

Unveiling grandeur of Sahyadris

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“MAGNIFICENT”, “awesome”, “breathtaking” are the words which come to mind if you happen to take in the view on the Malabar coast of Southern India along the Arabian Sea, wherein lies a range of mountains known as the Western Ghats or Sahyadris. One can’t but marvel at the painstaking effort of Kamal Bawa, a professor in Massachusetts and co-author Sandesh V Kador, an internationally acclaimed photographer, in bringing out a coffee-table book titled ‘Sahyadris: India’s Western Ghats — A Vanishing Heritage’.

The book, released by Nandan Nilekani and Rohini Nilekani, a unique endeavour of the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (Atree), not only highlights the beauty and incredible diversity of life in the mountain stretch in the form of pictures but also includes nuggets of information about this little-known region in peninsular India. Incidentally, this nearly 1600 km stretch along the southwestern coast is considered one of the global diversity hotspots in critical need of conservation. And this is precisely the point which the authors of the book are trying to make.

We could not help but ask what motivated them to address this globally acknowledged issue. “Well, the inspiration came in the form of a query by Nandan, who once asked me if there was any book on conservation, to which I had no answer. The idea of writing such a book germinated then and started taking shape when I met Sandesh at an exhibition. I shared with him my idea, to which



Kamal Bawa (not in pic) & Sandesh Kador (on right), authors of the book ‘Sahyadris: India’s Western Ghats – A vanishing heritage’, which was launched by CEO of Infosys Technologies Ltd., Nandan Nilekani (on left) on Wednesday. Rohini Nilekani (centre) of Arghyam looks on.

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he took an instant liking.”

“Though the 240-page book was completed in a short duration of a year and a half, it was quite a task,” agreed Sandesh.

Releasing the book, Nilekani said, “Conserving nature is the need of the hour and the Western Ghats present a true picture of beauty and biodiversity. The book will serve the purpose of creating awareness among citizens and policy makers on the need to conserve this bounty of nature before it vanishes.”

Echoing these sentiments, Rohini Nilekani said it is time to acknowledge the work of every single conservationist in the country and this book is a reminder of how humans and nature can co-exist.

Saying that conservation is a passion with him, Kamal Bawa added, “It is a complex challenge to conserve bio-diversity and multiple approaches should be used to address the issue. We, society as a whole, should come together and take up this cause.” Elaborating, he suggested a three-pronged strategy to tackle and conserve natural resources -- generating new knowledge, creating awareness and finally having a policy and governance to ensure correct implementation.

The authors are planning to come up with another book showcasing the bio-diversity of the Eastern Himalayas, while Sandesh is planning to produce documentaries on conservation.