (469 m —1538 ft)

The funnel-shaped pinnacle of this fort stands prominently on the Panvel-Pen road. It is a landmark seen from Bombay. Thickly forested, the area has been declared a bird sanctuary. There is a rest house on the main road. 10 km from the Panvel-Pen road a mud track branches off (the rest house is situated here) and a man-made route leads comfortably upto the base of the funnel. The 45 m thumb-shaped funnel rises steeply with caves at its base. This offers excellent opportunities for rock climbing from the eastern side. To avoid the heat, the climbing should begin very early in the morning or late in the afternoon. The rock is fairly firm, but one should be careful of scree and bees. The top commands a grand view and in clear weather the Bombay harbour is visible. While descending it is possible to rappel with a firm tree as an anchor. The fort walls are excellent for practicing artificial rock climbing.

○ **Sankshi (Badrudin)**

A small fort near Pen with water tanks, on the Panvel-Pen road. Get down at Chunabhatti, 14 km before Pen. Walk about 6 km to the tomb of Badrudin at the foot of the fort, which is gentle to climb. From the tomb one can return via Valati to the main road.

○ **Mira Dongar** (568 m —1863 ft)

A small hill with a temple. This is a popular place, 14 km from Pen. It is enjoyable in the rains with a high waterfall behind the temple.

THE KARJAT AREA

○ **Palasdari Lake**

A small lake on the railway line 3 km ahead of Karjat. Trains to and from Khopoli halt at this small station.

○ **Palasdari Fort** (533 m —1750 ft)

A small hill fort across the railway line from Palasdari lake Excellent for monsoon outings. It can also be climbed by getting down at Thakurwadi halt on the ghat section of the railway line. Get down to Ulhas river from this halt and proceed towards Karjat. The fort stands at the edge of the range (10 km).

○ **Kondana Caves** (60 m —200 ft)

These are the caves at the base of Rajmachi fort. They are a group of 3-4 huge Buddhist caves situated in the forest and not much frequented. They are at little above the banks of the river Ulhas. From Thakurwadi railway halt in the ghats, get down to river Ulhas. Cross the river to village Kondivde on the other bank (3 km). A cart track leads to the caves (3 km). Kondivde village is connected to Karjat by a bus road (14 km). In the monsoon, Ulhas river will be difficult to cross.

○ **Salpa Lake**

Another small lake at the base of Bhairi caves and opposite *Khandpur lake,* on the southern (right) flank. Proceed by bus to Khandpe (8 km) from Karjat and ahead to village Salpa (5 km).

△ **Bhairi Cave**

A cave high up on a rock-face with a sharp pinnacle nearby. A unique place in the range. A giant cave of Bhairav is hewn out in a rock-face. It has a water tank. An eerie place particularly due to animal sacrifices still practised there. On the Chaitra Purnima every year, a fair is held here.

From Karjat proceed by bus to Sandshi via Khandpe. A complicated track leads to base of the cave (4 km). A series of rock steps lead vertically straight to the cave. The steps are blown-off in certain section near the cave making the approach and return difficult and exposed. Another longer route is to climb up the ghat to Jambuli village near the beautiful Kondeshwar temple. Traverse along the



Bhairi Caves : Pinnacle

edge of the ghat between the Bhairi pinnacle and the ghats to descend to the base of the cave. Jambuli is served by a direct bus from Talegaon and is approachable by a track from Valvand village near Rajmachi.

★ **Bhairi Pinnacle**

A sharp pinnacle near the cave. It offers a good climb of about 40 m. It has easier approach from the east face, while other routes will be challenging. Another pinnacle 100 m higher up will also provide a good challenge.

☐ **Dhak Plateau** (707 m — 2320 ft)

A huge flat-topped hill detached from the main range of the ghats. It has a long ridge falling towards Karjat. From Karjat take a bus to Vadap (8 km) via Dahili and Vengaon. A 5 km climb to the upper plateau among thick forest leads to village Dhak. Another 5 km climb and one reaches the top. Dhak is connected with Rajmachi and Kusur situated on the ghats.

○ **Peth (Kotligad)** (472 m —1550 ft)

This is a small fort with a large cave at its base. It is detached from

the main range. It has an interesting fortification at the top in the shape of a funnel with a rocky staircase carved in the middle. This funnel is known as Kotligad. From Karjat take a bus to village Ambivli via Kashele. A beautiful small lake near Ambivli is worth a visit. From Ambivli, climb to village Peth (3 km) at the base of the fort. Easy climb to the top. The lower plateau is connected with Wandrekhind on the ghats in the east.

○ **Tungi**

Tungi is situated on the long ridge dropping from Bhimashankar and it has a prominent round top. An enjoyable cross-country hike in the monsoon. Proceed by bus from Karjat to Kashele. Then walk on the road or take a bus to Khandas for 6 km to reach village Kotha and Ghotra. The ridge behind is Tungi. One can continue a long traverse to Padar killa and then to Bhimashankar.

□ **Padar Killa** (610 m —2002 ft)

A square rocky massif, which jutts out from the ghats near Bhimashankar. Huge broken pinnacles distinguish it from a distance. One has to reach the first plateau of Bhimashankar, either via Tungi or via Karjat-Kashele-Khandas. As one starts traversing to the left, to village Koli, a wide gully between Padar Killa and the massif of Bhimashankar leads up to the top. Excellent view of a series of waterfalls in the rainy season. This is also known *Rani Kalavanticha Mahal* after a legend.

Bhimashankar Forest







Bhimashankar temple *Portuguese bell*

○ **Bhimashankar** (1005 m —3296 ft)

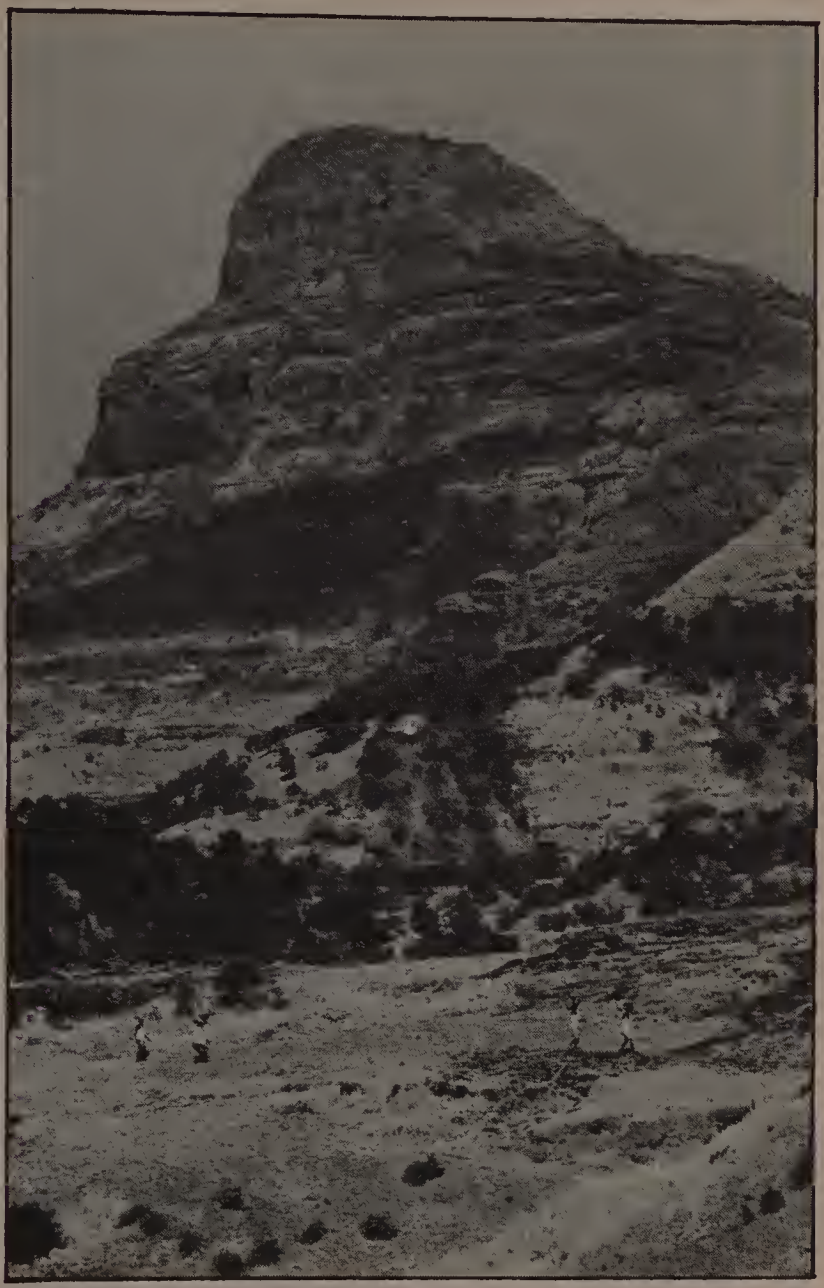
A famous pilgrimage site on top of the ghats. It is one of the Jyotirling of Shiva and has a beautiful temple and a huge bell, a relic of the Portuguese times. Nag Phani, the highest point, is nearby and commands an excellent view. It is thickly forested and has many approaches. Buses ply directly from Pune and Bombay to the temple. However, for hikers to enjoy the ruggedness, the best approches are by climbing up the ghat. It is a steep and long climb. From Karjat take a bus to Khandas at the base via Kashele (14 km). Or reach Khandas by a bus from Neral (19 km). After a flat walk of 2 km, a track climbs up steeply along a small spur to the first plateau on which Padar Killa is situated. A long traverse on the north (left) takes one to village Koli (3 km). Ahead, a rather steep and long climb leads to the thick forest above. Traverse north in the forest to reach the temple (6 km). Another route which is far steeper and shorter is to climb up to the upper plateau straight. A fascinating route through rock-cliffs leads up. At two places wooden ladders

help to overcome the cliffs. The route joins the original traverse route at Koli village. Another approach is from Kalyan to Mhasa (via Murbad), and then via villages Ambetembe, Agashi, across the river to Baliware, Chinchvad and Bombad to reach the base by bus (22 km). A steep climb leads up the ghats and to the temple. From the ghats, the temple is approached by a flat walk of 16 km from Wandre in south or 18 km from Ahupe via Ghonemal in the north. Many such combinations are possible. There are dharamsalas and other places if one wants to stay at the temple.

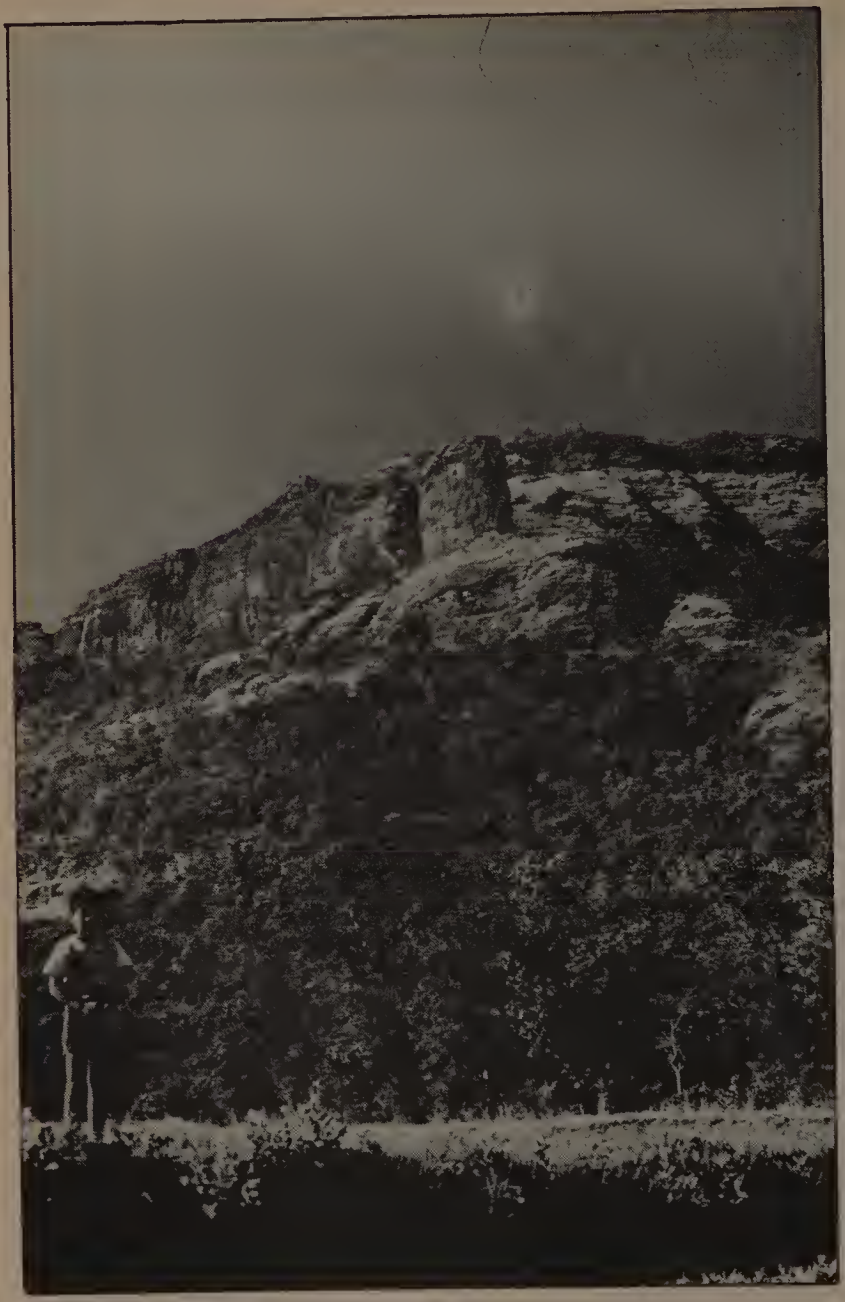
○ Bhivpuri Tunnels

From Andhra Lake's western end, two huge tunnels drop water in pipes down the ghats to the power house. In the monsoon, the tunnels are usually cleaned and they are worth visiting then. The permission of the authorities there would be required. From Bhivpuri station a narrow gauge railway line leads to the power house at the base of the ghats (14 km). One may get a lift by a small rail car in the morning or go by bus. A hill path leads from the left to Camp 18 where the tunnels are situated. Good view of Matheran. From the ghats a bus from Talegaon reaches Kusur and Khandi. The tunnels are nearby.





Utwad



Kohoj Fort

KONKAN REGION



Mahalaxmi Pinnacle

THE region covers the places lying near the western sea coast and are entirely different in scale and approach. They do not, strictly, form a part of the Sahyadris. Almost all the places are easily approachable and involve a small but enjoyable outing. Most of them are convenient for a day or a family outing.

This region is divided into three parts. The first is the area north of Bombay which covers the area between the northern crest of the Sahyadri and the coast line.

THE NORTH KONKAN AREA

This area is to the north of Bombay and is very convenient to visit. There are a number of gentle hills which are delightful in the monsoons or just after the rains. Frequent trains on the Western railway make the area very accessible. It is easy to approach many places from the Bombay-Ahmedabad highway. All places are connected by buses feeding the highway from the nearest railway station.

○ **Tulsi Lake**

A popular lake surrounded by a thick forest. Drive or take a bus from Borivli station to this lake supplying water to Bombay. Good for camping and scrambling along the banks. Be careful of anti-social elements reported here.

○ **Shandur Hill** (459 m —1506 ft)

On the Ghodbunder road, between Thane and Borivli, the most popular picnic spot is Cheena creek. The hill behind, with Goumukh on the top, is Shandur (5 km). It lies overlooking the Vasai creek in the south. A good hike for the monsoon only. One can cross over to Pokharan and Thane on the other side.

Now from the Ahmedabad highway, before the creek bridge, turn left on the Thane road —Cheena creek is 5 km from here.

○ **Vasai Fort**

This fort is intimately associated with the history of the Portugese in India. In 1534 it was occupied by them until 1739, when the Marathas captured it. Proceed from Bombay to Vasai railway station on the local line and catch a bus to the town. The fort is about 3 km away near the sea shore.

○ **Uttan-Manori**

This is an open beach, great for an evening or a moonlight walk. From Bhayandar railway station buses ply directly to Uttan.

□ **Kamandurg** (652 m —2140 m)

A dome-shaped peak near Tungareshwar. From Vasai station take a bus to Kaman village. Ahead, across the river, walk to Devkundi village (3 km). A little ahead, the route turns to the right in the forest and leads to the top of the prominent ridge. The ridge climbs to a col and from here, plenty of scree and loose rock will be encountered on the way to the top.

○ **Tungareshwar** (664 m —2177 ft)

This is the highest plateau in this region. It is thickly wooded and is a great delight in the monsoon. From Vasai station, catch a bus to Kaman and get down at Tungareshwar phata. After crossing the highway, walk on a cart track which leads to the popular temple of Shiva (3 km). Ahead the track climbs up a further 10 km to the flat top. On the northern end of the Tungareshwar plateau giant walls offer rock climbing opportunities.

On the Ahmedabad highway one can reach the bifurcation directly by car.

○ **Chinchoti Waterfall**

A beautiful waterfall near the Ahmedabad highway, worth a visit in the monsoons. About a km ahead of the bifurcation for Kaman, near a small bridge is the village Chinchoti. Proceed along the nala for about 4 km and turn towards a gully. The waterfall is here. Coming by bus, get down at the Kaman phata on the highway to reach the village Chinchoti. Kamandurg and Tungareshwar hills are nearby. In recent times it gets very crowded with picnicers.

○ **Pelad Lake**

Situated at the foot of the Tungareshwar hill. Little ahead of the Tungareshwar bifurcation, turn right to the village and lake Pelad.

○ **Jivdani**

A small hill behind the railway station of Virar. Climb up by regular footsteps to the temple of the same name. Flat hill good for monsoon outings.

Towards its eastern end a col called Papar Khandi with a small temple and a garden is worth a visit. A small lake on the other side of the col is an enjoyable view. Return directly from the lake to Virar, 3 km. The hill to the south of the col is *Bharvanda* which is good for a scramble and return to Nalla Sopara Station.

○ **Arnala Fort**

A small sea-fort off Virar. From the station take a bus to Arnala, 13 km. A ferry in the sea to the fort. A small fishing village nestles among its intact walls. Two watch-towers and lot of fresh water.

□ **Tak-Mak**

A formidable looking small hill fort on the Ahmedabad highway Reach village Sakwar or Bharol (near 80 km stone) from Bombay or by bus from Vasai going to Manor. Easy but steep track through thick forest. Two flat tops with little fortifications. Nearby are two separate square rocky pinnacles, called *Lingi,* which are also approachable.

○ **Bandre Dam**

On the Ahmedabad highway about 84 km from Bombay and 16 km before Manor naka bifurcate to the east (right) from the village Dhekde. This dam is 3 km away

○ **Ghotara** (584 m —1916 ft)

On the way from Bhiwandi to Vajreshwari, the road flanks past this hill. 10 km ahead of Supegaon, get down from the bus and climb the hill. Good in the monsoons.

○ Dhori Dongar

A small hill near Ghotara. From Bhiwandi, proceed by bus to Supegaon. Dhori Dongar is 6 km ahead, adjoining Ghotara. To return, come via Vajreshwari or Bhiwandi.

□ Tandulwadi Fort

A hill fort for a good outing. Reach Safale station and proceed towards Tandulwadi village. From the high col where Safale-Tandulwadi road crosses the ridge, follow the track to the north (left) climbing along the ridge. A great view of Vaitarna river. The route goes over some rocky portions, a little tricky if wet. On the top, few water tanks and a monsoon lake.

For return one can get down from the col in the west to descend along a nala to reach Safale.

The adjoining hill, known as *Indra Dev* is approached by a long traverse. One can descend straight near the Safale railway station. On the other side, from the Tandulwadi village, Vaitarna river can be crossed to reach the Ahmedabad highway, 10 km away. A motorable bridge will be ready soon.

A traverse to northwest to Taru Khand is also possible and would allow one to reach Kelve road station in a day.

□ Taru Khand

A peculiar rocky projection on the north of this hill gives rise to a legend. It is believed that Gods had landed here and left their craft. There are ruins and water tanks on the top.

Reach Kelve road station and proceed in the east to Zanzroli, 5 km. A beautiful lake (locally called *Bhandara*) nestles here. From its southern end (right) climb up. This hill is joined to Tandulwadi fort and a traverse is possible.

From Kelve road station, Kelve village is 4 km on the west with a good sea-shore and a temple.

○ Kansara Hill

A small hill to the north of Taru Khand. From Kelve road reach Dagad Dandi village to scramble up the hill. One may continue north towards Palghar fort. Or take a road which leads from Dagad Dandi to Kamra (4 km), Nevli Pada (6 km) to Palghar (2 km).

□ Palghar Fort

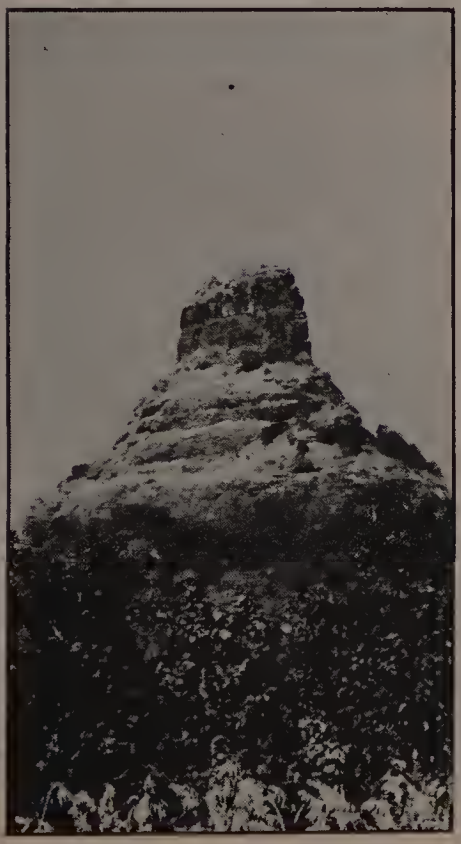
Seen from Palghar station to the east. Proceed to Nevli Pada (2 km) and turn east to Bhagola 3 km. A variety of routes leads up any of

the many ridges. A cluster of rocks a little below the highest point is known an Nandi with the summit as Shiva. The fort is also known as *Nandi Mal*. Two water tanks on the top. One can return via Ambewadi or reach Devkhop lake on the Palghar-Manor road.

Projection on Kohoj Fort



Adsule Pinnacle



○ Devkhop Lake

A lake on the north of Palghar-Manor road. It lies between Palghar fort in the south and Asawa in the north. Take a Manor bus from Palghar to get down at Dasturi. Lake and a temple of Vaghoba is nearby.

○ Asawa Fort

From Palghar proceed to Nandura, 5 km, in the northeast. The fort is an easy scramble from here.

○ Kokner

This is a place on Surya river near Palghar. There are hot springs and opportunities for scrambles around. Leave for Palghar and take the bus to Kokner. The hot springs and hills are nearby.

○ Barda Hill

A hill near Dahanu. From Dahanu railway station, catch a bus to Gholvad. Walk 5 km to Asavli village. Climb to the hill begins from here. Return by the same route. A huge waterfall near Asavli is worth a visit in the monsoons. The hill is a double humped huge plateau and will be a long walk for a day outing.

□ Kohoj Fort

This beautiful hill stands on the road from Manor to Vada. It has a beautiful view and two peculiarly shaped pinnacles on the top and water tanks.

Manor is 102 km from Bombay on the Ahmedabad highway. It can be reached from Palghar. 2 km before Manor proceed to Vada road to either Vaghote (13 km) or Ambai (11 km). Easy route to the top. Excellent view of Dehraj river, Vaitarna river, Bandre dam and Tak-Mak. Vada is 15 km ahead of Vaghote via Kanchad (2 km).

□ Asherigad

This little known fort lies on the Bombay-Ahmedabad highway. Reach Manor naka (102 km) from Bombay. 10 km ahead is the village Khadkona at the base of the fort. Two ways to the top. A good cave, water tanks and a lake (only in the monsoon) on the top. Good opportunities for rock climbing.

△ Adsule

A sharp-ridged pinnacle opposite Asherigad. The approach is the same as above. Bifurcate to the east (right) on a sharp ridge touching the highway. Steep climb to the top. Very barren in the summer months. No water. Also known as pinnacle of *Medhwan*. Many hills and few pinnacles surrounding Adsule to the east are



Asherigad

also formidable. Adsule itself presents a great imposing view as one approaches from the road.

★ **Mahalaxmi Pinnacle**

A Mahalaxmi temple on the Ahmedabad highway is 128 km away. It can be reached by buses from Dahanu to Charoti naka (24 km) and ahead 4 km to the temple. It is regularly served by buses.

A peculiar shaped pinnacle near the temple is interesting to climb. A fairly good track leads to the cave at the base of the pinnacle, 100 m high. Traverse ahead to northwest and reach the start of the climb. Lots of scree and exposure. Rock is loose and steep. Route goes along ledges and the last 40 m are not too difficult. Rope essential. No water anywhere.

☐ **Gambhirgad** (686 m —2252 ft)

A peculiar double-ridged fort, rather remote to approach. From Dahanu reach Charoti naka (24 km), Kasa (2 km) and bifurcate north to Saywan (16 km). An unmetalled motorable road leads



Gambhirgad

ahead to Udhwa (14 km) and joins the highway at Talasri (8 km). Bombay to Charoti naka direct is 124 km.

From Saywan proceed to Askona (2 km) on the road. Trek to Vihale, 2 km, at the foot of the fort. Climb up the fort by a spur in the centre of the south face. Water tank here at the base of the southeast cliff. Great view from the top.

There is a route to descend or climb from Udhwa also. River Varnai near Saywan is a beautiful sight.

○ Saputara

A small hill station in Gujarat. Buses reach directly from Nasik via Vani or from Billimora via Vasda and Vaghai. It can be approached by car from Bombay (350 km) via Pardi, Chikhli, Vasda, Vaghai to Saputara. (From the highway at Chikhli it is 102 km away).

Good walks around and the climb of nearby Hatgad fort possible.

THE SOUTH KONKAN AREA

The area south of Bombay, across the sea, has many attractive places of historical importance. Being on the coast line they offer an

entirely different panorama. You can reach these places by ferry across the sea or by road via Panvel and Pen. They can be quite hot in summer. All are generally easy and do not involve much trekking.

○ Dronagiri

From Bombay reach Uran by ferry (45 minutes). Get down at Mora (Uran) and take a bus to Karanja. From here an easy climb of an hour or so to the fort at the top. Or, from Karanja walk along the sea-shores to Peerwadi beach (6 km). A good beach with a dargah to stay in From here climb up a longer spur coming down almost to the beach. Get down the shorter way, on the other side to Karanja for return.

○ Kankeshwar

A small hill with a temple and dharamshala on the top. Take a ferry from Bombay to Rewas and from Kihim, turn left from the last road head at Saral. By road, the route follows Bombay-Pen-Alibag-Kihim and turns right (3 km) to the base at Saral. A well-constructed route of 5 km leads to the top. Thick forest and Kihim beach nearby.

○ Sagargad

5 km before Alibag on the western coast from Pen, get down at Khandala village, climb to the plateau of the Sidhheshwar temple (5 km). At the other end is the fort with some fortifications and a cannon. In the monsoon a beautiful waterfall forms near the temple. As per a local legend, a long tunnel joins this hill fort with the sea-fort near Alibag.

○ Alibag Fort

West of Alibag town about 1 km into the sea, this pankot is situated. Only during the low tide eastern side is clear to approach. The fort is in line with the famous observatory of Alibag.

The fort was captured by the British in 1840 and a garrison was stationed here for a long time.

○ Chaul

Chaul is referred to as the museum of western Inida's history. There are forts, churches, Buddhist caves dating back several centuries B.C. and remains of ruined old Portuguese palaces. Prominent among the monuments is the tomb of Kanhoji Angre, chief of the Maratha navy. For reaching this picturesque historic place, reach Rewas by ferry from Bombay and then a bus to Alibag takes you to Chaul. Alibag is served by direct buses from Bombay also.

○ **Korlai Fort**

Situated near Chaul, it is a fort on top of a hill which is on the edge of the sea and across the Revdanda creek. The base village is Korlai. Within the fort are the mammoth palm groves and the top commands an excellent view of Chaul and Revdanda creek. This was a former stronghold of the Portugese and consists of two huge stone walls.

○ **Janani Hill** (342 m —1121 ft)

A hill with forest and small temple of Inderdevi on top. Get down on the Goa road little before Kolad at Talavli (Khamb) or earlier at Sukeli village. Proceed to climb this gentle many-armed hill by any of its ridges.

○ **Ghoshalgad** (372 m —1222 ft)

A small fort in the Konkan plains which used to be Siddi Johar's stronghold to protect the Janjira-Murud enclave. The base village Ghoshale can be reached from Roha (13 km to south) or Kolad (17 km to southwest) which are both connected by direct buses from Bombay. Fort is 5 km northwest from the village, on a hill between the Revdanda and Salva creeks.

○ **Talegad**

This small fort stands opposite Ghoshalgad. It is an easy climb from the base village Tale. A few cannons and fortifications atop.

○ **Avchitgad** (*c.* 305 m— *c.* 1000 ft)

Across the Kundalika river from Roha this fort stands 5 km away. Approach from Roha to the north or from Mendhe to the south. Many water tanks, cannons, inscriptions and fortifications.

SEA-FORTS

There are innumerable sea-forts situated on the long coast line of Konkan along the highway to Goa. These forts neither involve any trekking nor they are Sahyadri forts. The reason for their inclusion here is that some of these forts played an important role in the history of Sahyadri. They witnessed many battles with forces descending from the crest of Sahyadri, which runs parallel to the coast line. Moreover they are unique in construction and are very beautifully situated. Thus they merit a visit by the lovers of Sahyadri. These forts are situated at a considerable distance from Bombay, in Raigad district, and are directly approachable by road or sea.

○ Murud-Janjira Fort

The fort, which is situated about 2 km across in the sea from Murud, was constructed in the 11th century. It was considered impregnable and witnessed many battles. Murud is served by direct buses. A good beach and a gorgeous mansion built by Nawab of Janjira are worth noticing.

○ Suvarnadurg

2 km from the town of Harnai, this is a small sea-fort worth a visit. There is a beautiful beach and a temple of Ganesh 3 km away.

○ Jaigad

One can reach this tiny fort by ship from Bombay or by road from Ratnagiri, which is about 32 km away. One of the sheltered ports with an impressive fort on the sea-shore.

○ Vijaydurg

Another of Shivaji's sea-forts with a temple on top. It has very impressive high walls and the walls are excellently preserved. Vijaydurg can be reached by steamer or buses directly via Rajapur.

○ Devgad

A huge table land running parallel to the sea-shore, forms a natural impregnable sea fort. It has a beautiful light house at its north end. Devgad is served by direct buses via Phonda and by ships on way to Goa.

○ Sindhudurg

This sea-fort built on a low rocky island of Malvan was formidable naval base of Shivaji. Shivaji had personally selected the site and participated in its construction. A small temple with Shivaji's image, palm and foot-prints is in the fort. Malvan can be reached by ship or by road, south of Ratnagiri.

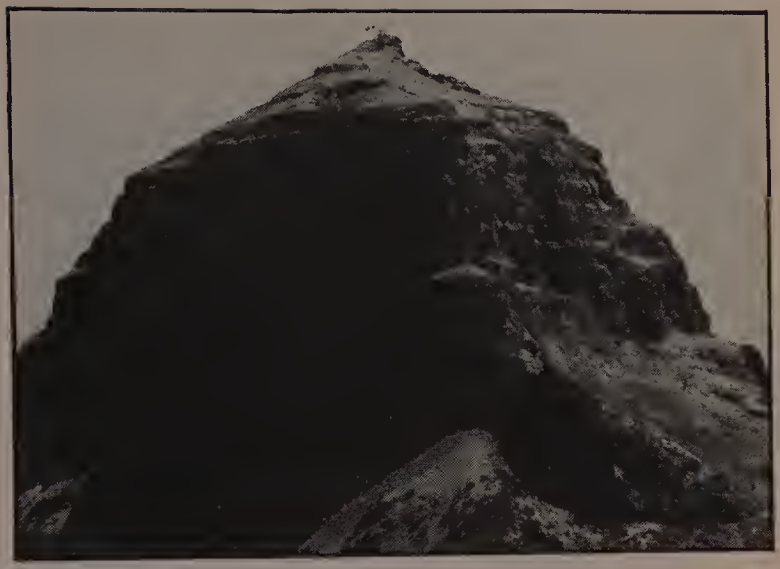
○ Terekhol Fort

Situated on the creek of the river Terekhol, this is one of the southernmost sea-forts in line with Sahyadri. It can be reached from Sawantwadi by bus or from Pedne in Goa across the creek by a ferry. A rest house amidst its huge walls and thick forest. Being situated on the border, it played an important role in Goa's liberation struggle, perhaps the last of the forts to play an active part in history in any way.





Hadbi-chi-Shendi



Markandya

THE northern limit of Sahyadris is defined by this region. To the north of Selbari range, Sahyadri flattens out and allows an east-west railway line (Surat-Bhusawal) to pass. Thus from this region, technically speaking, Sahyadris start from south of Tapi river. This is the dividing line between Satpuda and Sahyadris.

Nasik region offers the most difficult mountains to climb. Usually, any place in this region will involve a lot of travelling, both by rail and bus. Thus, it will be advisable to go for 2 to 3 days at least in the region and combine different places. Many places will require ropes, and during summer it can be very hot as the area is not forested. The region is divided in 3 sections. There are convenient buses and trains leaving Bombay at night and reaching the starting point by early morning. It is advisable to ascertain bus timings, otherwise one may well be stranded anywhere. For most of the places Nasik and Satana are the main bus heads.

THE SELBARI RANGE

This range forms the northern-most boundary of the Sahyadri. These are remotely situated hills and forts and will necessarily involve long

bus journeys from Nasik, Satana, Dhule and Sinnar. This range runs in a semi-circular loop around Mosam river. The northern section runs east to west (from Mangi-Tungi to Galwan) and the other section; south of Mosam river, runs west to east (Salher to Mulher). The western edge falls gently to Dang area of Gujarat State.

○ **Mangi-Tungi** (1329 m —4360 ft)

This is a very prominent twin-pinnacled peak with a plateau in between. There are Jain temples underneath and around the pinnacles. The eastern pinnacle is Tungi and the western one; Mangi. The whole mountain is a solid semi-circular basin and has regular steps leading to the temples. It commands an excellent view and one can see the flat expanse north of Sahyadris, including *Pimpalner lake*. This is the first peak of the Sahyadri in the north.

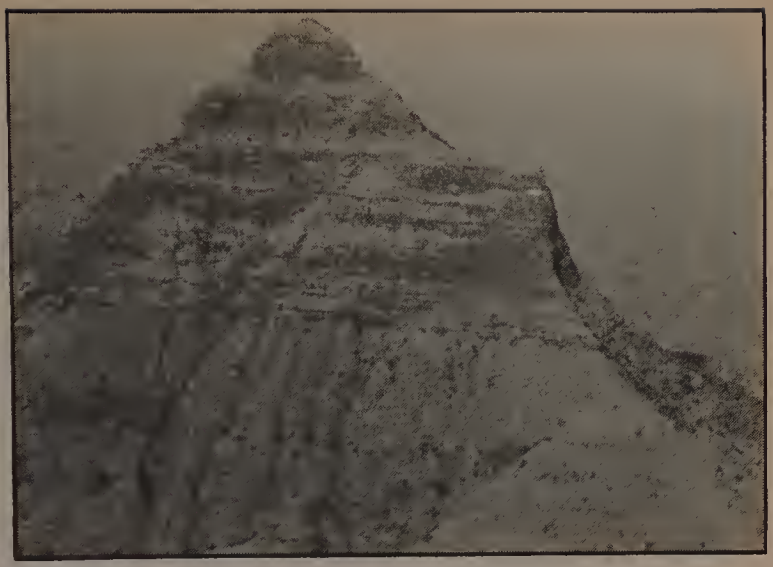
It is directly served by buses from Manmad and Nasik via Satana-Tahirabad-Selbari phata on the Pimpalner road. Mangi is 6 kms inside. There are dharamsalas and availability of food at the base.

One can walk across the Mosam river valley in south to Mulher (6 km).

On the hill opposite the base of Mangi, there is the famous dargah of Shah Daran Malik.

Mangi-Tungi





Tambolya

☐ **Tambolya**

A sharp mountain next to Mangi-Tungi in the west. Proceed from the Mangi base to Vadkhel and Patalwadi at the base, or via Jaitapur.



☐ **Nhavi Killa** (*c.* 1280 m — *c.* 4200 ft)

A beautiful fort further southwest of Tambolya. It has same approaches as the above. It has fort walls and water tanks on the top.

☐ **Hanuman** (1062 m —3486 ft)

Continuing further west of Nhavi Killa one reaches Hanuman on the western crest of Sahyadris as they fall to the Dang forests. You can approach by bus ahead of Mulher to Bambhulne village or come up from Chinchli in Gujarat to the same village to climb this hill or from Chinchli proceed to Varsa in the northwest to approach the hill.

☐ **Dher Kharak** (1099 m —3605 ft)

Another hill on the western edge of the Sahyadris. This lies to the south of Hanuman and has same approaches as above.

★ **Galwan Pinnacle**

A very shapely and prominent pinnacle which guards the route climbing up to Salher. It is to the south of Dher Kharak. Hanuman can be approached from the same villages.

From the Dang area one can proceed north of Chinchli via Varsa village to Navapur. Here a motorable road crosses from Navapur to Pimpalner on the ghats, thus, along with the railway line, signifying the true northern end of the Sahyadris.

☐ **Salher** (1567 m —5140 ft)

The range running west to east, south of Mosam river is dominated by Salher fort.

This is the highest hill fort of the Sahyadri. It is steep and well-fortified. The view from the top is one of the finest in the region. There is a huge cave and water cisterns a little below the top. This is the second highest peak in the Sahyadris (after Kalsubai) and one of three peaks above 5000 ft (1520 m) in the Sahyadri. On the top a small temple is dedicated Parshuram.

Proceed from Nasik to Satana-Tahirabad-Mulher and ahead by bus to Vaghambe at the base, passing Haranwadi dam on the way. From Vaghambe, the route climbs steeply through fields to the col between Salher and Salota. Regular steps lead to the caves at the top. One can return via Dang in Gujarat. From Vaghambe, proceed to climb down to Chinchli village in Dang (10 km) for buses to Ahwa-Bilimora via Vaghai (61 km). Another route from the top of Salher descends to Salher village on the south and then down to Chinchli in Dang for buses. As the area is on the border, fusion of



Salota

Gujarati and Marathi language in the local dialect is both worth noticing and humourous.

△ **Salota**

A shapely fort, adjoining Salher. From the common col with Salher, proceed to a diagonal rocky staircase in the centre (on the southern wall), leading to the top. After the staircase, the route traverses along caves and water ponds to the top. A fascinating route to follow.

★ **Takara** (1478 m —4848 ft)

A huge pinnacle south of Salher. It is very prominently observed from Salher and Salota. It is a solid massif worth a try.

From Satana proceed to Vinchur, Sakora, Tatone to Watara at the base, (bus available for most of the way). A good climb leads to the top.

Approach from the west would be from Dang. From the road head at Mogla (on Ahwa-Chinchli road) proceed to Don and Bhekarpada at the base. A tough route to the top.

An excellent view of Karner nadi in the northeast and Punand nadi in the southeast.

○ Panch Pandav

Small five humps on the ridge gives the name to this hill. It joins Salota to Mulher. It runs along the bus road from Mulher to Vaghambe.



On Mulher



On way to Mulher: Hargad behind

☐ **Mulher** (1317 m —4320 ft)

A beautiful twin plateau fort which is also known as *Aurang gad*. It is situated far away and involves a long journey. Bombay to Nasik and to Satana. Change bus for Tahirabad and for Mulher village, at the base of fort. A good track to the top. One sees many ruins of the fortifications and Muslim tombs. It has two plateaus and both are totally deserted. The fort is about 3 hours climb from the base with two temples and a water pond halfway up. The forest at the base is good. Caves and historical remnants on the summit plateau. The adjoining hill is called *Hargad* and is little higher. It could be visited through a chor darwaza and a rocky staircase.

○ **Chauler Fort** (1128 m —3702 ft)

A small hill situated on the southeast tip of a spur starting from Salher. This can be reached from either Kalvan, going 10 km in the north (via Bhadwan) or from Satana, 12 km to it's southwest via Wadi Chauler.

○ **Galna Fort** (878 m —2882 ft)

A twin fort approachable from Malegaon. Proceed in the north to Galna village. A small fort lies at its outskirts. A hill on the northwest of Galna has also some fortifications.

○ **Astamba**

A mountain to the north of Sahyadri. Take a bus from Nasik or Dhule to Nandurbar. Change bus to Talade and to Chaugaon village (13 km). Ahead to Gormal village. Climb to Astamba village on hills, Four hours of steep climb to the top. No water, but a good view of the Satpuda.

○ **Narnala Fort** (1059 m —3475 ft)

This is an old fort standing on an isolated hill of Satpuda. About 15 square km in area, it is surrounded by forest with a huge water tank. It is far to approach. From Nasik to Dhule and Akola and then proceed to Akot. Narnala fort is 16 km away by bus from here.

○ **Toranmal**

A less-known holiday resort on hills. It has a lake and dak bungalows. Bus from Dhule to Shahde, Ranipur to Toranmal. Good cross-country walks around.

THE AJANTA SATMALA RANGE

This range runs to the north of Nasik-Manmad railway line. Running west to east it has many beautiful forts, some of them remote and difficult. Major starting points for the treks are Nasik to Vani-Nanduri, Lasalgaon, Chandwad and Manmad.

Motorable roads pass through this range at two points. This allows for an easy access to the foot of the hills.

This range is not on the crest of the Sahyadri, which is further west. There are a few high hills to the west of this range which completes the topography of the area. It joins Jawhar in the west and Chandwad range in the east, with Selbari range in the north and Trimbak range in the south.



Taula

△ **Taula** (1231 m —4040 ft)

The westernmost point of the range. It has a peculiar pinnacle-like projection. Vani-Saputara road (from Nasik) skirts its western edge. 6 km ahead of Vani get off at Bhitbari phata. Another motorable road proceeds on the north of the range from Bhitbari to Kalvan. Jambli village is 5 km away on this road. A difficult trek leads to the top from here.

△ **Achala**

A twin peak of Taula, lying to the east of it. 4 km ahead of Vani (on



Achala

the Saputara road) get off at Pimpri-Achala village. A track leads to the top via the eastern col (with Ahiwant).

☐ **Ahiwant** (1228 m —4029 ft)

A giant hill with many arms and a long plateau on the top. It lies to the east of Achala. (a) From Pimpri-Achala village one can reach its western col (with Achala) and climb up. (b) From Vani reach Male phata (2 km) and reach Ahiwantwadi (2 km), off the road.



Ahiwant

From here a steep scree-route leads on to the top. Or, proceed to the east to climb between budhya (hump) of the killa and the main fort and reach the top. Water-tanks on both, budhya and the main fort. The road at the base joins Vani-Nanduri road. (c) The longer route would be to get off after the Vani-Nanduri col and proceed to Dariyapur. A long, 6 km, route skirts the arm to reach the col between Ahiwant and Mohindri to reach the top.

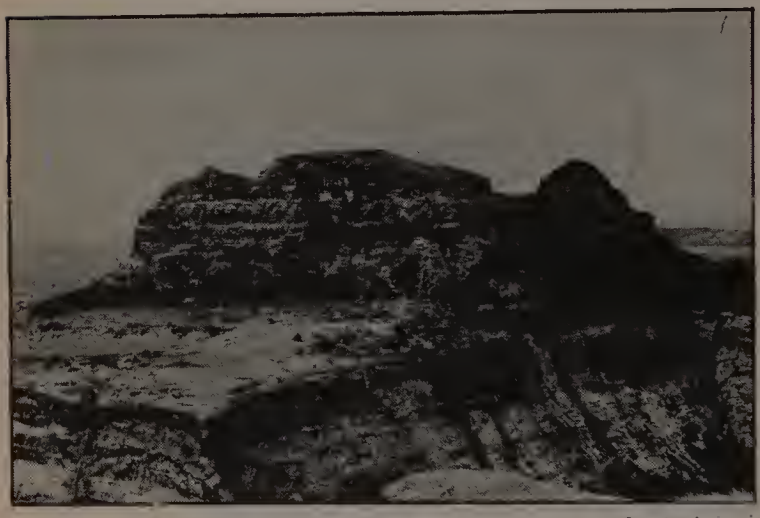
○ Mohindri

A longish hill opposite Saptashringi. It has a peculiar hole at its end. From Nanduri, proceed to its base at Mohindri village. Easy walk up.

Chandkapur lake is to the north of this hill. A road crosses its arm from Nanduri to reach the lake.

○ Saptashringi (1416 m —4645 ft)

A popular place with a temple at it's base. From Nasik proceed by bus to Vani (51 km). Get down at Chandkapur phata for a route over a steep rock ladder to the temple. A well-defined route of 5 km. There is also a motorable road from Nanduri to the temple, and good places where one can stay. Higher up are plenty of opportunities for rock climbing to the top. Good views.



Saptashringi

□ Markandya

This is the hill east of Saptashringi and it is convenient to approach it via this mountain. From Saptashringi, descend to the col in the east and reach the pass. Through the pass, climb to the plateau of Markandya.

Skirt to the north and climb a ravine to reach the upper plateau. Here, go around to the south of the citadel to climb a gully to gain the top. Just below the top there is a water tank covered with a small dome. For direct approach: from Vani reach Mulon Babapur (5 km) at the base and climb upto the pass between Markandya and Rawlya further east.



Jawlya

△ **Rawlya** (1332 m —4370 ft) and
☐ **Jawlya** (1236 m —4056 ft)

Continuing the Ajanta-Satmala range to the east of Markandya, one reaches this twin-pinnacled fort. From Vani reach the pass between Markandya and Rawlya. The base village is Babapur, 5 km away from Vani at the base of the hill. From the pass, climb to the common plateau. On the plateau there is a small hamlet between the two peaks. Climb both the peaks from the hamlet. Jawlya has several water tanks. Rawlya is little tricky to climb with a little rock patch to overcome. There are incomplete caves on the west face of Jawlya. Come down to Vani or continue to the west to Markandya or to the east to Dhodap, via a khind (2 km) to Wadala (3 km), Golwadi (5 km) and to Sonar's village (2 km). The whole region is very hot in summer and water may be in short supply.

☐ **Dhodap** (1451 m —4761 ft)

A very prominent fort seen from the road and rail. From Nasik, take a bus to Vadlibhoi naka on the main road to Chandwad or to Dhodambe village, 7 km away. Proceed to Hatti village of Rajputs,



Dhodap from Rawlya plateau



Cave and walls of Dhodap

(known as pardeshi), 4 km ahead. Another 1 km of flat walk and the route climbs up for 2 km to the upper plateau and a Sonar's village. Excellent caves and water ponds on the top with a commanding view. Final rock pyramid still 70 m higher with a rock climbing route on the ridge. On the western ridge of Dhodap, a wide gap is hewn out. As per the legend, the condemned prisoners were thrown from here. Ikhara Pinnacle on the adjoining common plateau.

From the Sonar's village a beautiful route leads to Rawlya-Jawlya. Passing some excellent old temples and water tanks at the foot of Dhodap, reach Golwadi (2 km). Down to Wadala (5 km) and up a khind to Jawlya plateau (5 km). A small hill called *Bandya* is prominent on the way at Golwadi.

△ **Ikhara Pinnacle** (1158 m —3798 ft)

Situated on the common plateau with Dhodap. A small settlement of Gorakhnath ashram at the base. The route up the pinnacle is climbing through a prominent slanting chimney. From Ikhara, one can return via Kondana village (3 km), Dhodambe (3 km) for a bus or ahead to Vadlibhoi (7 km) on the main road.

□ **Lekurwadi**

A long serrated ridge with scattered pinnacles. It lies to the east of Ikhara and is a flat walk from it.

□ **Koldheir** (978 m —3209 ft) and
△ **Kachna** (1134 m —3722 ft)

Two small hill forts complete the eastern edge of the Satmala range. The motorable road from Nasik to Satana passes over to the Kanchan-Manchan khind on its east (via Devla). This road divides the Chandwad range from the Satmala range.

For Koldheir (which is the eastern-most) get off at Dhaode after the khind. A good track to the top. Not much fortifications. Or from Dhodambe to Kondana and ahead to Koldheir village on way to the top. For Kachna get off before the khind to go to Puri village. To the northwest lies Kachna, which is a good scramble.

□ **Kanhergad (Kanhira)**

A hill fort in the Ajanta-Satmala range, north of Rawlya-Jawlya and 11 km northwest of Dhodap. From Nasik proceed on the road to Kalvan via Vani-Nanduri. Get down at Gowapur. The fort is 6 km to the southeast. It witnessed the heroic battle in 1672 during Shivaji's escape from Surat. The other approach is to proceed from Kalvan to Otur in the south. Climb up to Kanherwadi and the top.

○ **Pedhya Dongar** (1194 m —3917 ft) and
○ **Varand** (987 m —3240 ft)

Two hills to the south and southeast of Kalvan. Pedhya is a huge plateau with many peaks. It joins Dhodap in the south. From Kalvan proceed to Shirasmani on the way to Otur in the south. A good climb to the top direct, or via Kundane.

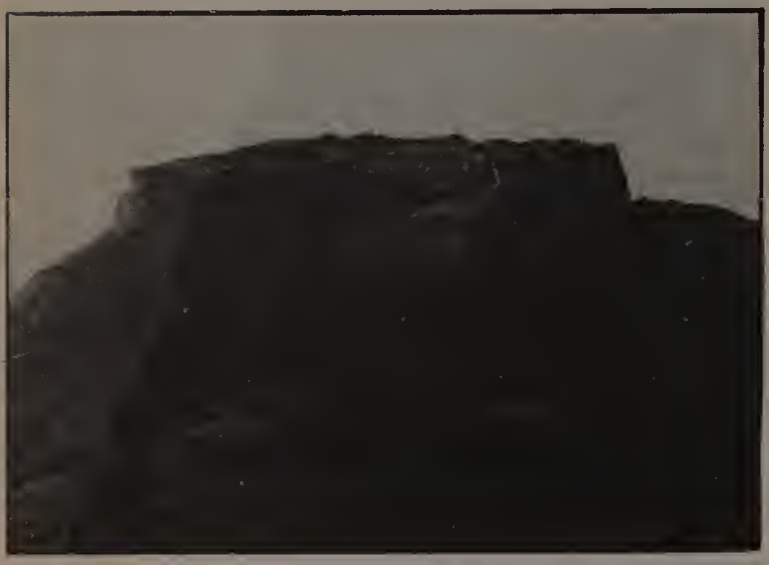
Varand is to the southeast of Kalvan. It is off the road to Devla. Get

off little ahead of Nirane to climb the hill.

These three hills are northern off-shoots of the Satmala range.

○ **Hatgad (1114 m —3656 ft)**

A few forts and hills lie to the north of the Satmala range, till the crest of Sahyadri. Hatgad is the most prominent amongst it. It is situated near the crest of the Sahyadri and on the border of Maharashtra and Gujarat States. From Nasik take bus via Vani and going to Saputara (Gujarat). Get down near the edge of the ghats at Hatgad village. The gentle fort is nearby. It is 7 km before Saputara.



Hatgad

☐ **Kem** (1177 m —3863 ft)

A giant hill on the western edge, southwest of Hatgad. (a) On the Vani-Saputara road get off at Sarad and reach Haran Tekri at the base. A long route skirts the hill to the top. This is the southern approach. (b) For the northern approach; bifurcate on the road to Surgana via Bhorgaon and Shinde to climb up.

A barren but prominent hill.

☐ **Nirhi** (1167 m —3829 ft)

(a) From Hatgad village a kuchha road bifurcates to Kalvan going eastwards. This passes from the north of Nirhi. Get off at Dalwat village, about 10 km ahead. Easy grassy route to the top.



Kem

(b) Another kuchha road leads from Hatgad to Chandkapur lake, Ambori to Nanduri, going southwards. Here from village Amdar, 10 km away, Nirhi can be climbed by its southern approaches.

Thus this grassy hill is a prominent divider in the area.

○ **Bhorair** (1287 m —4222 ft)

Twin hills on the Hatgad-Kalvan kuchha road. Get off at Arola village, about 15 km from Hatgad. Long route leads up the southern approaches of this huge hill.

THE CHANDWAD RANGE

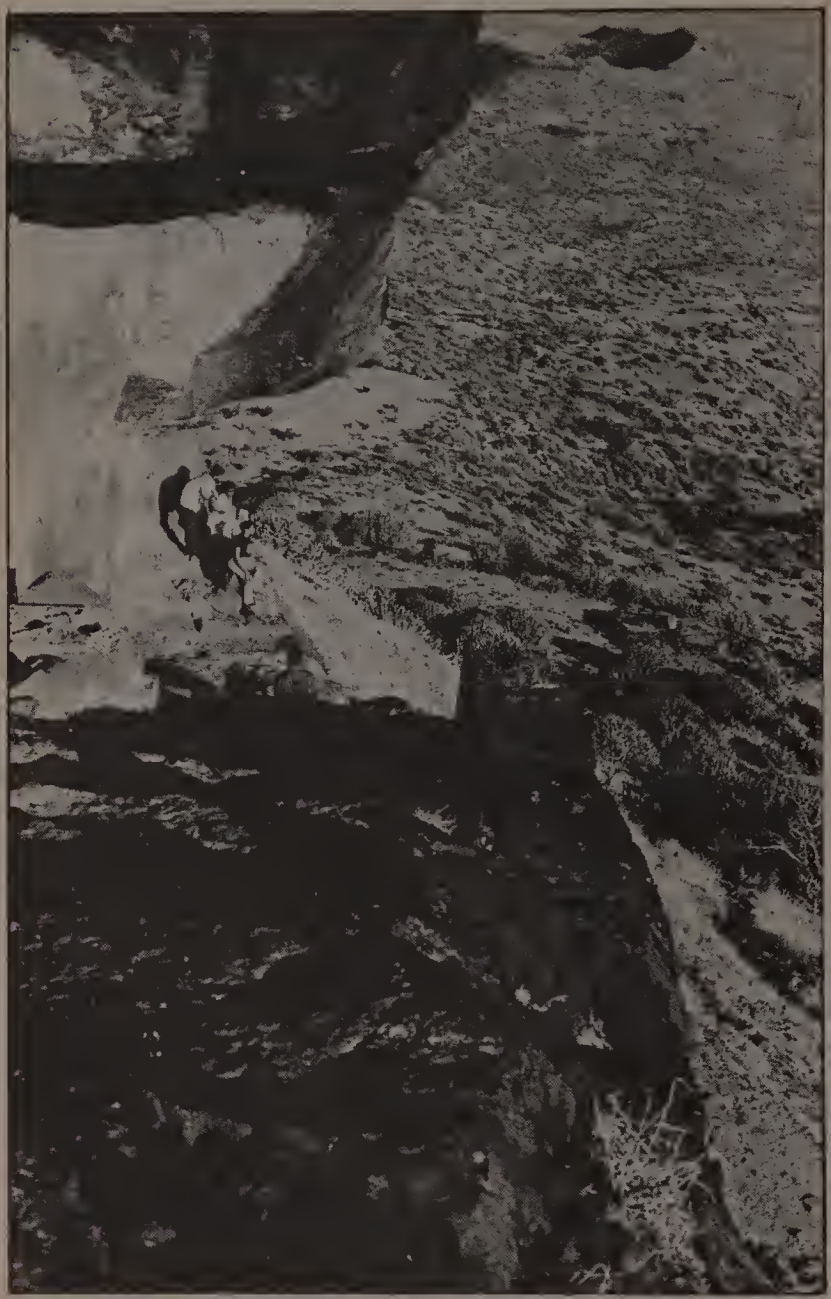
Strictly speaking, this is a continuation of the Satmala range. However, for convenience, it is classified as a separate range. From the Kanchan-Manchan khind (Nasik-Satana road), this range proceeds east to southeast. Then across the Manmad railway line to end in the Ankai-Tankai hills. The Bombay-Agra road passes in the centre at Chandwad.

☐ **Chandwad** (1125 m —3691 ft)

Reach Lasalgaon railway station, ahead of Nasik. 19 km ahead in the north, on the Bombay-Agra road, is Chandwad town. The fort is nearby. Proceed to the small temple on the ridge. Long grassy slopes and about 15 m of rock climb to get access to the top of the fort. Rope is advisable.

☐ **Indrai Killa** (1370 m —4495 ft)

Ahead of Chandwad, proceed on the Bombay-Agra road, keeping the fort of Chandwad on the east (right). A prominent bifurcation of a cart track leads to the valley on the west (left). Open walk for 8



Entrance of Indrai Killa

km and steep climb to a well fortified entrance. There are many caves, a temple and huge water tanks on the top. One can proceed to Rajdher or Sade Teen nearby.

○ **Sade Teen**

As the name suggests, this mountain has three and half hillocks on a common plateau. It is situated between Chandwad and Indrai Killa, near the Bombay-Agra road.

△ **Rajdher** (1091 m —3579 ft)

This is a very interesting and difficult fort. Proceed to Rajdher village from Indrai Killa. From the village a complicated route leads to the base of the rock wall on the north face. The steps are blown off. One must traverse on the rear side of the fort from the village. A 100 m rock climb gives entrance to the fort. An anchor is available above the blown off steps to fix a rope for rappelling down or climbing up on the rope. One can descend on the west to the Nasik-Satana road (Kanchan-Manchan khind) for a bus to either, Chandwad, Nasik or Manmad.

○ **Ankai** (961 m —3151 ft) and
○ **Tankai**

These twin hills form a part of Chandwad range and are situated about 8 km south of Manmad. The fort of Ankai can be reached from the railway station of Ankai near Manmad. It has ancient caves and a temple of Agatsya, the sage who is credited with the achievement of the first crossings of the Vindhya mountains. Both the twin hills are very attractive to visit, with Buddhist caves at their base.

★ **Hadbi-chi-Shendi**

A very prominent and curious looking projection about 5 km before Manmad. As one approaches Manmad by train, this thumb-like pinnacle of about 150 ft is visible from a distance. Walk from the station on the Daund railway line and bifurcate after about 2 km towards village Katarwadi. Easy scree scramble upto the base of the pinnacle. Last parts are exposed and difficult to climb over rather unsafe rocks. The Shendi has been climbed by a few and it has always been an exhilarating climb.

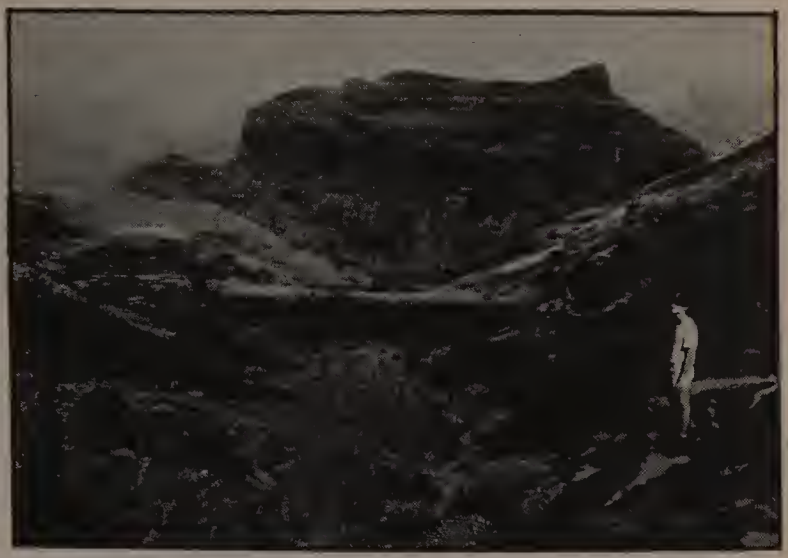
○ **Gorakhnath**

A square solid massif opposite Ankai-Tankai. From Manmad reach Ankai station and proceed to the west. At the base, there are huge caves. Top can be gained with little difficulty from the western end. Commands excellent view of the Satmala range. [$]



Dangya Pinnacle

IGATPURI REGION



Chhota Kulang

THIS is one of the most interesting and challenging regions of the Sahyadris. It has some of the most interesting hill forts, the highest of peaks and many of the places are a challenge for rock climbers. There are sharp rocky features and remotely placed hill forts which are the speciality of this region. The countryside is beautiful, with plenty of water.

The Thal ghat road climbs up from Kasara to Igatpuri. Convenient night trains and buses reach Igatpuri by late night or early morning. There are connecting morning buses to Wilson Dam or other places from where one can begin hikes. It takes more than a day for many hikes to this region and hikes should be well-planned to make the most of this opportunity. It is perhaps due to this difficulty of time, that some areas of this region are not much frequented.

THE KASARA RANGE

These are a group of hills situated around the railway line from Kalyan to Kasara and are served by local trains from Bombay. All of them rise from the plains and are popular among trekkers.

○ **Mahuli** (762 m —2501 ft)

Trains from Kalyan to Kasara go almost around this group of peaks. There are two main formations. The fort is higher and easier to reach, while Chanderi is tricky and steep. The ridge from Mahuli again rises in the north to an easy flat top called Chhota Mahuli. Mahuli fort is a popular hiking place due to its accessibility and it is fun in the rains, winter or on a moonlit night. From Asangaon station, proceed to Mahuli village (5 km). The fort is on the northwest (right), 3 km away. Climb by the east face gully, reaching the saddle at 600 m. Large plateau with excellent views of Tansa lake. No water available on the way up and only one tank in the centre.

△ **Mahuli Chanderi** (748 m —2454 ft)

From the train, one can see the group of pinnacles of this impressive massif. All these pinnacles are covered with scree. From Asangaon station, walk to the base village Mahuli (5 km). Chanderi is on the southwest (left). The route goes up a small ridge on the left, facing the mountain, and then climbs a steep gully to a saddle. Twin peaks can be seen from here. The one on the north (right) is smaller and sharper. The higher one, on the south (left), with thick vegetation, has a fantastic view of surrounding mountain ranges.

○ **Lingi** (540 m —1772 ft)

A shapely peak, thickly forested and in backdrop of Tansa lake. This is the last point on the ridge jutting from Mahuli towards Tansa. From the Tansa dam site proceed in the forest to gain the top via the northwestern (right) skyline ridge. Excellent monsoon outing



○ **Chhota Mahuli** (610 m —2003 ft)

It is a small hillock with easy reaches. Cross-country walks are enjoyable only in the monsoon or in the moonlight. Proceed ahead on the railway lines from Asangaon station. After about 3 km, the hill on the northwest (left), above village Kaotharti is Chhota Mahuli. It has a connecting ridge with Mahuli fort. Can also be approached from Atgaon station.

○ **Tansa**

One of the largest lakes supplying drinking water to the city of Bombay. Approachable by bus from Atgaon station (13 km). It has good rest houses with gardens. Cross-country approaches from Vaitarna are also possible and enjoyable in the monsoons, winter or moonlight.

○ **Vaitarna**

Another large artificial lake supplying water to Bombay. It is situated in thick woods and would make an enjoyable walk. From Khardi station, either by bus or on foot, proceed on a metalled road to Vaitarna (17 km). A good view and a place to stay. About 2 km before Vaitarna, a road bifurcates on the south (left) to Tansa (19 km). A good walk amongst woods.

○ **Bhatsai**

A dam on the river Bhatsai. This is another huge lake to supply water to Bombay. On the Agra road, ahead of Atgaon at about 10 km distance, a road leads to the site. Excellent sites for camping around the lake in the woods



○ **Thal Ghat**

During the monsoon, the region around Kasara is full of streams and greenery. There are many small hillocks on the way to Igatpuri where one can spend an enjoyable day. Walking along the main road, there are many bifurcations to enjoy a small climb or a swim. For instance, walk on the Kasara road from Igatpuri till you reach the edge of the ghats. Follow a footpath in the westerly direction till you reach Vihigaon village. Proceeding further, reach the road leading to Vaitarna river and then further to the river about 2 km ahead. Another small outing can be to a 15 m high waterfall about 14 km from both Igatpuri and Kasara. It is just a kilometre away from the road.

○ **Bhairoba Mal** (510 m —1675 ft)

From Kasara railway station, proceed north to Radya-cha-pada (3 km) and ahead climb up a long plateau, running east-west. Proceed on the west (left) to the extreme edge, where walls suddenly drop on all the four sides. This is the highest point. One may return the same way or descend to Kornadanpada village via a spur leading down to the southeast of the highest point. Return to Kasara via Bhagapada and Vihiripada (13 km). A good outing in the rains. Many small points nearby for cross-country walks or walk to Khardi railway station.

○ **Balwantgad**

A small hill fort north of Kasara. Proceed to the base village Vihigaon, 6 km from Kasara to climb this gentle fort.

★ **Bhavani Pinnacle**

Situated southeast of Kasara station, this is a curious looking conical peak which is somewhat lower than the rest. From Shahpur catch a bus towards Dolkhamb to reach village Shenwar for climbing the pinnacle. An unmetalled road from Kasara also approaches its base.

□ **Karoli Ghat**

This is a steep pass leading from the Konkan to the Deccan plateau. It is worth climbing or descending, particularly for a huge bowl in the rock of about 50 m created by a waterfall. From Asangaon station travel to Sakurdi village by bus. A faint track leads through the forest to its base. A few hundred feet above one comes across the waterfall bowl. If one wishes to proceed ahead, an exhausting climb up to Samrad village just below Alang may be undertaken. Karoli ghat can also be approached from Dolkhamb, which is served by buses from Kasara and Shahpur.





Getting down Karoli ghat *On upper Vaitarna lake*

☐ **Bhopatgad** (480 m —1603 ft)

From the plains of Konkan rises this small hill fort of Bhopatgad. It has long ridges, good forests and a gentle walk leading to the top. A very enjoyable hike in rains with easy accesses from road heads. From the bus head at Khodala, walk to village Pathardi (6 km). Easy walk ahead to Kurlod (6 km) at the foot of the fort. Gentle climb of 2 km to the top. One can proceed on the other side of the gad to Zaap (3 km). Bokharipada, ahead to Jawhar (16 km) for buses to Bhiwandi. Or, from Zaap on a cart track to Nihale (13 km) on the main road for a bus to Jawhar or Khodala to Kasara.

○ **Jawhar-Suryamal-Khodala-Mokhada**

These small towns are situated amidst mountainous country and thickly forested areas. They are directly connected with Kasara by bus and each has a rest house. They provide excellent views and relaxation. Plenty of opportunities for small hikes and cross-country walks among the forest with wild life. With base at any of these places, one can undertake rather easy outings to nearby hillocks and forests. Utwad, Basgad and Trimbak ranges are nearby for



On Harihar



Harihar fort

fairly long hikes, or Bhopatgad and walks along river gorges and thick forests for shorter ones.

THE TRIMBAKESHWAR RANGE

The hill forts around Trimbak are very fascinating to climb. Trimbak is a popular pilgrim place and is served by frequent buses from Nasik. One may undertake cross-country walks to catch buses towards Kasara and Gujarat.

Brahmagiri (Trimbakeshwar) (1294 m —4246 ft)

A prominent place of pilgrimage with temple and shelter available. Reach Trimbak from Nasik. Regular steps lead to the temple. Long grassy top. Anjaneri, Harihar and Fani Dongar nearby.

☐ **Anjaneri** (1300 m —4264 ft)

A huge grassy topped mountain. Two princpal approaches. One from Wadhiware past Ghargad and Dangya to Mulegaon (11 km) at the base. Climb up the southern end of the fort. Pond, bungalow and a temple on the top. Second approach is from Trimbak to the top via Anjaneri village (3 km) on the Nasik-Trimbak road. This is a rather regular route. Good view of Brahmagiri and Harihar nearby.

☐ **Harihar (Harish)** (1120 m —3676 ft)

A unique fort in the Sahyadris, built on a triangular prism of rock. Its three faces and two edges are absolutely vertical. The third edge is inclined at an angle of about 75°. A one metre wide rocky staircase is hewn on this edge. At one place, it goes through a hole carved in an overhang. On the top there is a small temple and a cave with water. There are many approaches to this area. (a) From Kasara to Vihigaon, Khodala (31 km), Shrighat (7 km), Devgaon phata (3 km) and then along the Upper Vaitarna lake to Nirgudpada or Kotumb Pada (14 km) at the base. (b) From Trimbak the above base villages are 21 km. (c) From Igatpuri-Ghoti to Upper Vaitarna colony (19 km) and to Devgaon phata (11 km) to join the first route.

Regular buses ply on all the above routes. Khodala to Jawhār is 40 km and it links with Wada and Ahmedabad highway near Palghar.

△ **Fani Dongar** (992 m —3255 ft)

A small triangular mountain with a 30 m high cobra-like projection on the top. Approach same as Harihar and it stands adjoining it in the southwest.

☐ **Utwad** (1238 m —4062 ft)

A triangular-shaped mountain with a common col with Basgad. On the way from Kasara, Khodala to Mokhada, get down at Khoch or Khoch phata. Ahead to Utwadwadi (5 km) at the base. Reach the common col and a gentle way to the top from the south.

☐ **Basgad** (1086 m —3564 ft)

A small fort with shelter and water standing south of Utwad. From the col proceed to climb Basgad on a good track. From the col reach the base of northern walls. Traverse almost till the centre and go up a broad rocky staircase to the upper plateau. From the staircase one can continue to traverse eastwards to descend to Nirgudpada at the base of Harihar.

Both, Utwad and Basgad can be easily approached from the base of Harihar also.

○ **Bhorgad** (1091 m —3579 ft)

This hill fort forms the western tip of the Ramshej ghat situated north of Nasik. Reach Ramshej 14 km from Nasik on the road to Peth to climb the fort.

THE NORTHERN RANGE

These group of hills are situated rather near the Igatpuri and Ghoti railway stations and are gentle to climb. They offer convenient one-day outings just after the monsoons or in winter.

○ **Igatpuri Lakes**

Two small lakes situated near the railway station. The bigger one, with a rest house, is the railway lake near the village Girnar. Another very near the pumping house, is a new municipal lake. Both are barren and are at the base of Tringalwadi fort walls.

○ **Tringalwadi Dam**

A small dam and a lake behind the fort as seen from Igatpuri. Proceed as in Walavihir to the Tringalwadi village. The dam is nearby with opportunities to climb the Tringalwadi fort.

○ **Tringalwadi Fort** (987 m —3238 ft)

Two solid masses of rock stand behind the Igatpuri railway station. They are good for small scrambles and walks after the rains. From the Igatpuri railway station proceed to the railway lake near village Girnar and follow the track to village Tringalwadi and the dam. A long zigzag route takes one to the top which is flat, grassy and without any water. Return from the village to the rifle range by-passing Walavihir.

□ **Walavihir** (916 m —3007 ft)

A scraped hill with a prominent peak north of Igatpuri. Easier approach is from Igatpuri. Pass the rifle range which is a km towards Bombay and follow a route going to the village Tringalwadi, circumventing the mountain. From the western col with Tringalwadi fort follow the long ridge to the northwest to reach the fort. It is also locally known as *Pandavleni* as it has a huge stone entrance and a temple. One can get down on the other side to the village Walavihir little off the Ghoti upper Vaitarna road. A group of three adjoining hills, forming a semi circular basin along the Tringalwadi dam are also part of the Walavihir range. They are known as *Torna-Bhekri-Gabadya*. They are barren and without any fortification.

○ **Kavnai** (914 m —3000 ft)

An enjoyable outing near Ghoti, a little ahead of Igatpuri. Bifurcate from the Nasik main road at Khambala to the left on the road leading to upper Vaitarna. 3 km ahead is Vaki. A cart track leads towards the west col of Kavnai via Beturli. From the col, traverse at the base of the massif. A narrow chimney-like formation leads to the plateau. A small lake on the top. Village Kavnai and a big temple on the other side. Opposite Kavnai is the mass of *Daskon* (898 m —2946 ft) which has a tough route to the top. The sharp peak of Budhya near Vaki village is also a good proposition in the area. The temple of Kavnaidevi is famous in the region. The huge temple with kunds is a popular pilgrim place.

□ **Budhya** (880 m —2887 ft)

A sharp ridge falling steeply gives a peculiar shape to this hill. From Ghoti, ahead on the upper Vaitarna road, one sees this hill 6 km ahead. Near village Vaki, cross a small river and follow the steep ridge to the top.

○ **Dhoria** (926 m —3039 ft)

There are a group of small hills northwest of Kavnai. All these are good for scrambles and can be enjoyable after the monsoons, when flowers are in full bloom. Dhoria is the highest of the lot. From Ghoti walk ahead on the Nasik main road for 3 km to a bifurcation for upper Vaitarna. Take a bus or walk to village Bhavli (13 km) or Nagerli. The peak rising at the top of the semi-circular basin is Dhoria (6 km). One can descend on the other side to upper Vaitarna lake colony and then to village Devgaon on the Vaitarna lake. Another easier approach is from Igatpuri. Proceed to Tringalwadi dam and ahead across Walavihir to this range.

□ **Kanjangad** (707 m —2321 ft)

From Khodala village on the upper Vaitarna road from Ghoti, as above, reach village Shrighat or Devgaon at the foot of this hill. A rather small and very gentle climb of 3 km to the top. A cross-country walk with a view of Vaitarna dam to Dhoria could be enjoyable.

△ **Ghargad** (962 m —3155 ft)

Directly opposite Kavnai, one sees a small range of peaks comprising of the Ghargad range. Out of these, Ghargad is in the centre, is known and difficult to climb. The three peaks of the range can be done comfortably in a day. From Igatpuri, catch an early morning bus to Nasik and get down halfway at Wadhiware phata.

Proceed to the village, 2 km inside. Proceed to the centre of the Ghargad-Sansi range for 5 km to reach the foot. On the west (left) is *Aghera,* with a very easy route to the top. In the centre is Ghargad. The rocky staircase is blown off and a little rock climbing is to be undertaken to reach the top. A long tunnel under the Ghargad massif is a mystery. After descending, proceed to the east (right), all along the ridge, to *Ambli* a rocky peak. Excellent view of Trimbakeshwar region. A small thumb-like pinnacle on the left of Aghera, called Dangya, could be an interesting proposition. One can proceed to Anjaneri fort from this region.



Dangya Pinnacle

★ **Dangya**

This is a prominent pinnacle which is clearly visible from the road or train. Get down at Wadhiware as in Ghargad. Proceed to Dangya village on the extreme west (left) of the Aghera-Ghargad-Ambli range. A huge pinnacle of about 100 m comes to sight. A route is possible from the west. One can proceed ahead to Anjaneri fort.

☐ **Bahula** (956 m —3137 ft)

A square-topped mountain, across the road, opposite Ghargad. This peak is within the firing range of Artillery Centre at Devlali and should not be approached without prior permission of the military authorities. From Wadhiware or a little ahead, from Ambe Bahula on the Igatpuri-Nasik road, proceed eastwards. It is an easy scramble up this broken and barren hill.

The Sahyadris are at their best south of Igatpuri. This region includes some of the highest forts, with the most interesting fortifications. To survey the fantastic panorama from their tops is a rare treat. For climbers, this region provides many fascinating and difficult propositions. Most of these forts have caves and water cisterns to allow climbers to spend comfortable nights. These places normally involve 2 to 3 days' hikes and one can get down by high passes into the Konkan, about 750 m below, to return to Bombay.



Kulang and Madangad from Alang

○ **Talegaon Fort** (813 m —2668 ft)

This is a small hill a little before you approach Igatpuri by road or rail. It overlooks the Kasara ghats and with its easy climb is an excellent outing for rainy or cooler days. From Igatpuri walk back on the road to a petrol pump. Bifurcate south (left) to village Talegaon (3 km). The fort is nearby. A very gentle descent of the ghats leads to the village Talewadi in the Konkan below. A river is to be crossed, which may be flooded during heavy rains. From Talewadi, walk to Laxmiwadi on the main road and then back to Kasara by the road or railway.

△ **Kulang** (1470 m —4822 ft)

As the train reaches Igatpuri station, one can see a huge massif of

mountains towards the south. The most prominent among them is Kulang. Standing at the edge of the ghats, it commands a fabulous view all round and the tough climb is amply rewarded by a most fascinating sunset. Kulang offers one of the highest of climbs from its base to the top. From Igatpuri, walk on the main road to north, out of the town. From the first railway crossing, walk on the metalled road to Pimpri-Sadarden (2 km) and ahead to Bhavli (4 km). From here, though the cart track continues, it is advisable to take the short cut by climbing on the left for Kulangwadi (6 km). (A 30 m waterfall ahead of Bhavli is highly recommended for a visit after the monsoon). The route goes along the Darna river. Darna river runs down to Pimpri village and on to Beale lake. From Kulangwadi, one sees two mountains in front. The one on the west (right) is *Chhota Kulang* and the one in the centre is Kulang. Madangad and Alang are on the east (left). A small track from Kulangwadi slowly climbs up towards Kulang. Traversing the forest, it gradually climbs up to the upper plateau. There are two routes to this upper plateau. The shorter one climbs up a nala to the southwest, between Kulang and Chhota Kulang. Then traverse to east to the base of the final rocky staircase. The other route skirts a prominent rocky-nose to climb up from the valley at the foot of Kulang and Madangad in the south. Both the routes meet at the upper plateau. A skyline ridge jutting out from the massif, has steps carved out and leads to the top. It is a very steep and exhausting climb. A huge cave with water cisterns nearby. No firewood.

The view is the finest in Sahyadris. It covers Mahuli, Kalsubai group, all the peaks of Igatpuri area and up to Nane Ghat and Sidhhagad. Almost 50 mountain-tops and places can be counted. The huge rocky terrain, falling steeply to the Konkan presents a grand sight. A grand view of Chhota Kulang is obtained. This mountain seems very difficult to approach. The final climb from its col with Kulang will be a good challenge. It does not seem to have been climbed. If one is not proceeding to Alang, then return by the same route, which is the nearest.

★ Madangad

This is a difficult fortress. Its square high massif can be recognised by a huge hole on its western (extreme right hand) top. In fact the top is above the hole and standing up there, one gets a feeling as if standing on a void. Some of the steps of the staircase leadings up the fort have been blown up. A steep rock face of about 20 m has to be climbed to enter the fort proper. Proceed from Igatpuri to Kulangwadi as in Kulang. Ahead, instead of bifurcating to the west (right) proceed on the cart track almost to Ambewadi. Turn south to



Madangad

climb to the col between Alang and Madangad. A very narrow and exposed track traverses back to the base of the massif. A broad rocky staircase then leads to the bottom of the rock climbing wall. There is a hold carved out in the rock at the top of the climb, which is good for fixing a rope. Further ahead, steps lead to a broad plateau with a huge cave and water. Excellent view of neighbouring Alang. It is easier to descend by rappelling down. One must be experienced and careful whilst climbing this fortress. Return journey can be on the same route, or from Ghatghar further south after visiting Alang.

★ **Alang** (1479 m —4852 ft)

This is a fortress of very great natural strength. It can be called, from the hiker's view point, the 'fort of traverses'. Three-fourth of the fort has to be traversed, at least 3 times at different levels to reach the top. A series of water cisterns arranged in a semi-circular fashion on the top is a unique sight. An excellent view of the neighbouring Kalsubai. From Igatpuri-Kulangwadi, reach the col between Alang-Madangad. Descend on the east (left), over rocky slabs to the thick forest. Flat traverse to reach almost the end of the massif.

A series of dry water ponds and a giant cracked-rock is a marker to turn into a nala for the final climb from the plateau.



Alang: Water-tanks

A narrow track up the nala leads to a small gully. An easy rock climb supported by a wooden tree (*bichki*) and one enters the second level of the fort. Another long, flat and sometimes exposed traverse to the extreme end towards Madangad. A huge cave is situated here. Above the cave, another long traverse gradually climbs up to the top. The summit is peculiarly shaped with two small domes. Water cisterns and a small temple situated at the base of the summit hump. For return, descend to the lower thick forest and proceed back to Igatpuri, or descend ahead to Ghatghar on the south. From Ghatghar return by the bus road to Wilson Dam, via Udhavne (30 km), or descend 600 m down to Konkan via Sakurdi ghat to Sakurdi (10 km) for buses to Shahpur and Asangaon. Ratangad can also be climbed from Ghatghar. Ahead from Samrad village also one can descend by Karoli ghat to the Konkan.

○ **Mhordan** (1052 m —3452 ft)

On the way to Wilson Dam or Taked by bus, one comes across the hill of Mhordan. Above the road, there is a long and about 60 m high rock wall. This could be excellent for rcok climbing. Situated very near to the bus head, this hill could form a good day outing. From Igatpuri, take a bus going to Taked or towards Wilson Dam. Get

down at Pimpalgaon or a little ahead at the bifurcation to Taked. The hill is an easy scramble up on the south (right). Excellent view of Beale lake.

○ **Katlia** (970 m —3185 ft)

A small hill in front of Mhordan. A small, but beautiful temple on the top. It is an easy scramble and one can be down in about 2 hours even whilst waiting for a bus. Same base approaches as Mhordan.

○ **Beale Lake** (Darna Dam)

This is an artificial lake very conveniently situated for a small outing. There is a huge dam and the surrounding small hills are good for a scramble. The lake extends from the dam, near the railway lines between Asavli and Lahavit in the north to the base of Mhordan in the south. From Asavli railway station, a bus road leads to Nandgaon on the lake (6 km). One can climb the small hill of *Hatni* (715 m —2346 ft), 10 km away to the west. The village Sakur is across the dam, from where the temple of *Khandoba* (662 m —2173 ft) can be visited. The Nasik main road bifurcates 5 km ahead of Wadhiware to Asavli and to the lake.

THE KALSUBAI RANGE

While the main range of the Sahyadris proceeds from north to south, from Kulang to Ajoba, an important range jutts out from west to east, from Kalsubai to Patta fort. This range goes parallel to the Kavnai and Ghargad range and to the south of the railway line. These are high and well-known peaks.

○ **Kalsubai** (1646 m —5400 ft)

With a height of 1646 m, this is the highest peak of the western ghats and Maharashtra. It is beautifully shaped and commands a fantastic view. The small temple of devi Kalsubai at the top is legendary and receives many pilgrims. For hikers, this is a simple mountain to climb. A bus from Igatpuri to Bhandardara halts at Bari village, at the foot of the mountain and at a height of 792 m. An easy route leads to an upper plateau with water. The top is rocky and one can see distant peaks in all directions. For a change, a route from the plateau traverses the mountain on the other side, to descend to Udhavne (10 km) which is served by buses to Bhandardara (16 km on road) and from here by bus to Igatpuri.

An adjoining hill (western edge) also has a conical shape, similar to Kalsubai. It is 1580 m —5185 ft and approachable by a connecting col with Kalsubai.

☐ **Kirda** (1516 m —4975 ft)

This is the hill between Alang and Kalsubai. It has a huge plateau at its base. It can be approached from Udhavne village by one of the southern ridges.

☐ **Pandhra** (1450 m —4756 ft)

Pandhra, 'the white mountain', is a high peak, directly opposite Kalsubai. It is rather uninviting with barren slopes and no shade or water anywhere. In summer, it appears absolutely white with heat. From Igatpuri, proceed by Bhandardara bus to Bari village or a little ahead to Waranghushi phata. From either of these places, it is a long and tiring scramble to the summit. However, one is rewarded with excellent views all around.

★ **Shenit Pinnacle** (*c.* 900 m — *c.* 2960 ft)

A 60 m pinnacle standing prominently at the saddle of Bitangad. With valleys on two sides, it stands very isolated. It would be a difficult rock climb from the east (facing Bitangad). From Igatpuri, reach Waranghushi by a bus. Walk to Shenit village (13 km), the route passing at the foot of Pandhra all along. On the road from Shenit to Bitangi village, the isolated pinnacle comes in view after 6 km, as you reach the saddle. Quite firm rock all along but also some scree. It could also be approached from Taked via Bitangi in the opposite direction.

☐ **Bitangad** (1085 m —3560 ft)

Situated in a rather remote place is the small hill fort of Bitangad. It is an easy walk to the top, with a cave and water at its base. The long approach to Bitangi (Bitanwadi) village at the base is via Igatpuri, Waranghushi-Shenit-Bitangi. This approach is suitably combined with Kalsubai range, and is a rather flat walk. The short approach would be from Igatpuri by bus to Taked. A good track of about 10 km via Maidara, leads to Bitangi. This village is very picturesque and is situated at the edge of the plateau. The fort is about one hour's walk from here. Mahankal is also easily climbed from here.

☐ **Mahankal** (1427 m —4682 ft)

A huge grassy mountain, with long easy ridges next to Bitangad. The base village is Bitangi, with the same approach as in Bitangad. A good view, but there is no water and it could be very hot. From Bitangi, proceed ahead to Ekdara in the north to continue to Patta-Avandh forts or to the south for Shenit pinnacle-Kalsubai.

☐ **Patta Fort** (1390 m —4562 ft)

One of the most interesting and towering forts. It has a huge plateau



Bitangad: Kalsubai behind

on the top, complete with a series of water cisterns and two fairly large caves. It was also called *Vishramgadh* or *Bara Gavancha Mal* (place of 12 villages). On the extreme southern end, there is a hall in a fairly good condition. The weather is always very pleasant here even in summer, as the plateau is on an average 1000 m high. An excellent view from the narrow summit. Two principal approaches to Patta are: (a) From Lahavit railway station (before Devlali) walk down on the railway tracks, bifurcating on the south (right) follow a cart track and cross over Darna river bridge to Shenit. Beyond cross Kadwa river to Belu. Here onwards, the route via Girwadi is long, but gentle and broad. Girwadi is also served by buses from Nasik (Bhagur to Igatpuri). The other route from Ninavi, is steep, but enjoyable and shorter. Both routes meet at the base of Avandh, which could be visited on the way. A long arm of Patta meets the Avandh plateau. From this plateau, a narrow track leads from the east to gradually climb up the ridge of Patta ad enter the walls of the fort. A long walk on the upper plateau and one reaches caves almost in line with the summit hump. (b) The second approach is from the bus head at Taked to climb up to Ekdara (10 km) and then to Vaithakwadi (5 km) at the base of the fort. (c) A shorter route is to proceed from Taked, to Adsure dam and climb up the ghats to Konkanwadi, at the base of the fort. An easy climb up. The route from Bitangad also joins at Ekdara by traversing all along the high

plateau. Avandh and Aad fort should be combined with a hike to Patta fort.

A motorable road is now almost ready to go up the ghats; from Taked to Pattawadi and will join it to Akola.

★ **Avandh** (1319 m —4329 ft)

A prominent huge rock massif, standing next to Patta fort. It has high walls and a narrow summit. The steps to the top are blown off and, at many places, one has to resort to rock climbing. This peak was probably used as a watch tower. Avandh is best approached from Ninavi or Girwadi, as in Patta fort. A track leads to the base of the rocky massif, from where rock climbing starts. A small cave near the top and a fantastic view of Patta fort.

○ **Aad Fort** (1233 m —4046 ft)

This is a gentle fort, situated on the same plateau as Avandh-Patta. It is to the east of Avandh. It is very easy to reach and climb. Aadwadi village is situated on top of the plateau. The base village Tirdhe is situated almost between the route from Avandh and Patta. It is best approached from either of these two huge forts, for a small outing. Approaches to Tirdhe village are the same as for Patta, from Ninavi or Girwadi.

○ **Mhasoba-Chainnagiri** (1273 m —4178 ft)

Two flat topped hills in line with Avandh and Aad fort. Approach village Tirdhe at its base as in Avandh-Patta. Easy to climb, with a temple at the top.

○ **Adsure Dam**

As one descends from Patta to Konkanwadi village and down on way to Taked bus head, this lake comes in view. It is 3 km from Taked and between two ridges coming from the Patta plateau.

THE BALESHWAR RANGE

Strictly speaking, this area is the continuation of the Southern range, going southwards beyond the Kalsubai range. But as all the treks to this region start from Wilson Dam (Bhandardara) and many of the hills are overlooking this lake, it is given as a separate section.

○ **Bhandardara Lake** (729 m —2393 ft)

A huge lake also known as *Wilson Dam*. Village Shendi is near the dam. A ring of high and beautiful hills surround the lake. A boat ride could be enjoyable, or one can stay at the Holiday Home and climb the various surrounding places. Approached by direct buses from Igatpuri.



Avandh and Mhasoba



Patta (Vishramgad)

○ **Chomdev**

An isolated 50 m high pinnacle. It is on a small hillock. On the bus to Bhandardara get down at Waranghushi phata and proceed to the village. Ahead to Babarvandi (6 km). The pinnacle is 3 km ahead. Buses also reach Babarvandi.

○ **Randha Falls** (702 m —2303 ft)

On the motorable road from Bhandardara to Rajur, one comes across this site of 50 m waterfall. It is a magnificent site, except that it is barren. Katalpur is 3 km up.

□ **Sindola** (1395 m —4577 ft)

As seen from Bhandardara lake, straight in line with the dam wall in the southeast is Sindola. A good climb above Mutkhel. Next three hills mentioned below are a good day's scramble with Wilson Dam as the base.

□ **Muda** (1520 m —4986 ft)

A dome shaped hill nex to Ghanchakkar. Best approached from Mutkhel. A sharp climb on a barren ridge leads to the top. Can also be approached from the road to Ambit from Shirpunje.

□ **Wakri** (1195 m —3920 ft)

Another high hill southwest of Muda. Same approach to its base as to Muda.

○ **Asawla** (1275 m —4184 ft)

A hilltop near Rajur, ahead of Wilson Dam. A little before Rajur and ahead of Malegaon phata get down where the road climbs to the highest col before descent to Rajur. Easy two hour walk to the top. Excellent view.

□ **Ghanchakkar** (1532 m —5028 ft)

This is a complicated hill, with many ridges and walls on all different sides. May be it derives its peculiar name from its shape. It is a place full of crystals and, if too many parties have not already collected them, one can also find some beautiful stones. The hill stands on the range coming from Kathra towards Wilson Dam. The 2 principal approaches to it are from the north (Bhandardara lake side). Get down at Shendi (Wilson Dam). Walk across the dam to Mutkhel (6 km). Climb up a steep col behind the village to the shoulder of Ghanchakkar (5 km). A good rock climb and one reaches the final slopes. Or from the col descend to Shirpunje village (5 km) in south to join the easier route.

The southern route is easy but longer. Proceed by bus to Malegaon

phata. An unmetalled motorable road leads to Dhamanvan and Shirpunje at the base (13 km). A long plod up the barren slopes to the top (4 km). One can also get down at Randha falls and climb up to Katalpur (3 km) and reach Shirpunje. From Shirpunje, one may proceed to Ambit-Pachnai for Harishchandragad or climb adjoining Muda or Wakri.



Ajoba from Ratangad

☐ **Ratangad** (1297 m —4255 ft)

As the name suggests, this is a 'jewel' among the forts in the region. It is an interesting fortress, situated at the edge of the ghats with numerous water cisterns and caves. It also commands an excellent view all around, overlooking the Konkan plains, Bhandardara lake, Alang, Kulang and the huge wall of Ajoba. From Bhandardara lake, walk across the dam to Mutkhel. Usually a boat is available here to ferry across an arm of the lake to Ratanwadi. A steady uphill climb of about 4 hours leads to the top. One has to negotiate a small chimney to enter the fort. A thumb-like pinnacle *(Khunta of Ratangad)* facing Alang at 1230 m —4037 ft, is an interesting proposition. After a descent from the fort, one can proceed to Kathra and Ajoba or on the other side return to Ghatghar or Samrad villages. From here a route leads back to Bhandardara via Udhavne (30 km) or one can descend to the Konkan plains via Karoli ghat to Sakurdi village (13 km) for a bus.

☐ **Kathra** (1406 m —4614 ft)

A well-trodden cart track from Ghatghar passes at the base of Ratangad. It climbs up to a col and descends on the south to Kumshet village. From this col, Kathra is a flat walk up of about 60 m. It is between Ratangad and Ajoba and, being higher than both, commands an excellent view. The top otherwise has little to offer and this mountain is best tackled whilst on the way between Ajoba and Ratangad.



Ajoba

△ **Ajoba** (1375 m —4511 ft)

This 'grand father' of the ghats is one of the most prominent mountains. Its one side is a steep and straight drop of about 1200 m into the Konkan plains. It almost jutts out from the main range of the ghats. The view from the top covers a wide and varied panorama. It has many approaches, but it always takes a day's trekking to reach its base. The approach from Bhandardara lake is via Mutkhel and

Kalthembe village (10 km). Join the cart track coming from Ghatghar at the base of Ratangad. Pass the col of Kathra and descend to Kumshet village at the base (19 km). From here, a very tricky route zig-zags on the lower slopes and ultimately reaches the base of a huge and long wall. Traversing it at the base, leads naturally inside the huge upper plateau with water and long grassy slopes. The top is narrow with a fantastic view. Another approach to its base is from the Malegaon phata to Shirpunje (13 km, see Ghanchakkar). A bifurcation a little before descending to Ambit village, leads to Kumshet, another 13 km. Kumshet and Pachnai (base of Harishchandragad) are also directly connected through a forested route. The routes from Kumshet lead down to Konkan. One via Dara ghat between Ajoba and Kathra would join the route from Karoli ghat and lead to Sakurdi (24 km). Dara ghat route is not in use and follows a nala and is bad. Another exciting route to Konkan is to climb down straight near the village. It is a very steep and exposed route with bits of rock climbing and lots of loose scree. After a long and difficult descent, it reaches Kundawadi in the plains. This is called Pathardi ghat and is 5 km long and difficult. An imposing view of Napta on the way. Walk to Talegaon (14 km) for a bus to Kalyan or Shahpur.

A temple of Ajoba dev about half way up from Konkan plains is a good site. From Shahpur reach Sakurdi by bus and ahead to Dehne village (5 km). A climb up the ridge leads to the temple up the cliffs. It is under the wall of Ajoba.

☐ **Ghodishep** (861 m —2825 ft)

A sharp projection from the ghats gives a peculiar shape and a grand view of Napta Dongar. A projection in the southeast, down in Konkan is called *Dadar Dongar* and is a good site to view from here.

The approach is from Kumshet village to go across Mula river to southwest 5 km. The high point is *Komda Dongar* and to its west is Ghodishep, along the plateau.





Napta and Bhairoba Dongar from Sakurdi ghat

MALSHEJ GHAT REGION



Nane Ghat

THIS region covers an area from Harishchandragad, upto Bhimashankar. It constitutes one of the most rugged and inaccessible part of the Sahyadris. All along the western edge, it drops, on an average, 1000 m into the Konkan, while to the east, lies the Deccan plateau. Apart from a continuous north-south range at the edge, there are at least three major east-west ranges, each with high forts of historical importance.

The approach is easy with the road passing from Kalyan-Murbad-Moroshi —up the Malshej ghat to Khubi and Otur. Here another main road joins it. One may get down at various places on this road or go off this road to approach hills. Many feeder roads also go deep inside these valleys. However, there can be various combinations to suit the time available and the desired objectives.

The main road head on the Deccan plateau, for this region, is Junnar. Junnar has direct night bus services from Bombay and early morning services from Pune, which are convenient. Bus approaches

from the Konkan are from Kalyan or Karjat to Murbad and onwards to major road heads at Mhasa, Dhasai and Tokavde.

Buses also ply on Junnar-Ghatghar (Kukdi valley), Junnar-Amboli (Mina valley) and Narayangaon—towards Ahupe (Ghori valley).

THE MALSHEJ VALLEY

○ Malshej Ghat

This is one of the old trade routes connecting Thitbi in the Konkan to Khubi on the ghats. This road is now motorable from Kalyan-Murbad-Tokavde-Savarne-Malshej to Otur on the Deccan plateau. Malshej will be a convenient road head for Harishchandragad, Karkai Dongar and the rest. A rest house at the edge of the ghats is a good place to stay at Malshej.



Bhairavgad



On way to Harishchandragad

★ Bhairavgad (864 m —2835 ft)

As you travel along the Malshej ghat road, one notices the sharp

pinnacle of Bhairavgad, separated from the main range. It rises steeply from the Konkan plains and is rather tricky to climb. A prominent and unique fort. Proceed by bus from Kalyan-Murbad-Vaishakhare towards Malshej. Before the ghats, get down at Moroshi. Skirt the northern flank of Bhairavgad to arrive at the pass between the main range of the Deccan plateau and Bhairavgad. From here steps lead up to the pinnacle. The walls overhang a little, and above, the steps are blown off. One will have to rock climb carefully above the overhang. Further crumbling steps and plenty of scree before reaching the top. Great view of Malshej Ghat, Nane Ghat and many prominent peaks like Ajoba, Harishchandragad. It is advisable to go well prepared for the rock climb.

☐ **Harishchandragad** (1424 m —4671 ft)

Situated in a remote region, this is one of the mightiest of hill forts. The hill top is an irregular table-land of about 5 km across. On the top, a km to the east of the summit, is the Bale Killa, with decaying walls and blown up cisterns. This hill top has a large water reservoir and a long chain of Brahmanical caves. There is a beautiful temple with water and shelter. Next to the temple is a huge carved-out room with a ling in the centre of water. About 2 km to the northwest, on the top, is Konkan Kada. It is a huge semi-circular rock wall of about 400 m and a most frightening sight. A light object thrown from the top is blown up by the strong wind from the semi-circular basin. The actual top is about 100 m further up from the temple and commands a view of the Nane Ghat region.

From the road of Malshej Ghat this hill fort is easy to approach. From Kalyan-Murbad-Vaishakhare, a bus road leads up the Malshej ghat to Khubi. Bifurcate to Khireshwar. A broad path from here goes up a forested gully to Tolar Khind near Bale Killa. The climb straight up from the Tolar Khind to the fort is little tricky, particularly in the monsoons. The easier way is to traverse ahead to join the route from Panchnai. A flat walk to the temple. But, to hikers, the long route from Malegaon phata, in the north is the most enjoyable (see Ghanchakkar). Walk to village Ambit (19 km) via Dhamanvan and Shirpunje. A further descent to reach the Mula river which is a most beautiful site among forests. In the monsoons Mula is difficult to ford but later it is a grand site with pools and lakes. A sturdy climb and a traverse of 10 km to reach Panchnai village at the base. Another steady, long climb leads to the temple at the top (6 km). One can descend by Sadhle Ghat.



Harishchandragad in rains

△ **Sadhle Ghat**

This is one of the ferocious routes descending from the top of Harishchandragad to Konkan plains. A ridge at the extreme western end leads to a rocky descent and a traverse on grass to the lower plateau. Cross to a depression in a ridge on the west (left). This is Sadhle Ghat. Route passes over boulders and between huge enclosing walls. After a descent of about 150 m bifurcate on the north (right) to a scree route down to Kelewadi (of village Belpada, 12 km). Climb a small pass ahead to Mudholwadi and another pass to Umbroli and Talegaon for a bus (20 km).

△ **Napta** (1204 m —3949 ft)

It is a prominent rocky projection at the edge of the ghats. It is sharp, nose-like and difficult to climb. Reach Panchnai village as in Harishchandragad. Straight ahead at the edge of the plateau, lies Napta. Scree and rock to the top. Fantastic view.

Another approach is from Konkan involving steep climb but more convenient. From Kalyan-Murbad-Malshej road, reach Savarne before the road climbs up to Malshej Ghat. Proceed to Belpada, 6 km at the foot of the ghats. Climb steeply on the track leading to Panchnai. Turn to north at the edge of the ghats to climb Napta.

A spectacular projection, *Bhairoba Dongar* (1151 m —3777 ft) is a grand site in the north on way to Napta.

☐ **Karkai Dongar** (1488 m —4883 ft)

From Malshej, proceed on the road to Khireshwar or Kolhewadi (via Khubi) near the base of this fort in the south. The top is a huge plateau with triangular peaks. A fabulous view of the southern ranges is available. This is a twin humped hill top, both points higher than the famous neighbour Harishchandragad. The eastern top is Ambedara while the western summit is Karkai Dongar. A temple and village on the upper plateau. Another approach is from Khireshwar and proceeds east from Tolar Khind.

☐ **Ambedara** (1428 m —4684 ft)

The eastern plateau of Karkai Dongar range. From the Malshej-Otur road, get off at Pimpalgaon. Climb up the plateau in the north to go across to Jambushi village 8 km, across Pushpavati river, 2 km ahead is Amedara village at 1020 m —3346 ft (4 km). Steep dome shaped summit with a temple is further 4 km.

From Pimpalgaon one can proceed south across Ar nadi for Hadsar fort.

THE NANE GHAT VALLEY

The valley leading from Junnar to Ghatghar-Nane Ghat, has many forts: Junnar-Ghatghar are connected by a bus road and on the way are convenient road heads to visit the ranges in the north and south of the road.

○ **Shivneri** (1018 m —3342 ft)

Situated about 3 km from Junnar, this is one of the important historical landmarks in the region. This fortress was the birth place of Shivaji and it carries many reminders from history. It has a huge arch at the entrance and many well-preserved fortifications. It rises from a three-cornered base of about 250 m from the plains and commands the town of Junnar. Its long and wavy ridge is marked from miles around by the arch which stands out against the sky between the minarets of a mosque. The triangular shape of this hill is of some geographical interest.

○ **Hadsar (Worade)** (1428 m —4687 ft)

This fort forms the eastern end of the Junnar range. From Junnar, catch a bus to Khamgaon (13 km). Walk across the valley to Godre on the north (6 km), which is the base village. A gentle climb leads to the grassy top. A temple and water on the summit. It has two distinct triangular shaped tops. The fort is joined to Hatkeshwar in

the west. It can also be approached from Pimpalgaon or Madh from the Malshej road, via Kolwadi. It is also known as *Parvatgad*.

○ **Hatkeshwar** (1251 m —4105 ft)

The conical top of this hill fort is very distinctive. It adjoins Hadsar in the east and has excellent views, open grounds and a temple. From Junnar, one can reach Rajur by bus or on foot. Going across the valley to the north, village Bokadwadi is at the base of the fort (5 km). One may have to ferry across Kukdi lake or proceed on the northern bank from the Manikdoh dam (Rajur dam). A gentle climb. Approach from the Malshej road is from Madh to Shitewadi (5 km) and to the summit via Josewadi (5 km). The range continues to the west from Hatkeshwar.

☐ **Nimgiri** (1108 m —3635 ft)

A small hill which came into news due to a plane crash on its slopes. Reach Rajur from Junnar. Proceed northwards to Khindwadi via Nimgir. The Kukdi lake will have to be crossed in a ferry or across the dam at Rajur. Easy ridge walk to the top. The route from base village Khindwadi, leads across a pass, on to the northern side to Borwadi and Khubi (15 km) on the Malshej road, thus forming an important internal pass between the two villages. It is also an alternate route to climb Nimgiri.

☐ **Dev-Dandya** (1295 m —4248 ft)

Lying on the edge of the ghats, to the west of Nimgiri, is the hill of Dev-Dandya, a hike to which could be combined with the former.

View from Dhakoba: Nane ghat and Jivdhan



From Ghatghar, walk onwards to Talewadi (4 km). To the north is Ajanawle (4 km). Lake waters will have to be ferried across. From here, one can easily climb this hill. Excellent view of Bhairavgad on the west, in the Konkan.

☐ **Bhagaria** (1308 m —4292 ft)

This imposing hill stands at the edge of the ghats, overlooking the Konkan plains. It is the westernmost point of this range. It can be climbed by a long and arduous route from Ajanawle, which is also the base for Dev-Dandya. The route (10 km) climbs through an imposing gully to the barren and rocky top.

○ **Chawand** (1065 m —3495 ft)

This hill fort lies to the south of the Junnar-Rajur road. From Rajur, one has to proceed to Chawandwadi at the base of this ruined and dismantled fort. The chief strength of Chawand lies in its great natural defences. It is conical in shape and a prominent landmark. The deep narrow precipice near the summit is an interesting rock climbing proposition. However, the rock steps lead to the top and it is an easy scramble from the village. On the top is a small shrine of Chawandbai and the whole hill is considered sacred in the region. Water supply is good and perennial.

○ **Jivdhan** (1145 m —3754 ft)

An important historical fort standing at the edge of the ghats. To the west, its walls drop a sheer 1000 m into the Konkan. It has a prominent isolated pillar, about 60 m high, known as Vanar Lingi



(Monkey's Point). It is popularly also known as *Khada Parsi*. It commands an excellent view across the Nane Ghat. The main gate towards Nane Ghat is completely blown off. The top has five cisterns and Mohammedan constructions. The caves have ankle deep ashes, which are believed to be those of the grains burnt in 1818. From Junnar-Rajur, proceed to Ghatghar. It is about 5 km from Ghatghar to the top. The path is mostly blown away, but has many foot and finger holds, artificially made. With its grand view, historical importance and commanding position Jivdhan is an interesting fort to visit.

○ **Nane Ghat (Pass)** (830 m —2724 ft)

This sheer cliff is a well-known land mark, very clearly visible from the Konkan. The walls of this pass jutt-out from the main range and hence command a magnificent view of the great bend in the Sahyadri. To the north; one can have a view of Kalsubai, to the south; is Bhimashankar, to the northeast; is Harishchandragad, and to the northwest; is Mahuli, across the Konkan plains, with its cleft shattered pinnacles. To the southwest; behind Sidhhagad, are seen the level tops of Matheran, the great comb-like rock of Chanderi and the pinnacles of Haji Malang are also visible. This is a pass, which, once in history, enjoyed prime importance. At the Nane Ghat, the inscriptions, steps, rock-cut rest houses, cisterns show that as far back as the 1st century B.C., this route was frequently used. Even now, it carries heavy trade traffic. From Ghatghar, which is the last road head from Junnar, one has to walk 6 km to reach the pass. Good water and caves with excellent views. A broad route gently leads down to the Konkan, and then a flat walk to Vaishakhare and Tokavde (14 km). Adjoining in the southwest is *Gone Ghat* which is very steep and not used. One can see the marks of blasting of rocks, as a road was intended to be made here.

○ **Ganapatigarad**

This is a beautiful rock temple situated 3 km southwest of Nane Ghat and is about one-third way up to the face of the cliff. Local legend is that this is an underground passage to Junnar. 3 km further south of this temple is the Tringa or Tirgun Dhara ghat which is steep and can be climbed with difficulty.

○ **Kukdi Lake**

A dam built on the Kukadi river which supplies water to almost the whole valley, by this lake. It is near the motorable road at Rajur and continues upto almost Ghatghar. It is known as Manikdoh or Rajur dam.

This area constitutes the southern valleys of this region. Most of the forts are situated on the crest of the Sahyadri and offer grand views. But the real difficulty is of travel to the base due to necessary bus changes and distances.

☐ **Amboli Ghat**

This pass lies to the south of Nane valley. It leads from Amboli on the ghats, down to the Konkan. It has a very sheer drop and is rather tricky to descend. One has to walk about 12 km in the Konkan from the base of this pass, to reach Dhasai, where buses are available. Dhasai is 6 km off the Malshej road from Umbroli phata. One can enjoy excellent views of distant ranges and of Nane Ghat. There is a direct road to Amboli from Junnar, on which buses are available. Another approach is from Chawand and Kukdeshwar.

○ **Kukdeshwar**

This is a small temple, beautifully situated on the way from Chawandwadi to Amboli, to the south. It has excellent wood and rock carvings and it is a treat to study its beautifully shaped doors. From Chawandwadi, walk to Pur (6 km). The temple is at the outskirts.

○ **Narayangad** (875 m —2872 ft)

A broad plateau with historical importance. It is situated overlooking Mina river valley, about 11 km from Narayangaon. From the Junnar-Narayangaon road, bifurcate at Nakkatwadi to Hivde on the Mina river (6 km). Ahead to the base village Kharwandi. Gentle climb to the top.

△ **Dhakoba** (1264 m —4148 ft)

This prominent hill stands at the edge of the range, overlooking the Konkan on the west and over the Mina valley to Junnar on the east. It commands one of the finest views and has a sheer drop of 1100 m to the Konkan. From Junnar, proceed to Amboli by bus. The route winds through the forest for 8 km to reach the flat top. Another approach is to reach by bus from Kalyan-Murbad to Dhasai in the Konkan and then climb up via Amboli ghat. It can also be visited from the south, coming from Ahupe and Durga Killa. An excellent temple half-way below the top, at 1109 m —3640 ft, from where the Mina river originates as per the local beliefs. A track directly descends to the Amboli ghat from the top of Dhakoba. Walk along the edge and steep rock step descends in a fearsome manner to the khind.

☐ **Durga Killa** (1175 m —3855 ft)

Situated half-way between Amboli and Ahupe ghat, this hill is necessarily long and inconvenient to approach. But, the surrounding beauty and isolation are very inviting. It has a small square top amidst dense forest. A small temple surrounded by forest at its base is a beautiful place where one can spend a night. From Ahupe, a cart track leads to Mangliwadi and Hatwij (16 km). A long descent and a subsequent climb to Durgawadi (6 km). Walking along the plateau of Durgawadi, the base is about 5 km. From here, one can proceed to climb Dhakoba and descend via Amboli ghat.

A very steep path leads down directly from Durgawadi and Hatwij to the Konkan. It is Kuthe-cha-ghat which reaches Khadakwadi near Dhasai over a very exposed route.

☐ **Tirangi Ghat**

Popularly known as Doni-cha-ghat. It leads from Dhasai to Madh (2 km) and up the ghats to Doni village or Umberwadi. It is a very steep and exhausting climb and during the monsoons the route passes near a grand waterfall. From Umberwadi; Hatwij is in north and Ahupe in the south.

○ **Ahupe Ghat**

This is a gentle pass which connects Dehri-Khopivli in the Konkan to Ahupe village on the ghats. It is a beautiful climb amidst thick forest. This is a good pass for climbing Damdamia-Bhimashankar in the south and Durga Killa-Dhakoba in the north. Catch a bus from Kalyan via Murbad to Mhasa and to Dehri and climb up to the pass (10 km).

Sidhhagad and Gorakhgad-Machhindra can also be climbed from Dehri.

○ **Damdamia** (1008 m —3307 ft)

This is a high point on the edge of the ghats. From Ahupe walk west-southwest across the plateau to its top (16 km). This hill is almost in a straight line with Sidhhagad in the Konkan and has an excellent view of it.

○ **Ghonemal** (1013 m —3325 ft)

Another high point on the edge of the ghats south of Ahupe. It can also be approached from Bhimashankar. Walk cross country from Ahupe for about 16 km, on the edge of the ghats to reach the top. Gaondewadi, which is the base village, is 10 km from Ahupe. A further 6 km to reach the top. River Ghori is to be crossed on the way.



Gorakhgad



Machhindragad

○ **Talegad** (1072 m—3516 ft)

A small hill with a good temple. About 22 km before Bhimashankar, on the road coming from Ghod, get down at Talegaon. A gentle walk leads to the temple at the top, in the southwest.

☐ **Gorakhgad** (651 m —2137 ft)

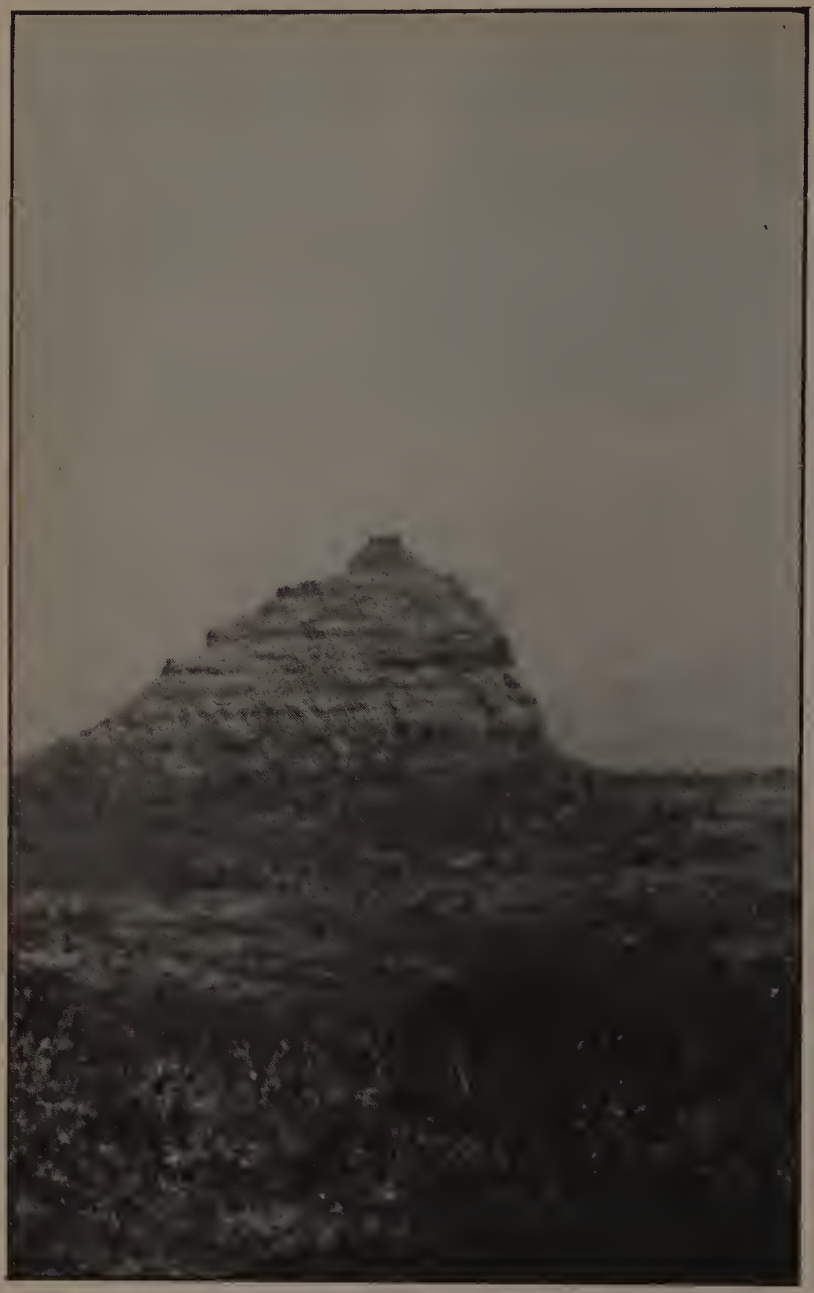
A sharp pinnacle separated from the main range. It has a huge cave at the base with good water. A good rock staircase leads to the top. From Kalyan or Karjat, reach Murbad by bus. Another bus to Dehri or Khopivli (10 km). Easy route to the caves at the base.

★ **Machhindra**

An isolated rock-pinnacle with a connecting ridge to Gorakhgad. It has a rocky top and is rather difficult to climb. One must go prepared for a rock climb. Approach via the connecting ridge of Gorakhgad and scramble up the initial scree. The actual climb is of about 30 m. Ahupe ghat is nearby and leads to the Deccan plateau.

☐ **Sidhhagad** (982 m —3223 ft)

A square massif, standing very prominently away from the main range and a conspicuous landmark from a distance. Travel from Kalyan or Karjat to Murbad by bus. Another bus to Narivli or to Tulai (11 km). The route then climbs up and passes what is locally known as Tungi of Sidhhagadhwadi (13 km). From the village, which is on the upper level, the route leads up rather steeply and traverses the whole massif to reach the flat top. From Siddhagadhwadi, one can get down the southern side to reach Kotwal Smarak. Freedom fighter Kotwal was shot at this spot by the British.



Tung

LONAVLA REGION



Korigad

THIS region is conveniently situated from a hiker's view point. Many convenient evening or night trains, or buses reach Lonavla. Many beautiful and gentle places are accessible from here. The train and motor road to Pune passes past a host of hills and lakes. Unlike other regions, one can hike here in heavy monsoon as the hills are gentle and long plateau walks are involved. Lonavla is one of the places where the Western Ghats have a motorable road passing through, known as Bhor Ghat. Of late, the region immediately near Lonavla has become very popular for hikers because of its easy accessibility.

THE RAJMACHI AREA

The area north of Lonavla in which lie the twin peaks of Rajmachi fort is extremely popular with trekkers. Some of the places are visited often and in large numbers. There are some gentle hill forts and large lakes and all approaches are almost long, level walks.

○ **Tungarli Lake**

A small lake owned by the railways. From Lonavla follow the

Tungarli road, which is motorable. The road passes beneath the dam. A small hut to rest. Tungarli village is nearby and Valvand lake across the ridge.

○ **Valvand Dam** .

About 3 km from Lonavla, this dam offers a garden and excellent relaxing spots. One can climb the ridges on both the sides. The one on the west will lead to Tungarli lake and the one on the north to Shirota lake, which is a long cross-country walk.

○ **Bhor Ghat**

In the monsoons, a walk from Khandala to Khopoli could be very enjoyable. Walk on the main road for 3 km and then bifurcate to the left. One can see Khopoli town all the time at the bottom. It is an easy 11 km downhill walk.

□ **Rajmachi** (826 m —2710 ft)

One of the prominent hill forts guarding the Bhor ghat, is the isolated twin peaked fort of Rajmachi. It is about 10 km as the crow flies from Khandala and about 20 km by track. The fort is separated from the main mass of ghats and is joined to them by its northwest end. A tongue, about 275 m broad, with endless curves, joins the fort to the Khandala plateau. During the long approach, the fort appears to be very near all the time. The higher peak is known as *Shreevardhan* and the lower one, as *Manranjan*. They are joined by a common col with a small temple on it. Village Rajmachi is at the base of the lower fort.

From Lonavla, proceed to *Tungarli* and descend to the plateau further ahead. Here the route from Khandala joins it. A cart track leads to village Udavne (13 km). A little before reaching Valvand village (6 km), bifurcate to the west (left) and across a nala. One now enters the fort through ruined walls. Easy walk to the col between the two peaks from elther side. The higher peak has a cave and a grand view. Both the peaks are easy to climb. From Rajmachi there are many other hiking possibilities. (i) From the point where the route bifurcates from the Valvand village, climb up a small ridge on the east (right). One reaches the western end of Shirota lake within a km. One can proceed ahead from the Valvand village to Dhangarpada which is a grand plateau walk to Kusur and Khandi. (ii) From the point where a nala is crossed to enter the Rajmachi fort, climb down along the nala to the Ulhas valley and come out at Kondivde. This would provide grand views of waterfalls in the monsoons. (iii) One can also descend from Rajmachi village to Kondana caves and hence to Kondivde and from there by bus to Karjat.

☐ **Bhairoba Dhak**

A prominent projection, jutting out from the main range between Rajmachi and Dhak. It has a round top and commands an excellent view of Rajmachi and the Ulhas valley. It is best approached enroute to Rajmachi. At the point where one enters the ruined walls of Rajmachi fort after crossing the nala, turn to the north (right). A gradual walk to the top (3 km). One can get down to Sandshi in the Konkan and reach Karjat via Khandpe (10 km).



Bhairoba Dhak and twin forts of Rajmachi

☐ **Ulhas Valley**

The semi-circular valley enclosed between the Rajmachi massif on one side and the Karjat-Khandala rail-track on the other, is the main catchment area for the river Ulhas. During the monsoons or just after, it presents a grand sight with numerous waterfalls and greenery. One can spend a quiet day on the banks of the Ulhas or complete a long hike along it. There are numerous possibilities. Get down from Rajmachi and walk along Ulhas, or get down from Thakurwadi railway halt, on the ghat line, and walk up the river to Khandala. Kondana caves and Bhairoba Dhak are some of the few places one can visit. In the monsoons, the Ulhas river is difficult to ford, so one must be careful to start on the correct side of the river for a hike.

○ Karla Caves

A popular place with tourist bungalows. These are well-maintained Buddhist caves. Catch direct buses to its base from Lonavla or walk from Malavli station. By climbing to the top of its ridge, Shirota or Valvan lake can be approached easily.

○ Shirota Lake

A large lake which is ideally situated and approachable from many sides. From Kamshet station, walk on Tata's private railway line to the dam. A huge expanse of water can be seen. On the western end of the lake is Rajmachi, to which a good cross-country walk is inviting. On the south (left) lies Karla caves, across a ridge and on the north (right) is Somwadi dam and Andhra lake.

○ Somwadi Dam

A little before reaching the darn of *Shirota,* a route bifurcates to the right and goes across the full length of the dam. A beautiful temple is situated here, surrounded by trees. About 5 km ahead is the village of Somwadi. Buses ply till Gocnri in rains or till Kusur-Khandi in dry season, via Somwadi. A small dam on Pundalik river forms a beautiful site. The valley ahead to the northwest leads to Dhangarpada and Rajmachi.

○ Andhra Lake

One of the largest lakes in the area with water from nearby hills pouring into it. From one end, water is drawn through tunnels for generating power at Bhivpuri power house. The lake is also known an Nethersole dam or Thakurwadi dam. Buses ply directly from Talegaon to Vadeshwar or Thakurwadi near the dam. An interesting cross country walk is from Somwadi to Uksan (6 km). A climb to the plateau (1054 m —3459 ft) gives a bird's eye view of the full expanse of the lake. Climbing down to the dam, one can either ferry across to Kusur or to Khandi village on the western end of the lake, or take a bus going along its banks. Distances from the dam: to Kambre 13 km, Dahivli 6 km, Kusur 12 km and Khandi 6 km. Many possibilities of further cross-country walks from here: (i) from Kusur, either get down the ghats via Kusur khind to Karjat; (ii) proceed to Dhangarpada or Rajmachi; (iii) from Khandi, visit the Bhivpuri tunnels; (iv) proceed to Wandre khind for Bhimashankar, which is a day's walk from there; (v) Get down Savle khind to Dhamni at the base of Peth. (vi) On the north of the lake is a fabulous area, enticing particularly just after the monsoons. From Vadeshwar to Vangaon (6 km), cross the lake in a boat to Malegaon in the north. Proceed to Pimpri (2 km). Climb to cross a khind to Paralwadi and ahead to Wandre (6 km). An ancient temple of

Bamneshwar here is of exquisite beauty. You can descend to Peth and Ambivli or proceed to Bhimashankar.

☐ **Hedruj** (1245 m —4086 ft)

One of the two flatish peaks, which form the northeastern boundary of the Lonavla region. It lies across the valley from the Andhra lake and is rather remotely situated for approach. Take a bus to Khed from Talegaon and proceed to Kadus. A long arm of Hedruj extends down to Musalwadi 6 km from here. Walk across to Savtwadi (6 km) and to village Hedruj, halfway up. An easy climb to the top on which a temple is situated.

☐ **Shingi** (1293 m —4243 ft)

A hill top on a flat ridge connected with Hedruj. The flat plateau continues further northwest to Pt. 1129 m (3704 ft) and to Wandre village. One can get down to the Konkan and visit Peth from here. Two principal approaches are available. Catch a bus to Bhimashankar from Pune, via Khed and Wada and get down at Wada. Walk (or take a bus) westwards to Chikhalgaon (6 km), Deoshi (6 km) and Audar (5 km) at the base. Easy route to the top. This is the approach from the northeast. There can be an interesting cross-country walk from the southwest. On Andhra lake, walk across the dam to Kivale (10 km) on the opposite bank and further to Partaiwadi (6 km). If in luck, one can get a ferry across the lake or get a bus, straight to Partaiwadi from the dam. Climb the ridge behind in the east leading to *Ambhu* khind. Hill of *Ambhu* (1062 m—3485 ft) can be traversed. Main peak is in the northwest. Descend on the other side to Waghuwadi (13 km); then, across the valley to Adgaon (6 km) at the base. One can also Hedruj.

THE MANDVI RANGE

The range is the southeastern boundary of the region and contains easy and enjoyable places to trek.

○ **Lohgad Fort** (1040 m —3412 ft)

This hill fort, along with the neighbouring Visapur fort is an important landmark. It is rather well-preserved, with a series of five gates and high walls to stop any intruder. It has an excellent view and is delightful in the monsoons when it is covered in thick clouds. From Lonavla, proceed to the next railway station Malavli. Walk to Bhaja village (3 km). Bhaja caves are nearby. The track leading to Bhaja village from the station continues to climb further up gently to the col between Lohgad and Visapur. Lohgadwadi is about 1 km ahead. A broad route leads to the top through strong fortifications. One can

visit Visapur fort. On return one can walk along the shores of the Pawna dam and come out via Shiv-khind to Lonavla.

○ **Visapur Fort** (1087 m — 3567 ft)

Adjoining Lohgad on one side and Bedse hill on the other, this huge fort is very easily approachable. It has plenty of water cisterns on top amidst forests and a long circular plateau. From Malavli station, turn south. A gradual climb from the village leads to the top. Another easy route leads down on the opposite side to the col with Lohgad.

○ **Bhaja Caves**

A group of Buddhist caves situated at the base of Visapur fort. Easy approach, within 1 km from Bhaja village which could be reached from Malavli station.

○ **Bedse Hill** (1104 m —3621 ft)

This is a sharp triangular projection near Visapur fort. A deviation to the left en route to Visapur fort and this hill can be easily reached. It is on the common plateau with Visapur fort. Another route gets down to village Pimploli (6 km) and then to Kamshet railway station (5 km). Bedse caves are situated at its base.

○ **Bedse Caves**

Another group of Buddhist caves which are easily approachable. From Kamshet station, walk on the road to Pawna dam (Kale Colony) (6 km). A bifurcation leads to the caves, about 60 m above the road.

○ **Pawna Dam**

A dam on the Pawna river. It forms a very huge reservoir; which has Tung and Tikona on west and east and Lohgad and Visapur in the north. Buses reach the dam from Kamshet station. One can ferry across or walk along the banks to any of the above forts, or do a long cross-country walk to Lonavla.

□ **Tikona** (1091 m —3580 ft)

As the name suggests, this is a triangular shaped hill commanding an excellent view. It is rather easy to approach and climb. From Kamshet or Talegaon railway station, catch a bus to Kale Colony of Pawna dam (13 km). Walk across the dam wall and proceed on to the other side (southern) to Tikona Peth (6 km). The top is very easy and gentle to reach from here. It has three good caves with water nearby and a huge lake on the summit.

□ **Mandvi Dongar**

A prominent land mark with a survey pole on its top. It is connected

with a ridge to Tikona. From Pawna dam reach Tikona-Peth via Ghavandi across the dam on the road leading to Paud. From the common col with Tikona follow the long ridge to the conical top.

THE PAUN-MAVAL

The huge plateau south of Lonavla and extending upto Mulshi lake and Konkan is known as Paun Maval. There are interesting groups of hills and forts, amidst thick forests, to climb. In the monsoons the heavy rainfall and strong winds are an unforgettable experience here.

○ Duke's Nose

As the train climbs up from Karjat to Khandala, one can see two rather prominent projections on the western side. They appear challenging and are the chief land-marks of the Bhor ghat. They are known as Duke's Nose and Duchess's Nose, or also known as Nagphani. To approach them, get down at Khandala. From the railway station, follow the old railway line going uphill. A track continues ahead to the top of the ridge. Descend to the valley on the other side. Easy walk up to the top of both the Noses. There are many other approaches and this is a very well-known place in Khandala.

○ Bushy Dam

A small lake owned by the railways. It has a small rest house, a permit for which can be obtained from the Lonavla station. On the way to INS Shivaji get down halfway. The dam and the lake are very near. One can do a ridge walk along Sakar Pathar which is behind the lake.

○ Sakar Pathar

A long flat ridge above the Bushy dam site is known as Sakar Pathar. A proposed hill station site, but scarcity of water prevented any development. From the Bushy dam, proceed to the west, towards the hill in front. A fairly wide track reaches the top. One can descend to Lonavla or continue onwards to Korigad.

○ Umber Khind

A narrow and deep gorge which was the scene of one of the many battles of Shivaji as he trapped the invading armies in these ravines. From Lonavla proceed to INS Shivaji and Tiger's Leap (or Waghdari), a popular tourist point. Proceed little north of the transmission lines and follow a nala, which is dry in summer, down to the lower plateau where Thakurwadi is situated. This is Ambenali



Korigad: fort walls

ghat which is a huge ravine. Many good sites here for rock-climbing. Further reach Chaini village and follow the course of Amba river to reach Jambulpada (10 km) on Pali-Khopoli bus road.

★ Moradi Pinnacle

An interesting pinnacle detached from the ghats. From Lonavla proceed by bus to Aatwan phata (on the road to Ambavne). Bifurcate northwest to descend the ghats on route to Falyan. Get down almost 460 m and traverse at the foot of a giant wall of the ghats. From a col climb up about 150 m of rocks and scree to the top. Return the same way—totally about 1220 m of gruelling up and down in a day without any source for water.

For a descent to the Konkan, go down to Falyan and via Mangaon to Jambulpada for a bus (10 km).

Because of its flat bottom it is nick-named as Khada Gujarati!

★ Ghoshalkhamb

The bus route from Lonavla to Ambavne passes half way from the village of Ghoshalgaon. In the backdrop is a square rocky massif with an easy col joining the ridge to the Jambuli plateau. An easy ridge walk to the top. For an enterprising climber the west face, which is seen from the village, is an interesting climb. Very exposed and beware of loose rocks.

△ **Jambuli**

Halfway from Lonavla on the road to Ambavne, is Ghoshalgaon, 10 km. Next to the village is Ghoshalkhamb and a rectangular hill with a long ridge with Jambuli pinnacle at the end. Direct approaches from here or from the village Jambuli little ahead.

The pinnacle is conical with steps leading to its top. An exposed move on the blown off step makes it interesting. A tèmple and a water-tank at the foot of the pinnacle. One can return along the shores of the Pawna lake and Shiv khind to Lonavla (10 km).



Korigad: Koraidevi temple

○ **Korigad** (929 m—3049 ft)

One of the most interesting places to hike from Lonavla. The route to the base of this isolated fort is full of vegetation, flowers and a variety of stones. The thick forest is recommended for camping. The cross-country walk can be undertaken is winter, or in the fully fury of the monsoons. From Lonavla, catch a bus via INS Shivaji to Ambavne. The motorable road winds up to the top of the ridge and continues via Ghoshalgaon to reach Peth-Shahpur (14 km), which is on the road. A good route leads to the top of the fort. The top is flat and much of it occupied by four fairly big ponds, two of which are permanent. There are two caves and also a ruined temple. It is said that when the fort was deserted in 1818, the temple ornaments

were handed over to Mumbadevi, the goddess of Bombay. A good view of Mulshi lake from here. In the monsoons, one may encounter fierce buffaloes on the top. They are allowed to live on the fort many days, without being taken back to the village. Getting down to Ambavne village on the other side, one can proceed to Mulshi lake, or down the ghats to Telbaila or Sudhagad.

○ **Devgad**

A huge conical mountain near Tung. Either approach from Tungwadi or from Ghoshalgaon. No fortification but a huge grassy slope with village Devgad at the base.

○ **Morvi Dongar**

A hillock between Tung and Devgad. It completes the ring of surrounding hills to the Pawna lake. Approach from the village Morvi from Tungwadi or via Ghoshalgaon.

○ **Tung** (1075 m —3526 ft)

A sharp conical peak and a prominent landmark from a distance. Now surrounded by the waters of the Pawna lake on three sides. From Pawna dam, one can ferry across in a boat to its base village, Tungi. A steep climb on grassy slopes leads to a temple. A rocky staircase leads a few feet down to a water reservoir. The summit is a grassy pinnacle with a ruined temple. One can also approach Pawna dam from the col between Lohgad and Visapur. From Tungi village, return to Lonavla is possible via Champser, Apti and Shiv khind, which is a gruelling 16 km walk.

Now a road approaches from Ghoshalgaon (on Lonavla-Ambavne road) to Tungi, 8 km, making this peak very easy to approach by 2 km walk ahead.

○ **Mulshi Lake**

A large lake built for generating hydro-electric power. Its beauty lies in the surrounding landscape and particularly the small islands amidst its waters. Buses ply directly from Pune to the Mulshi dam. A boat ferry is available in the mornings and afternoons. A branch of the lake towards the southwest feeds the power house at Bhira Camp. Korigad lies almost at its northwest edge. From near this fort, a ferry is available from Tiskare village to cross the lake to the dam in about 4 hours.

○ **Dhangad** (782 m —2565 ft)

This small fort is situated on a hill opposite Korigad and involves a steep climb. Once the place was known as Peshwa's prison and halfway up is a beautiful temple of Girjai devi. It is about 10 km

ahead of Korigad across a col. A bus road approaches its base at Bhambharde.

○ **Kurdugad (Vishramgad)**

A small fort situated at the edge of the ghats bordering the Mulshi lake. Two ways to proceed to the base of the fort. From the Mulshi dam take a launch to Tamhini or from the other end at Tiskare near Korigad, launch to Bandra and then go south to Sarola to reach Tamhini. Proceed south to Dhamanvahal and climb the fort. For return descend to Konkan to Jite village, and after a longish walk in the plains to Mangaon to catch a bus towards Bombay.

★ **Telbaila** (1013 m —3322 ft)

As one proceeds further west from Korigad, a square, solid brown massif comes into view. It has two sections and is situated at the edge of the ghats. It offers a tough rock climbing route and is interesting to climb. The upper reaches are exposed and full of scree and overhangs at one place. This overhang is difficult to climb but has been overcome by borrowing an improvised ladder from the base village. From Ambavne at the base of Korigad proceed to Masgaon (5 km), Salter (3 km) and Telbaila (3 km) at the base. If desired, one may go down the ghat of Telbaila to climb Sudhagad and get out at Pali.

○ **Sudhagad** (619 m —2030 ft)

One of the most well-preserved forts, with its walls and fortifications mostly intact. The most interesting route to visit this fort is to trek from Lonavla, across Korigad and Telbaila. From Telbaila village, get down to the Konkan via Wazri pass to Bhairampada (6 km). From here follow a nala to the top. Huge fort-walls and entrance gates on the way. The top is a big plateau with water and a temple. From Bhairampada, Pali is 13 km away, via Dhondse, Nadsur and Vada.

○ **Sarasgad**

A small fort with a temple on its top and it is regularly visited by many. It is situated very near Pali and a regular path with steps leads to the top. It is a good place to visit on the way to or from Sudhagad. There are a few hot springs near Pali also.

○ **Thanal** (588 m —1931 ft) and
Karsambla Caves (575 m —1886 ft)

For cave enthusiasts, these are a group of caves situated in the hills nearby Sudhagad. Thanal lies to the north of Sudhagad. From Bhairampada, go to Nadsur and further ahead to Thanal village (10 km). Ahead, on the route to Kondgaon the caves lie in the hills. Whilst for Karsambla caves, one has to proceed to the south of Sudhagad.



Fort walls of Rajgad



Torna fort

A trek in the Pune area is to trace the footsteps of history. Many ruined forts speak of history. It was in this region that Shivaji started his campaign for Swarajya. It bears testimony to many historic battles between the Marathas, the Moghuls and the British. It abounds in thick forests and wild life, particularly to its south. Pune is easily reached from Bombay and usually one finds morning buses from the railway station or Swargate to Welhe, Bhor and Wai, which are the major starting points. One may also reach all these places by all-night buses. For Bombayites, it will necessarily involve a long travel and it is always advisable to go for a two or three day hike. The general gradient of climbing is gentle and paths are usually well-defined. The region is rich in flora, fauna and historic fortifications.

THE BHULESHWAR RANGE

○ **Sinhgad (Kondana)** (1317 m—4320 m)

This fort stands as a sentinel of history in the region. It witnessed many historic battles in the Maratha period. The most famous was in

1670, when Tanaji scaled a difficult western cliff in darkness and won the fort for Shivaji. This Tanaji cliff is still an inviting challenge. The fort lies 26 km southwest of Pune by road, with the National Defence Academy and Khadakvasla dam to its north. A television tower soars from its heights and there is a permanent shelter and availability of meals. For a hiker, there are many interesting routes (1) Buses reach Donaje at Sinhgad base. A well frequented path leads to the Pune darwaja of the fort. (2) Get down from Pune-Bhor bus at Katraj ghat, 13 km due east of the fort. A long ridge, via point 1094 m (3591 ft), leads amidst forest to the fort. (3) Bus to Kondhanpur and a long track joins the first route. (4) 5 km ahead to the west of Kondhanpur is village Kalyan. A track leads to the Kalyan darwaja of the fort. An interesting long trek would be to proceed from Sinhgad to Rajgad. From the Kalyan darwaja, proceed to Kalyan village and hence via Vinzar Pass to Vinzar village which is on the Welhe road. Or alternately traverse the ridge going southwest from Sinhgad after coming out by Kalyan darwaja. At the edge descend directly to Vinzar village. Proceed to climb Rajgad via any of its different routes.

○ **Purandar Fort (Wajrangad)** (1390 m —4560 ft)

Standing about 26 km south of Pune, this fort witnessed many a great battles in Maratha history. It has the twin fort of Wajrangad and, in its time, it was a very formidable fort. For rock climbers, there are plenty of opportunities. Two main sites are rocks leading to Kedareshwar and those on the eastern end of the fort. Frequent buses ply between Pune and Saswad at the base and some, right up the fort.

○ **Malhargad (Sonori Fort)** (965 m—3166 ft)

The road from Pune to Saswad climbs up the Dive ghat to Karha plateau. Get down at Phulewadi immediately at the end of the ghat. The fort is about 3 km away in the southeast. It is a small hill with good fortifications.

One can traverse to the western end of the Karha plateau to visit the temple of *Kanifnath* (992 m —3254 ft), 8 km walk. Descend to Wadki naka for bus to Pune.

○ **Rajgad** (1376 m —4514 ft)

This was the first capital of Shivaji for 25 years and has a long association with history. It lies about 40 km southwest of Pune, has 8 km of surrounding curtain walls with three wings inside. To the north; Padmavati machi, in the east; Suvela machi and in the southwest; Sanjivani machi. It has a central top known as Bale Killa.

There are many interesting routes to climb and descend: (1) The buses leading to Welhe pass from Dapod or via Vajeghar, on the banks of the Kanandi river. A northernly spur leads to the Padmavati machi through a Chor darwaza (16 km). (2) From Welhe bus, get down at Vinzar, 6 km northeast of the fort. Cross Kanandi river and reach Sakhar village (2 km). On the road again cross Gunjavni river over a bridge to the Gunjavne village (2 km). Gentle to steep climb up the Chor darwaza. (3) From the Welhe road alight at Margsani and proceed to Gunjavne village on the road. Proceed as above. A few buses reach Sakhar and Gunjavne village too. The last two routes are most popular and easy.

Interesting routes would be to come down from Rajgad on the south to the banks of Bhatgar lake for a ferry. From another Chor darwaza, get down a very steep route to Male (6 km) on the lake; or from Sanjivani machi, try the steep descent to Khulshi village or Bhutonde (10 km) for a ferry. Rajgad has a long connecting ridge with Torna. It has 2 passes. From Rajgad the first is Kolhe khind, connecting Pali to Khulshi. The ferry leads to Basrapur 2 km away from Bhor and is usually available in the early morning or afternoons. Plenty of shelter, perennial water, temple and above all, excellent views.

○ **Torna** (1403 m —4604 ft)

Standing 6 km west of Rajgad, this second highest fort was another citadel of history. It commands excellent views and is easy to climb. Its two wings are called Zunzar machi, to the east and Budhla machi, to the south. There is a temple on the main fort which is inhabitable only in the dry season. There are perennial water tanks on the main fort and Budhla machi. From Pune reach Welhe by bus. A broad route leads to the top in about 2 hours' climb. A long ridge connects Budhla machi to Rajgad. A scrambling down below a nearby twin tower allows descent from Torna. Another obscure route from Chitta darwaza in the west of Budhla machi leads to the Kanand pass. An interesting cross country route will be to proceed to Rajgad and Lingana. From Welhe to Nivi, Ghisah and Singapur (16 km) or from Torna via Kanand pass, Harpud to Singapur (14 km). Further on to Linganawadi via Asanvli pass in the south or Boratyachi Nal in the north.

○ **Raigad** (862 m —2829 ft)

This beautiful hill fort was the capital of Shivaji, with his coronation as Maharaj being held on the fort. It commands an excellent view and has many reminders of old fortifications. Reach Pachad, via Mahad by road, at the base of the fort. Regular steps lead to the

top. Can be crowded on Sundays. Lingana is nearby to climb. Dak bungalow and hotel available for stay and food at the top.

Interesting cross-country routes join this fort with Torna. The fort has become very popular in recent times for the study of its fortification. Trek the circular route around it or climb it from its various edges.

★ **Lingana** (908 m —2979 ft)

Lying to the east of Raigad this is an impressive looking mountain. It is rather difficult to climb and will involve rock climbing. From Pachad at the base of Raigad, descend on the east to Linganawadi at the base. It is advisable to attempt to climb with a guide from here. One may continue a long cross-country trek to Torna from Linganawadi via Harpud and Kanand pass.

○ **Birwadi**

A small hill fortress 11 km east of Mahad on road to Bhor. Catch a bus from Mahad to Bhor and get down after 11 km to climb the gentle fort. This fort with Lingana was built by Shivaji to improve the defence of Raigad.

THE BHOR AREA

Many an interesting trek starts from Bhor, which is connected with Pune and Bombay by regular buses. Usually, it would be advisable to reach Bhor in the morning for the further connecting buses.

○ **Bhatgar Lake**

Situated at Bhor, this huge lake is a delight in any season. Originally called Lake Whiting and Lloyd Dam. Local ferry leaves from Basrapur about 2 km away. There are bungalows where one can stay and by ferrying across, one can climb Rajgad-Torna and visit many picturesque villages on its banks.

○ **Vichitragad (Rohida)** (1116 m —3661 ft)

It is a small fort 6 km south of Bhor. From Bhor, walk or take a bus toward Ambode khind which descends to Wai. Turn west (right) from Khanapur (3 km) to Hatnushi (2 km) and Bazarwadi (1 km). Easy ridge climb to the top. A small temple and water. One can get down further on to the southwest at Nazre (5 km) and proceed to Ambavde for a bus or for climbing Raireshwar or Kenjalgad.

○ **Raireshwar** (1398 m —4589 ft)

A prominent 8 km long plateau, lying southwest of Bhor. The



Vichitragad (Rohida)

On Rohida



teen-aged Shivaji vowed in a temple here to establish Swarajya. It is still a place of worship. The two temples offer shelter and perennial water with a sparsely populated village. There are many approaches to this plateau. (1) Reach Rairi village in the north by bus (via Nigudghar and across Nira river) at its base. A good track leads to the top. (2) Take a bus to Ambavde in the south. A long climb to the top plateau, via Korle village (5 km). (3) A long zigzag ridge connects the plateau to Kenjalgad.

The western tip of the Raireshwar plateau, called Nakhinda, is said to have many medicinal plants. The plateau has a thick forest and a grand view all around.

Now a motorable road from Ambavde to the top of the Raireshwar plateau is almost complete.

At Ambavde there is a tomb of Shankarji Narayan, the founder of

the Bhor Pant Sachiv Dynasty. A majestic temple of Shiva of great antiquity also nestles here.

☐ **Kenjalgad** (1302 m —4273 ft)

This fort straddles the ridge joining from Raireshwar. This is a dividing line with the Kamalgad valley in the south. Take a bus to Ambavde and walk or take a bus further to Korle (6 km) or Titeghar. Route leads up to Machi (5 km) where a good shelter is available. The top is reached via a broad rock staircase. There is a huge tunnel-cum-cave near the top and an excellent view. The top itself is bounded by a cliff about 60 m high. It is also possible to get down to the south from Machi to Asre village and proceed to Wai, or proceed by the long connecting ridge to Raireshwar. One may also come by a long connecting ridge from Pandavgad via Eruli village.

○ **Kangori Fort (Mangalgad)** (774 m —2538 ft)

This fort stands a little off the ghat line, 6 km south of Varandha ghat road. Together with Kawla and Kelanja on the plateau, it guards the three ghats: Bhope, Varandha and Kamtha. (1) From the Bhor-Mahad bus, get down at Varandha village, at the base of the ghat. Proceed to the south to Kiye (8 km) on a good track. Gothaoli is 5 km ahead at the base of the fort. (2) Buses available to reach Pimpalwadi (from Mahad) at the foot of the fort. Proceed ahead to Kiye to join the above route. Easy climb to the top of this deserted fort. One may proceed to Raireshwar, via Vadghar village in southeast.

○ **Shivthar Ghal**

The road from Bhor to Mahad, descends Varandha ghat. To the north lies this valley. The caves situated here are famous because Saint Ramdas, Shivaji's guru, had written the famous Dasbodh here. (1) From Bhor, proceed to Mahad by bus. Little before Varandha village, get down at the junction for Parmachi village. (2) From Kawla, proceed down to the caves. (3) From Mahad, proceed by bus to Gazeri for the caves near Ambe Shivtar (4 km). Buses from Mahad to Shivthar Ghal reach Baras village also; 1 km short of Shivthar.

○ **Kawla** (647 m —2124 ft)

26 km west of Bhor, this fort stands on a short precipitous rocky spur. It jutts out northwards from the edge of the Varandha ghat, where the road descends to the Konkan. Get down at the bifurcation for Parmachi village on the Varandha bus road. It is a flat walk, leading to the edge of Kawla. There is no water and it is totally

deserted. Shivthar Ghal nestles at its foot. One may also reach here from Varandha village from Mahad involving a climb to the Deccan plateau.

THE WAI AREA

Wai forms a major base for many an interesting climb. Situated on the Pune-Mahabaleshwar road it is connected by many buses. Usually the connecting buses operate in the morning. Walki and Krishna rivers rise from the north and the south of Kamalgad near Wai. Wai town thus boasts of two large rivers of the Sahyadris.

○ Dhom Dam

A huge dam is built on Walki and Krishna rivers. Its waters surround Kamalgad. There is an exquisite temple at Dhom near the dam. One can descend here directly from Pandavgad. Nearby at Bhopgaon there is a samadhi of Marathi poet-saint Vaman Pandit.

○ Mandhardeo (1374 m —4508 ft)

A beautiful temple situated on the top of a ridge and among forest. Proceed from Wai to Menavli. Further, a good motorable road leads upto the temple. From here descent towards Bhor is possible (to Ambode khind), or, one can proceed on a long ridge walk via Eruli to Kenjalgad.

○ Pandavgad (1273 m —4177 ft)

A small fort near Wai, catch a bus going to Dhom-Velang. Get down at Menavli (5 km). Easy route leads to the fort in the background. Water and temple at the top with two houses.

□ Kamalgad (Bhelanja) (1375 m —4511 ft)

Standing at the centre of the valley, this square fort is the divider between Walki basin in the north and the Krishna basin in the south. A village and thick forest on the top. On the rocky top, there is a deep shaft leading some 30 m into the ground, said by some to be a quarry for red geru stone, which is in abundance here. There are four major interesting approaches: (1) From Wai, by bus to Dhom. Walk over the dam to Velang and cross Walki river to Chandwadi-Asgaon (6 km). A long ridge leads to the top. (2) From Velang proceed straight to Wasole. A good route leads to the top. Wasole can be reached from Kenjalgad. (3) From Panchgani, descend to Chikhlun (5 km). Cross Krishna to Asangaon village and



Ancient temple: Dhom

a long ridge climb to the top. (4) From Mahableshwar, Kate's point, get down to Nandgaon. Across Krishna river to Partewadi and follow a good route to the top. Rivers and dam waters will have to be crossed in a boat, which is usually available.

○ Navra-Navri of Kamalgad

The adjoining hill of Kamalgad is the Navra-Navri, which is connected to it by a long ridge. It provides a good traverse and a short rock climb on its scattered pinnacles.



Pandavgad from Dhom

○ **Bawdhan Fort** (1002 m —3287 ft)

A huge fort situated about 10 km south-southwest of the town of Wai. It has good fortifications and three huge plateaus; at the top water is scarce.

○ **Vairatgad** (1200 m —3939 ft)

Situated 8 km south of Wai, it watches over the Wai-Satara road. On Wai-Satara bus road get down at Asle, via Bhuinj. The fort stands in the west. A track from the village leads to the easterly pass from where one may climb a ridge to reach the final cliff. At the base, there are several permanent water tanks. Skirting the tanks on the north side, enter the fort through a dilapidated gate at the northerly end. Apart from the ruins of a temple and curtain walls, there is little else left on the fort.





Makarandgad



On Pavan khind trail

THIS region covers areas on both sides of Mahabaleshwar around Koyna dam, Warna valley and Panhala range.

THE SHAMBHU-MAHADEO RANGE

Starting from Mahabaleshwar there are a number of well-known historic forts which merit a visit. They are surrounded by dense forest and the area receives the highest rainfall in the entire Sahyadri.

○ **Mahabaleshwar** (1438 m —4718 ft)

A well-known hill station, directly connected by bus. It offers a lake and many long walks. One may trek to Pratapgad and Kamalgad from here. Heavy rains during monsoon.

○ **Panchgani** (1334 m —4377 ft)

Another well-known hill station. Directly connected with Wai and Mahabaleshwar. It offers many along walks and good rock climbing at Table Land. It can be made a starting point for hikes to Kamalgad and Krishna and Walki river valleys.

○ **Pratapgad** (1080 m —3543 ft)

A historically important fort near Mahabaleshwar connected by direct buses. It has many fortifications, and is particularly well-known because of the tomb of Afzalkhan, who was killed by Shivaji on this fort.

○ **Chandragad**

A small fort lying on a spur that leads down from Arthur's Seat point of Mahabaleshwar. A track leads down to the fort.

□ **Makarandgad** (1236 m —4054 ft)

Also known as *Madhugad*. Take a bus to Tapole from Mahabaleshwar. Get down at the Zolai khind and down to Zanzwadi on the Koyna river and cross the river to Chaturbet. 10 km climb upto Ghonaspur through a beautiful forest. Easy route to the top and a temple situated amidst thick forest. A cave, full with water and four pillars are a mystery here. As no end to the cave can be seen, it is surrounded with local legends. People living here are of a rare Jangam tribe and build memorial stones over their dead, which fill up the area. On the west, one can get down by Hatlot pass (5 km) to Kalmani (10 km) in Konkan. Nearby, Birmani and Kalunje have bus connections with Khed on the Goa road.

□ **Mahipatgad**

This is one of the range of three forts which is parallel to the main range of the Deccan plateau. (a) From Pratapgad proceed southwest and climb over the main ridge of the ghats down to Kotwal village (16 km). Proceed south to climb to a col between Mahipatgad and the spur of the Deccan plateau. Turn west to enter the fort and then proceed south. Thick forest, water tank and a temple. A direct ridge connects with Sumargad. Proceed south to get down to Beldarwadi on the ridge connecting to Sumargad. For Makarandgad proceed down to Konkan to Kalmani village and then climb up the ghat via Hatlot pass to the fort (24 km). This may also be donw in reverse to visit Mahipatgad from Makarandgad. (b) Another direct approach is from Khed (on the Goa highway). Take a bus to Mandavi and Vadi-Jetapur. Climb steeply to Beldarwadi (13 km).

□ **Sumargad**

A central fort of the above range. It has to be approached from either Mahipatgad or Rasalgad. From Beldarwadi lying between Sumargad and Mahipatgad, proceed south on the ridge. Traverse under the eastern cliff and climb up by the southeast corner. Route



Mahipatgad and Sumargad from west

passes along two man-made caves and involves little rock climbing. One may proceed along the ridge to the south to Rasalgad for an easier exit.

☐ **Rasalgad**

A small fort among the trio and is easier to approach. Reach Khed (Konkan) by road and catch bus to Rasalgadwadi which is at the base. Easy route to the top. One may visit Sumargad by proceeding on the common plateau to the north.

☐ **Parbat** (1125 m —3692 ft)

A small fort overlooking the Koyna reservoir. The easier approach would be from Khed in Konkan to Ambavli at the foot of the ghats (15 km). Climb up the Amboli ghat (10 km) to a col between Parbat and Chakdev in the south. A descent on the east to Parbat village is possible to the banks of the Koyna lake, for a ferry.

☐ **Chakdev** (984 m —3230 ft)

Lying to the south of Parbat it has the same approaches from Amboli ghat or a direct trek from Ambavli to its top.

○ **Shindi Fort**

A small fort further south of Chakdev overlooking the village of Met Shindi which is on the Koyna lake. The easier approach would be to

cross the Koyna lake to Mhasapur from Bamnoli and proceed westwards via village Met Shindi. On the west, a descent via Mahar and Khopi to Mirla is possible (15 km) for a bus to Khed (15 km).

Southeast of this fort lies Vasota.

THE BAMNOLI-ASHTA RANGE

The area around the two rugged towns of Satara and Karad boasts of many forts which played an important role in the history. Some are very easy to approach while some, situated on the banks of the Koyna reservoir, are far away and involve time and travel.

○ Ajinkyatara Fort

Also called the fort of Satara. It overlooks the town of Satara and is situated above it. A regular road leads to the top. Little fortification on the flat top.

○ Sajjangad (Parali Fort)

This fort stands a few km southwest of Satara. It was known as *Aswalya*. After it was captured by Shivaji in 1673 his guru, Sant Ramdas, made his abode there and it was renamed as Sajjangad. The buses lead from Satara to Parali town at the base of the fort. Regular habitations on the top.

○ Santoshgad

Santoshgad is a small hillock 16 km southwest of Phaltan. Proceed by bus to Dhowl or Tathawda to visit the fort.

○ Warugad

Two small forts which seem like rather easy hillocks for hikers. Warugad standing north of Palwan plateau was captured in 1655 by Netaji Palkar of Shivaji's army. It is approachable from Phaltan and going by bus to Bhadli and Girwi, proceeding south of Phaltan.

○ Chandan-Wandan Forts (1169 m —3836 ft)

These twin forts stand as the two southern summits of Chowneshwar range, to the northwest of Satara Road station. They were captured by Shivaji during his whirlwind campaign following Afzalkhan's death. To visit these forts, from Satara catch bus to Bhuinj which is on the Satara-Pune road. Walk to Jamb (3 km) where the Satara Sugar Factory is located. The forts are behind. Climb to a common col between the forts. To the south is Wandan where a straight route leads to the top. For Chandan move north from the col. A little bifurcation and rock climb give entry into the fort.

○ **Nandgiri** (1077 m —3533 ft)

These three forts lie east of Satara along the road. On Nandgiri fort there is a ninth century Jain temple in a cave. It lies to the east of Satara Road railway station. *Jaranda* is a hill with a temple, on the southwest of the Satara Road station.

○ **Wardhangad** (1065 m —3493 ft)

Wardhangad stands some 40 km east of Satara on road to Pusegaon. Get down 8 km before Pusegaon to visit the fort. It sheltered Shivaji in 1661.

○ **Mahimangad**

Mahimangad is a small hill 16 km east of Pusegaon. 16 km ahead of Pusegaon, get down at Hivra to visit this fort.

○ **Bhupalgad**

A fort of historical importance as this happened to be the only fort captured by Sambhaji, (Shivaji's son) for Moghuls, against his father. From town of Karad, proceed to the east by bus to Khanapur. Ahead to Palshi, 17 km and to the base village Banur at the base of the fort.

○ **Agashiv Caves**

A group of Buddhist caves (250 BC), situated in a hill on the southwestern outskirts of Karad town. University of Magadha of pre-Christian era had a branch here.

○ **Gunvantgad** (990 m —3248 ft)

From Karad proceed to Patan, on the road to Chiplun. This hill fort is situated 10 km southwest of the town. It commands spectacular views of the Koyna dam and the Shivsagar reservoir.

○ **Vasantgad**

A small hill fort near Karad. On the road to Koynanagar it is 10 km away. Get off at Chhatrewadi or little ahead at Sakurdi to walk up the fort.

○ **Machhindragad**

A small hill fort, about 10 km south of Karad. Direct buses lead to the base.

○ **Kas Lake**

A beautiful lake situated amidst red hills, west of Satara. Take the direct bus leading to Kas village (24 km) which is on the banks. Small shelter available.



Crossing Koyna lake

☐ **Vasota** (1171 m—3842 ft)

Vasota straddles on the ghat line, protected by a bear-infested jungle. It is inaccessible except by a long and arduous trek. It has two forts, the old and the new. It is easy and possible to visit the new fort through thick jungles. From Satara catch a bus to Kas Lake (24 km). From here 6 km ahead down to Humne village via Andhare (4 km) on the banks of Koyna lake. Walk along the lake to Wagle village 3 km away. Here a small ferry is available across the lake to Khirkundi village. Now walk along the banks to Vasota village 3 km on top of an intervening ridge.

There is a direct bus to Bamnoli which has a regular motor ferry across. This crosses to Met Indapur and one can walk on the western shores of the lake to Khirkundi to join the above route.

Proceed along an arm of Koyna lake to the west. The route now on is thickly forested and there is no human habitation. Climb in the dense forest and by a tricky route to the top of the fort (5 km). Two large water tanks near the top.

The old Vasota fort is in the south and about 2 hrs away. To the north are two lingis. The lingi further away is the Nageshwar temple and between the two lingis the route leads to Nagsari and Konkan.

Old Vasota fort has direct approach from the lake and Rada pass on its south,leads to Konkan.



Nageshwar lingis on Vasota. Shindi plateau behind

Old Vasota fort



From Mahabaleshwar (Tapole) to the Koyna dam would be about 65 km and may require 5 days due to the thick forests and many arms of the lake extending westwards. It would lead to Jungli Jaigad and Navja village. A ferry can be arranged to traverse the lake. In any form the Koyna lake area is fun.

One may return via Konkan by getting down steeply from the fort.

After descending halfway on the route from Vasota village, traverse in thick forest to the edge on the north. Here a rock carved temple of Nageshwar is situated and the pass down is called Nagsari. The route down is over steep and exposed scree and leads down to Choravne village. Buses available to Chiplun or Khed to return to Bombay.

△ **Jungli Jaigad** (1029 m —3376 ft)

A small and little known fort near the Koyna dam. It is situated in the thick forest infested with wild animals. From Bombay proceed to Karad by rail or by bus. Take morning bus from Karad to Chiplun and get down at Koynanagar and ahead to Navja (11 km). From Navja walk northwest to a rain gauge station, 5 km away. Climb on to a easterly spur which narrows down to about 15 m long and 1 m wide. This is also cracked due to an earthquake. This is the entrance to the fort. The fort is a longish spur, about half kilometre long and 30 m wide. No water of shelter available. Towards the south of the fort, Kumbharli ghat joins Chiplun to Helwak and Karad by a motorable road.

KOYNA TO WARNA

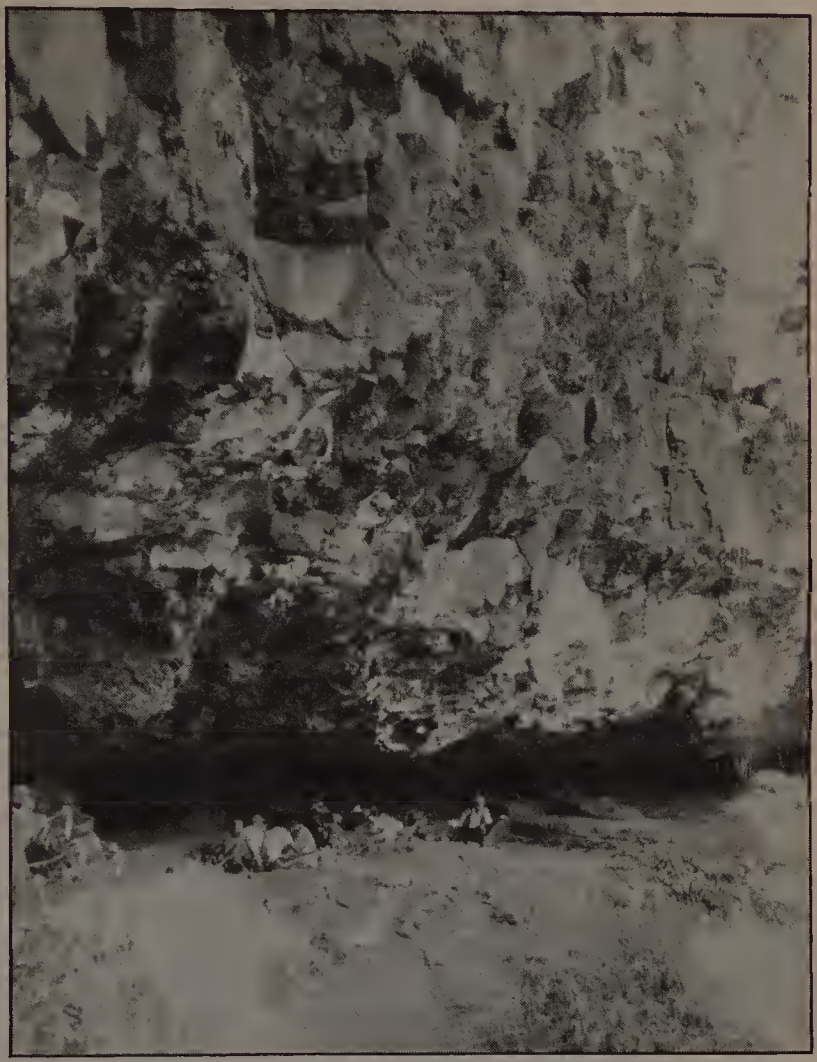
South of Jungli Jaigad and the Koyna dam lies the most unknown part and thick forest of the range. Immediately after the Karad-Helwak-Kumbharli ghat-Chiplun road, lies Bhairongad. Going further south it goes all aong in some of thickest and animal-infested forest. The track goes from Helwak to Bhairongad 12 km, —Patharpunj, 5 km —Rundiv, 13 km —on a kuchha road along the ghat to Chandel, 15 km —Ghotne, 12 km —Udgir, 15 km —to Lavala, 16 km. Lavala is on the Kolhapur-Malkapur-Ambe ghat-Sakharpa road. South of the road is the Panhala-Vishalgad range.

The southernmost motorable road is Phonda ghat, south of this range.

This is a relatively unknown and unspoilt area. A long trek would offer a delightful time.

○ **Ram Ghal**

A huge cave well-known in the area. From Helwak (near Koynanagar from Karad) climb up to Dhangarwada, 3 km. The cave is about 2 km ahead hidden in a wide gully. It has a perennial water source. Proceed ahead to Bhairongad.



Ram ghal

△ **Bhairongad (Saranggad)**

From Karad proceed to Koynanagar (Helwak) by a bus going to Chiplun. (1) Trek to Kondhavle (10 km) and ahead to Dhangarwada. Proceed ahead to a plateau above and enter the forest. Reach a deserted village of Vaghena (3 km) proceeding all along south of Helwak. Proceed ahead west and after crossing two stream beds the route zigzags up to a col and joins a prominent route. Follow the route southwards to the temple of Bhairongad (5 km). It is a sturdy temple of Bhairoba with water nearby. From the northern face you enter the fort. On the western edge there are water tanks. For getting down to Konkan, between Bhairongad and the temple a pass leads down to Durgawadi in the northwest, leaving Pate village on the left (11 km). The buses come here for night halts and lead to Chiplun. One can proceed south through the forest to Prachitgad, with the route almost unknown, via villages Patharpunj (5 km) and Rundiv (13 km). (2) A shorter route would be to climb up from Ram ghal (Dhangarwada) 3 km, on the plateau above. Traverse and descend to old deserted Vaghena village (4 km). Proceed west to the edge of the ghats to meet the prominent track to Bhairongad (5 km). (3) A round-about but easier route would be to go to Patharpunj from Helwak (14 km) and to Bhairongad (5 km).

△ **Prachitgad** (971 m—3187 ft)

A small fort situated amongst forest. (1) To approach the fort from



Konkan proceed by bus to Sangameshwar, south of Chiplun. Take another bus to Nayri, east of Sangameshwar. Walk to Shringarpur (3 km). Climb up a westerly spur to reach a prominent white spot in the cliffs (6 km). Traverse under the cliffs to the north and climb up to the north col, between the fort and the plateau. At this northern tip you find a dilapidated gate called Mahar darwaja, (another 10 km). There is a temple, huge water tanks and old guns on the eastern section of the fort. This fort is not visited often even by the villagers and so one may have to resort to cutting the route in the forest.

(2) For a complicated approach, proceed from Bhairongad to Patharpunj (5 km) and to Rundiv (13 km) in the south. A thick forest and volcanic fields (locally known as 'Sada'), to be traversed. Guide is advisable. Prachitgad is an hour away from Rundiv. Descent to Nayri (13 km) in the west, over another exposed ghat is possible.

From Rundiv one can proceed south to continue along the ghat edge. Little above Rundiv a motorable road goes along in a thick forest to Chandel (15 km). A beautiful village. Ahead is Mahimantgad.

Also from Rundiv descend to the eastern valley: to Javli, Durgwadi to Chandoli at the Warna dam site (20 km). All these villages may be shifted once the dam is complete and the area is declared a 'sanctuary'.

Volcanic rock-fields



□ Mahimantgad

A small fort above Devrukh in Konkan. (1) Take a bus to Nirgudwadi and a route to the top, 6 km. (2) But the enjoyable long route is from the ghats. From Chandel village (15 km from Rundiv of Prachitgad) walk on kuchha road to Dhangarwada 8 km. From here bifurcate west to get down the edge of the ghats to a col with the fort (6 km). Easy climb up.

From Dhangarwada or Ghotne (4 km ahead) one can descend to Marleshwar in Konkan (6 km).

Motorable road continues south from Ghotne to Udgir (15 km) and to Lavala (16 km) on the Ambe ghat-Kolhapur road.

○ Warna Dam

A new dam is being built on the Warna river near Chandoli. Water of this reservoir will protect the thick forest on the westen edge and allow for a grand trekking area on its bank. Buses ply from Karad-Undala-Yelapur-Natvad-Arla to Chandoli (58 km). Or from Malkapur-Kokrud-Arla to Chandoli (30 km). Chandoli is in the valley and base for Prachitgad (via Rundiv, 20 km) and Mahimantgad (via Ghotne, 20 km).

○ Marleshwar

A small cave-temple in the Konkan. It is situated in a rock-amphitheatre and could be very hot and crowded. Direct road from Devrukh to Marleshwar, 21 km.

The route from the ghats descend from Ghotne to the edge of the plateau (3 km) and down to Konkan (3 km) at Marleshwar.

From Devrukh one can reach Kolhapur via Sakharpa (16 km)-Ambe ghat-Malkapur.

THE PANHALA RANGE

This range near Kolhapur is easily accessible by buses and it forms one of the southern boundary of Sahyadris.

○ Jyotiba (952 m —3124 ft)

Situated about 300 m above the plains, 14 km northwest of Kolhapur in the Panhala range; this is a group of temples, dedicated to Jyotiba. The place is also known as Wadi-Ratnagiri and is connected with Kolhapur by bus.



Mhasai Pathar temple

○ Panhala Fort

A popular hill station south of Kolhapur. Direct buses lead to the fort walls in one hour. Plenty of places to visit and stay.

○ Mhasai Pathar

A long rock plateau of about 11 km, devoid of any vegetation or habitation except a solitary temple. A rare sight to see waterfalls pouring down its walls in the monsoons. Strong winds are its speciality and a night spent in the temple is a rare experience. When dry, the crumbling walls offer a lot of rock climbing. From Panhala, at Pusati-cha-buruj descend to Turukwadi and climb up to the plateau, which is opposite. It ends on the other side with a descent to Kumbharwadi.

○ Pavan Khind

Originally known as Ghod khind, this is a historical gorge where Shivaji's general Baji Prabhu trapped the chasing Moghul army. It is a small gorge about 30 m deep and is a ferocious sight in rains. It is a cross of four valleys which converge to this narrow passage. From Gajapur, as in Vishalgad, proceed to the huge plateau called Ghod Uddanacha Mal which witnessed the fight. The gorge is little off this plateau. Ahead is Dhangarwadi and Pandhrepani where buses ply between Malkapur to Anaskura ghat. Malkapur to Pandhrepani (15 km) to Anaskura ghat (15 km). Foot track leads down.

○ Vishalgad

A giant fort with many historical monuments at its top. From Kolhapur take bus on Ratnagiri road (via Malkapur) to Ambe (62 km). 19 km away is Gajapur which is also linked by bus. Buses also lead to the base of Vishalgad, 4 km away. A new dam on the Kasari river is planned, 5 km from Gajapur. The fort itself is little detached from the main range and is joined by small saddle. Many well preserved gates, a dargah, samadhi of Ahilyabai and Baji Prabhu are some of the attractions along with a great view.

There is a famous dargah of Malka Rehman and a Shiv mandir.

The west gate of Vishalgad leads to Machal (7 km) or Devde and ahead by bus to Sakharpa (8 km) in Konkan on the main Ratnagiri road.

□ Panhala to Vishalgad

This is a good trek following the footsteps of history. Shivaji escaped from Panhala and, chased by Moghul army, took refuge in Vishalgad. Baji Prabhu held up the chasing army and trapped them at Pavan Khind. He laid down his life. This trek is beautiful and an experience in full fury of the rains, proceeding east to west generally.

From Panhala descend by Pusati buruj to Turukwadi and climb up the Mhasai Pathar (7 km). Descend on the other side to Kumbharwadi (4 km) and proceed to Mandlaiwadi (9 km).

Ahead proceed to Patewadi, Sukama to Pandhrepani (12 km). Pavan Khind is ahead (5 km). Descend over Kasari river to Kemruwadi (9 km). Vishalgad is ahead via Gajapur (9 km).

Motorable road joins Kolhapur-Ambe (via Malkapur) (62 km), bifurcate to Gajapur (19 km) to Vishalgad base (4 km).

A road joins Malkapur to Pandhrepani (20 km) and crosses to Anaskura ghat (12 km). One can trek down to Konkan from here to Rajapur. A bifurcating road from Pandhrepani goes towards a dam over Kasari river. This road almost skirts Pavan Khind.

○ Ambe Ghat

Ahead of Malkapur on the Kolhapur-Ratnagiri road, this is a motorable ghat road which is well known for its scenic beauty, forest and flora and fauna. A small rest house is available.

○ Gagangad

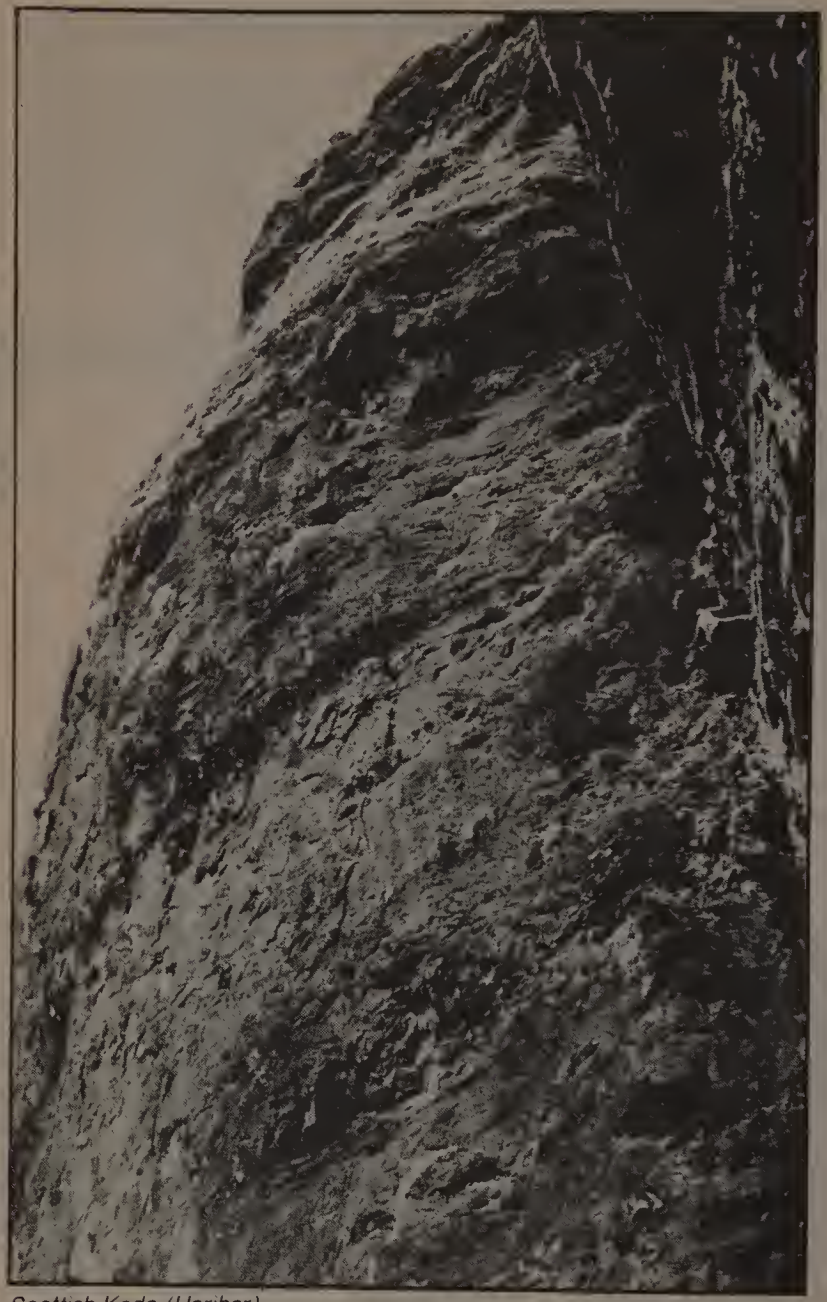
57 km southwest of Kolhapur, on the crest of Sahyadri lies this fort near the town of Bavda. This was a fort, built by Bhoj Raja of Panhala

in the 12th century and was dismantled after 1844. Water supply is abundant due to excessive rains. Bavda town can be reached by the buses from Kolhapur and the fort lies 2 km to the southeast.

○ **Bhudargad** (977 m —3206 ft)

Branching from the main Sahyadri range in the northeast direction, this is a fort situated on a bluff rock 58 km south of Kolhapur in Chikodi range bordering Vedagaiya river. Three old shrines on two huge plateaus on the top, one of 800 m going north-south and other of 650 m going east-west. From Kolhapur reach Gargoti and proceed to the base village Shivapurpeth 10 km to the south. [$]





Scottish Kada (Harihar)

ROCK CLIMBING AROUND BOMBAY

THE Western Ghats present many opportunites for a rock climber. There are plenty of places where one can learn and practice both basic and advanced craft. The areas mentioned here are the ones which are strictly meant for rock climbing only. Apart from these, many forts and pinnacles are available where one can do exploratory rock climbing. All these are mentioned in the preceding pages.

All the places of rock climbing mentioned below are for trained climbers only. They require rock climbing equipment like ropes, pitons, karabiners. It is most inadvisable to climb alone or without training. Many forts and places will demand the use of rock climber's skill and equipment to gain its summit.

MUMBRA

This group of hills provide the rock climber with routes of varying difficulty, and various techniques can be practised in these hills, at some place or the other. The pinnacle at the southern end is called the Mumbra pinnacle and the one at the north; Parsik pinnacle. The rocks vary from really bad to reasonably good ones. No single route can be said to have completely reliable holds, and good rock throughout the climb is rare. The climber should always test the holds and pitons already in place before trusting to them in these hills, and especially so after the monsoon, when the climbing season begins and in places where there is vegetation in cracks. Careful of the bees at many places.

Nursery Rocks

As the name suggests, this is a group of rocks ideal for the beginner. It provides all kinds of holds and techniques, whilst there is no exposure to speak of. After getting down at Mumbra railway station, walk back on the main road for about 200 m and then to the left up a well-trodden path near some huts, past a pylon placed on the slope, till one comes to level ground, more or less on the same level at the start of some smooth, gently overhanging slabs, which can be seen from the station as well as from the train. The place can be identified by the sprinkling of huge rocks on which one practices techniques such as mantleshelf, chimney, lay-back. The highest rock (one with a rippled surface at the north) is about 10 m and the rest are smaller.

Seventy-Foot Routes

From the nursery rocks, a level path leads further north for some 50 m to a slab of about 20 m (70 ft). The most obvious route on this is

up the crack. There are other routes to the left and right, none difficult and all ideal for getting the beginner used to some height. At the top of the slab, on a scree shelf, a thick iron peg is driven into the scree. This can be used for rappelling after proper testing each time. For these climbs, only a climbing rope and equipment for rigging up an anchor and for rappelling will be required. The best time is the afternoon, when there is shade here.

First Step Routes

Below, the Parsik pinnacle, there is what is called the 'First Step' as, in profile, it looks like a huge step. One can climb up to the start of the climb from the main road near the dredging site, following a path. At the top of the step (about 20 m) is an anchor peg like the one at 'Seventy-Foot' slab, though firmer, being cemented in. This can be used for rappelling on the east face or the north face. There are three obvious routes up this: (1) Starting from the tree at its base and going up in a generally straight line direction. There are 2 pitons in place for a running belay on the way and another one just 1 m below the end of the climb in a crack running from the stance to the top. (2) A variation would be to move left from this stance, over to the east face and then on to the top. Another route starts a few feet to the right near a faint cleft and leads in a generally 11 o'clock direction after the first few feet. (3) The easiest one is on the west face, up a fault running in a generally 2 o'clock direction upto some cactus at the top. For these climbs it would be useful to have about 3 pitons (horizontal and vertical), karabiner for snapping in and a sling or two. On the east face there are about 5 pitons in place for a few steps of artificial climbing. All these pitons should be thoroughly tested, some have been known to come off at a certain angle. Can be done morning or afternoon, the latter preferable for artificial climbing.

West Face Routes

After crossing the Philips Factory from the main road, across the railway tracks and up towards the west side of the Mumbra hills, one comes to the 'West Face'. Any route may be tried on this face, the most popular and easy one being along a fault in a slightly 11 o'clock direction ending at a scree ledge. There is an easy way down to the right. If you want to rappel, find a good firm tree, cactus or both. Pitons are not very useful here; chocs, slings, would be better. Good climb for the morning. Above this ledge there are looser rocks and steeper climbs only to be attempted by experienced climbers. Carry plenty of equipment for this.

Dudha Slabs Routes

Reach the dargah on way to Dudha lake and walk towards the north,

skirting the hill at the same level and keeping it to your right. A well-trodden path leads you to some rocky slabs. At the very beginning of these, the slopes are very gentle and easy for a mixed rock climbing and scramble. A little further on, more serious climbing pitches are available.

(1) Classic Route

This route starts from a ledge about 2 m off the ground and about a foot wide. The route follows a generally 2 o'clock direction along an obvious line and at about 5 m there is half driven-in piton in place (do not trust completely). About 20 m up, there is a jutting-out piece of rock which seems to adhere to the face, around which a sling may be put. Safer, however, would be to hammer in some pitons in some horizontal cracks around 15 m off the ground. About 40 m from the base, there is a wide shelf for a belay with an old rusty piton in place at knee-level. After the big shelf the route goes straight up from the piton for about 15 m to another wide ledge. The holds are firm and good on this stretch. Now make for a cactus at about 2 o'clock, direction, then around it and further up 10 o'clock direction past the gentle overhang and crumbly rocks and further up to a big cactus formation at the top.

(2) Traverse Route

This starts at about 5 m distance from the 'Classic' and goes straight up for about 20 m. The rock is very good, but no place for pitons or any protection for that matter. Pinch holds. At 20 m there are two interconnected holes through which a sling can be passed for a firm belay. From here the route goes slightly to your right along an obvious traverse line and ultimately joins the first stance on the 'Classic' route. Same way to the top.

(3) Crack Route

About another 120 m away from the 'Classic' route, there is a big vertical crack all along the face. If one follows this, it is a good climb to the top. Just to the left, however, if one keeps away from the crack, there is rock climbing to be had up to a stance ledge about 25 m above. On the way—at about 15 m—there is a good upward jutting rock on which to put a sling for a running belay. The rock on the ledge is very flaky and a horizontal piton would have to be put in a suitable crack. From this point, one chimneys over a rock and further up along the crack to the base of a very large rock. Place ofe belay here. From here up a narrow chimney formed by large rock and the face proper on to the scree slopes and the top.

(4) In-between Route

A few feet further away from the 'Crack' is another route which goes straight up for 15 m. Small ledge for belay. Further up, another 12 m, slightly bigger and sloping ledge. In two o'clock direction over a bulge may be a piton in place here —if not drive in one as it is a slightly tricky move. Slightly exposed traverse to the right and join the 'Crack' route almost at the end.

(5) Pudding Route

Very much further away, still skirting the hill at its base and about 250 m away from the start of the 'Classic' route, one comes across some broken rocks which still adhere loosely to the face. This marks the start of the route. Route goes up at 2 o'clock direction to an obvious shelf at about 15 m height and then at the same angle past a jutting out rock with a piton half driven in on its right side and on to a wider shelf with faint blue patches at knee level. A very firm piton will have to be put in here with a right-and-down oriented pull if used for a running belay. From here the route traverses to the right where the ledge peters out. This is part of the top of an overhang bulge and the exposure is more at this point than at any other. A fall here would be a free one to the bottom. One goes straight up from here for about 3 m. A short person will have to feel for the holds. After this the route goes up at 11 o'clock direction on to a stance. If one does not want this exposure —go straight up a fault from the shelf to a small tree. The exit near the tree is slightly tricky. From the stance ledge one goes straight up a flaky rock face for about 10 m on to grassy slopes and then further up easy scree slopes to the top. Also an escape route from the second stance on the left if one does not want to do the difficult part.

After completing any route on the Dudha slabs, there are easy slopes for getting down to the dargah on the southeastern side. All the routes require full length rope between climbers. A variety of pitons should always be carried and so also slings. One can then always rapell down if route is not sought to be completed. There are not many good places for pitons and whenever one is found, it is advisable to drive in a peg. Please however keep in mind the preservation of the rock face and it would help if pitons are driven in only when necessary, removed, and chokes are used wherever possible.

Gullies

On the east face of the hills, after the smooth slabs and before the Mumbra pinnacle, there are gullies which are distinctly seen from the road and numbered from north to south. The third gully has two good chimney climbs and a slab to finish off. The first gully has some wide

bridging and gullies 4 and 5 too have some good climbing pitches. Rest mostly scree. There are bees in these gullies and one has to be careful. Best time would be October-November. Good afternoon climbs.

Pinnacles

Both the Mumbra and Parsik pinnacles offer climbing opportunities. However, the rock here are particularly flaky and loose and it would be more proper to say there is scree climbing. Careful of the bees.

KANHERI CAVES

The area above the actual caves is an excellent training ground. To reach the caves direct buses are available from Borivli station on holidays. On other days, one has to go by car, or walk.

Climb above the caves to the temple. Near the temple, there is a group of three rocks amidst thickly grown trees. They are good for practice and loosening up. The holds are big and firm.

The Slab

Above these rocks, about 30 m higher, you come to 'The Slab'. This is gentle in gradient with 3-4 good routes. One route starts near the left end and goes straight up. Good holds to a small ledge at 15 m. Ahead slightly smaller holds to a step ledge and to the top.

The second route slightly to the left of this (3 m away) climbs gently up to a prominent ledge. Then traverse under the overhang to the right to join the original route.

The third route is on the extreme right of the first route. It follows a 20 m long under-cut crack along its entire length. Start from a tree on the right edge and proceed along the crack. Excellent undercut holds. Join the first route.

The Chimney

For 'The Chimney', proceed on the right from the temple. Climb up a dry nala and a rock wall to reach two huge rocks standing against each other. This is almost the highest point of the caves. Water is available here. 'The Chimney' is about 15 m high and enjoyable to climb. It widens a little towards the top, but otherwise it is very safe. A crack just on the right of the chimney is also an interesting climb (Ian 'Clough's Crack'). It follows a narrow chimney to begin with and the route ultimately forces one on to the face.

MAJOR ROCK CLIMBS IN SAHYADRIS

Arun Samant

Period	*Name, Approximate Height and Location of the Climb/Lead Climbers of the First ascent/Clubs*
1978 December	Lingana pinnacle (150 m), (Pune Region). Hira Pandit, Santosh Gujar, Anil Patwardhan, Tukaram Jadhav: 'Holiday Hikers'.
1979 November	Hadbi-chi-Shendi (70 m), (Nasik region) Deepak Mahajan, S. Oka, S. L. Patki and A. D. Gokhale: Private group
1983 December	Khada Parsi pinnacle, Jivdhan (130 m), (Malshej Ghat region) Charuhas Joshi, Bharat Hadkar, Sanjay Borole, Sunil Mohile: 'Girivihar'.
1983 December	Nawara pinnacle, Mahuli Chanderi (160 m), (Igatpuri region) Dilip Zunzarrao, Ramakant Mahadik, Dilip Dhumal: 'Cave Explorers' and 'Holiday Hikers'.
1984 April	Telbaila north pinnacle (60 m), (Lonavla region). Dilip Zunzarrao Naren Shetiya: 'Cave Explorers' and 'Nature Lovers'.
1984 April	Tungi pinnacle, Mangi-Tungi (85 m), (Nasik region). Arun Sawant, Dilip Zunzarrao: 'Cave Explorers', 'Nature Lovers' and 'Holiday Hikers'.
1984 May	Shendi pinnacle, Harishchandragad (40 m), (Malshej Ghat region) Arun Sawant, Dilip Dhumal: 'Cave Explorers',.

1984 September	Dangya (100 m), (Igatpuri region) Pradeep Kelkar, Naren Jadhav, Shyam Lanke, A. Fojdar, Y. Bal, C. Chawhan and D. Dhavle: 'Youth Hostel Association', Pune.
1984 December	Vazir pinnacle, Mahuli Chanderi (55 m), (Igatpuri region). Prajapati Bodhane, Pradeep Kelkar, Uday Kolvankar: 'Holiday Hikers'.
1985 February	Loose Boulder pinnacle, Mahuli Chanderi (50 m), (Igatpuri region). Milind Pathak, Prajapati Bodhane: 'Holiday Hikers'.
1985 April	Duke's Nose, north wall, (245 m), (Lonavla region). Arun Sawant, Satish Ambekar, Abhijit Patil: 'Cave Explorers'.
1985 December	Konkan Kada, northern edge, Harishchandragad (390 m), (Malshej Ghat region). Girish Sant, Jayant Kulkarni, Anant Pai, Vasant Limaye, Vivek Bhand: 'I.I.T., Bombay'.
1986 March	Ban pinnacle, between Dolkhamb and Ratangad (210 m), (Igatpuri region). Milind Pathak, Prajapati Bodhane, Anil Chavan, Dr. Deepak Kulkarni: 'Holiday Hikers'.
1986 May	One Tree Hill pinnacle, Matheran (85 m), (Karjat region). Raju Shinde, Arun Sawant: 'Cave Explorers'.
1986 November	Scottish Kada, Harihar Fort (170 m), (Nasik region). Doug Scott, Dhiren Toolsidas, Sharavati Prabhu: 'The Mountaineers'.

Year/ Location	*Brief Description and Nature of Injury/ Probable Reasons of the Accident*
1967 Parsik pinnacle (Mumbra)	Bees attacked a group of trainees on a rock climbing course. Trainees ran helter-skelter. One of them fell from the edge of the rock wall and died. *Bees attack.*
1968 Parsik pinnacle (Mumbra)	A big boulder came off from the top of the pinnacle. Out of three climbers standing on it, two safely jumped away whereas the third, Vallabh Meghpara fell and died. *Loose boulder.*
1977 Dudha Slab (Mumbra)	A handhold came off and the lead climber fell about 10 m to 15 m. Mani injured his spinal cord. *Loose rock and inadequate protection.*
1979 Lingana pinnacle (Pune region)	Santosh Gujar after climbing the pinnacle solo, fell and died when a piton from which he was rappelling came off. *Inadequate piton placement.*
1980 N.M.M. face (Mumbra)	The lead climber dislodged a loose rock which hit the second man. He fell bringing down the lead climber with him. Nagarkar and other climber had head injuries. *Loose rock, inadequate protection and no helmets.*
1980 Tanaji kada (Sinhgad)	During the descent Ashwin Pundalik slipped and died. *No protection.*
1980 Irshal (Karjat region)	During an unroped traversed Abhay Bhave slipped and died. *No protection.*

1982 Gambhirgad (Konkan region)	Sushila Iyengar slipped from a track, fell and died. *Loose scree.*
1982 Vashi (New Bombay)	The lead climber Shashank Kulkarni slipped on final scree portion bringing down the second with him but they were held by the third climber. Shashank Kulkarni and C. D. Tambat received head injuries and fractures. *Loose scree, inadequate protection and no helmets.*
1983 Mumbra pinnacle near Dudha Slab (Mumbra)	A handhold came off and the leader, Muslim Contractor fell. A runner could not hold his fall and he had head injuries. *Loose rock, inadequate protection and no helmets.*
1983 Nakhind (Karjat region)	During a local hike Purvi Vora slipped on wet rocks near the top and received back and knee injuries. *Wet slippery rocks and too many trekkers on slippery ground.*
1983 Karnala pinnacle (Karjat region)	Bees attacked three climbers on top of the pinnacle. They had no rope with them. Two of them managed to climb down, though severely bitten by bees. The third, Anil Murkshi jumped about 80 ft to his death. *Bees attack, no rope.*
1983 River near Bhimashankar (Karjat region)	Dastoor carried away by forceful current while crossing the river. Though the rope was used he was not tied on to it. *Improper use of rope.*
1983 Borivali to Thana	During a cross-country hike while crossing a flooded stream Virendra Khambkar was drowned trying to save a girl from drowning. *No rope.*
1984 Mahalaxmi pinnacle (Konkan region)	While climbing without rope, a boulder from a handhold came off and Prof. Pradeep Meher fell and died. *Loose rock and no protection.*

1984
Dudha Slab
(Mumbra)

The lead climber, Divyesh Muni fell when a foothold came off just 1.2 m away from the second Dr. Silin, who was anchored to a cactus tree. The lead climber, the second climber and the third climber alongwith all runners were pulled down. Divyesh escaped with sprain. Dr. Silin had head concussion and Vinita Bhatawdekar received fractures.

Loose rock, inadequate protection and no helmets.

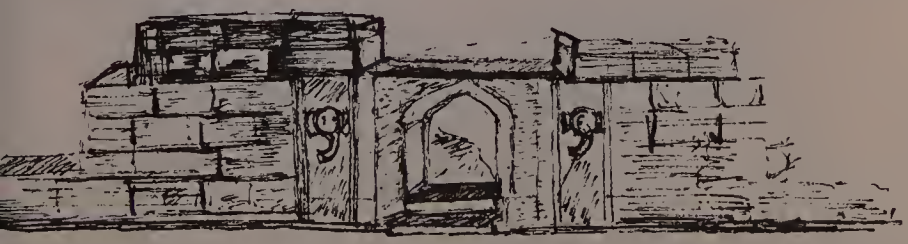
1986
West face of
Parsik pinnacle
(Mumbra)

The leading girl Sadhna slipped, the protections came off and she fell on the second, Mihir Sarkar. Both of them fell further down. Mihir died of head injuries while Sadhna Shah received multiple fractures.



A SUMMARY : MAIN REASONS OF ACCIDENTS

1. During hiking and trekking accidents have occured due to:
   (a) Slipping on loose scree, wet and loose rocks;
   (b) Not using ropes and protections while crossing difficult and exposed spots;
   (c) Crowding by trekkers at exposed places;
   (d) Not using ropes while crossing flooded streams and drowning by inexperienced swimmers, swimming in jeans.
2. During rock climbs accidents have occured because:
   (a) Handholds and footholds have easily come off, loose rocks have fallen on climbers after being dislodged by the party.
   (b) Protections are not properly and adequagtely placed by the lead climbers and have invariably come off during falls.
   (c) Second climbers have not adequately anchored themselves and instead of arresting the falls of lead climbers, they themselves have been pulled down. The main reason obviously being inexperience in giving a dynamic belay.
   (d) Climbers have not been using helmets.
   (e) Climbers have sometimes attempted things beyond their experience and capacities.
3. In Sahyadris there are plenty of bee-hives on rock faces and in jungles. Bees get disturbed due to smokes from fires of even cigarettes, loud sudden noises, stones thrown at them or any other reasons and attack moving trekkers. Once they attack the poison is painful. Or the panicky climber has slipped and injured himself.



CHECK-LISTS

The following suggested check-lists are found to be useful for items to be carried on treks. However, one must judiciously select items according to season, duration of a trek and the area to suit individual taste and needs.

EQUIPMENT CHECK-LIST

For a day outing	*Additional items for an overnight outing*	*Seasonal and special items*
Cap	Torch	Rainwear/ Umbrella
Rucksack	Toothbrush/paste	Pullover
Water bottle	Sleeping bag or	Goggles
Walking shoes	shawl/blanket	Swimming costume
Pen-knife	Towel	Soap
Lunch box	Socks	Wind-proof jacket
Change of clothes	Cooking utensil	Plastic bags
Chappals	Mug, Plate, Spoon	Map
Plastic sheet	Sleeping clothes	Compass
Lighter or	Candles	Steel-grip tape
Match box	Gas stove	

Prachitgad



FOOD CHECK-LIST

A trekker should be self-sufficient for all the meals and food. Nothing is available at villages and one should not plan to depend on it.

For a day outing

Chapatti/Bread
Cooked vegatables
Juicy fruits
Salad
Biscuit, Cake
Pickle, Jam
Butter, Cheese
Sweets
Lemon powder
Glucose
Sandwiches
Eggs
Cooked lentils
Curd

Additional items for overnight outings where cooking facilities are available

Khichdi/Thepla/Bhakri
Tea/coffee
Milk powder or
Condensed milk
Soup
Raw vegetables
Ghee
Rice
Potatos, Onions
Salt, Masalas
Canned food
Noodles
Dehydrated food
Papad



Mahimantgad

MEDICAL CHECK-LIST

Prepare a general medical kit and replace as and when used. Always carry this pack with you.

Ailment	*Drug (quantity)*	*Dosage*
Injury, blisters	Band Aid (10 strips)	apply as needed
	Cotton bandages (2)	
	Betadin ointment (1)	apply as needed
	Sterile gauge (2)	
Stomachache		
— if burning sensation	Digene (10)	1 tab. 4 to 6 times a day
— if colicky pain	Baralgan (10)	1 tab. 3 times a day
Bodyache, headache, fever or tiredness	Novalgin (10)	1 tab. 4 times a day
	Crocin (10)	
Travel sickness, or vomiting	Avomin (4)	1 tab. 2 times a day or as required
Allergy	Avil (4)	1 tab. as required
Skin irritation	Caladryl cream (1)	apply as required
Dehydration	Electral powder (2)	take as required
Water purifying	Steritabs tablets (20)	1 tab. as per instructions
	Iodine tabs. (20)	
Diarrhoea/ Dysentery	Lomotil (10)	1 tab. 3 times a day
	Streptomagma (20)	2 tabs. 3 times a day
Cough or sore throat	Strepsils (10)	take as required
Blisters	Boric powder	apply after bursting
Sprains	Crepe bandage (1)	apply
Muscle pain	Relaxyl (1)	rub gently

Also carry Odomos (for mosquitos, insects), medical tape. Any other special medicines should be carried as per individual needs after consulting your doctor.

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After the initial training in the Sahyadris and the Himalaya, he trekked and climbed extensively. Still an active climber, he has led many expeditions in the Himalaya and climbed high peaks.

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