

INAUGURAL CEREMONY

Nov 21, 2005 - Monday at 6.30 pm, Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

The official inaugural ceremony of Vatavaran 2005 was held in the evening at the Stein auditorium, India Habitat Centre on November 21, 2005. Though the festival started off in the morning with three parallel events i.e. screening of nominated films in two halls and the International Federation of environmental journalists Annual Congress at IHC.



Dr. Pradipto Ghosh, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests welcoming the participants and delegates



Harriet Nimmo, Chief Executive, Wildscreen releasing the festival catalogue at the Inaugural ceremony of the festival



August gathering at the inaugural ceremony of the festival



Shri S. Jaipal Reddy lighting the inaugural lamp of the festival alongwith farmer couple, Ramiah and Janammah

Dr. N. Bhaskara Rao, Chairman, Center for Media Studies in his welcome speech introduced the concept of Vatavaran to the audience. He said, "Vatavaran assumes importance because it is India's only competitive film festival featuring film screenings, symposia, exhibition, film bazaar, etc. It is also the first time that so many collaborations of this importance have been achieved and the number of entries we have received from filmmakers is very encouraging and shows the popularity Vatavaran enjoys".

In a unique gesture of appreciation, Dr. Rao felicitated Ramiah and Janammah, a farmer couple from Khamam district of Andhra Pradesh, who had contributed to the environment by planting ten million (one crore) trees single handedly. The couple lit the lamps and set the motivational tone for the festival by their enchanting song.



Shri S. Jaipal Reddy, Union Minister of Urban Development and Culture, while inaugurating the festival cited Vatavaran as catalyst to encourage filmmakers and motivating electronic media to take up the issue. He said “Films are the most potent media for motivating and informing people about environmental issues or any of the national agendas”

Welcoming all the distinguished guest and audience Dr. Prodipto Ghosh, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, appreciated Vatavaran for providing a platform for filmmakers to showcase their work. Reiterating the importance of environmental issues and the role played by the filmmakers he said, “filmmakers have a task of entertaining and informing and they have to do all this with great sensitivity and with a great deal of creativity. It is also important that filmmakers as part of this enormous responsibility ensure that they reflect the scientific understanding that exists and answer to these that remain.”

Ms. Sunita Narain, Director, Centre for Science and Environment, referring to the role played by media and filmmakers in triggering a change in the society said, “the biggest tragedy today in India, is that media is only following what society already knows and already does, we are not leading the change. And that is really the big challenge in front of filmmakers and the communicators.

The fact is that media demands simple stories so we tell them but our ultimate challenge is to tell a complicated story and yet be able to enthuse the same middle class audiences to understand that story even if it is about protecting the tiger it cannot be done in the abject poverty of this country.”



Critically acclaimed filmmaker Buddhadeb Dasgupta expressed happiness on being a part of Vatavaran and requested the organizers to give the festival more visibility by taking it to all parts of the country. “I want to request the organizers to please take this festival out from here so that everybody knows this festival exists”. He also requested the filmmakers to provide the real picture and maintain originality. “By not manipulating images let us speak out our hearts, our minds and our stories”

Dr. N. Bhaskara Rao, stated that Vatavaran was not simply a festival but a movement for creating concern and compassion for environment, nature and wildlife in society. It was a multi-faceted activity taking the shape of a national movement. “Vatavaran is not for screening of films alone. It has a series of sequential parallel events involving eminent producers, directors, activists across India and abroad.” He added, “this year Vatavaran 2005 has special significance, for first, it has attracted 244 entries against about 100 in 2002 and 154 in 2003”.

The lighting of the festival lamp by all the dignitaries was followed by book release of the Vatavaran 2005 Festival Book by Harriet Nimmo. This was followed by the screening of the inaugural film, Monsoon – India’s God of Life, by Vatavaran 2003 award winning filmmaker Shekar Dattatri. Dedicated to the theme of the Festival – Forest for Life, this inaugural film was a chronicle of how the wildlife of India copes with the days of summer, and how the arrival of the southwest monsoon transforms their lives and the land they live in.