



## SCREENINGS OF VATAVARAN NOMINATED FILMS

21 November 2005

10 am – 5:00 pm, Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, India

- Opening film: *River Taming Mantras* 30' by Sanjay Barnela focuses on the consequences of flood control measures like construction of embankments in Bihar.
- *Diary on Man Monkey* 27' by Anirban Dutta Gupta explores the intricate web of relationship between the common Langur and the humans in the city of Ahmedabad in Gujarat.
- *Do your Bit* 30" by Anand Thakur is a message to save water.
- *Vultures: Death Watch* 47' by Niret Alva and Nikhil J Alva seeks the cause behind the sudden death of vultures
- *Experiment with Truth*, 6' by Amish Srivastava dwells on the impact of pollution.

### Open forum - An interactive session

This year, the festival introduced Open Forum for discussing various pertinent issues. School students, students from colleges and mass communication institutes, filmmakers and general public participated in the open forum on the first day. Filmmaker shared their experiences of filmmaking. Questions on availability of funds for shooting for three years, pros and cons of the construction of embankments, availability of a Hindi version of the film and whether rivers be tamed were raised for the opening film 'River Taming Mantras'.

Syed Fayaz while replying to an audience query commented, "we are not activists. We are just filmmakers. We are here to raise an issue. There are other people who should take it forward". He further said "For filmmakers like myself what matters is audience... Even if we change one person... that's it, this is what's going to make a change".



*Filmmakers responding to audience*

The audience asked for justification behind the conclusion that diclofenac was the cause behind the death of vultures as shown in the film ‘Vultures: Death Watch’. Director Amish Srivastava said, *“Humlogon ne kahin baar kaha hai ki we are not activists, toh hamaaraa kehne kaa matlab yeh nahin hai ki hum bachke nikalnaa chaah rahe hain.. Solution toh film mein hai... bas baat yeh hai ki aapko issue kaise hit karta hai”*.

On the issue of reaching wider audiences and coping with budget constraints, Anirudh Rastogi, student filmmaker said, “I feel that people from more diverse background should take filmmaking... to make it richer”. On coping with budget constraints, Anirban Dutta Gupta, added that “It is slightly more difficult for a Natural History and Wildlife filmmaker to survive as compared to another branch of filming”.

While sharing his experiences of shooting filmmaker Anirban Dutta said, “Shadows of Tehri’ was an attempt to document the experiences of the former residents the of old Tehri. I tried to contrast pro – monarch and anti monarch views of the residents.”



Taking up an audience query on selection of the subject of the film, director Vijay Jodha said that he felt that the healers were successful in their treatments and their work represented both biodiversity and religious diversity as the healers were Muslims and their clients were Hindus.

Vijaya Mule, President, Indian Documentary Producers Association: “I am only hoping that the documentary filmmakers would start lobbying together and see that their programmes are shown not only by NGOs and concerned individuals but they get shown on television channel, you have to fight for a documentary slot”.

Smita Singh, Associate Producer, “Vultures: Death Watch” expressed her concern about funding for documentary filmmaking and said, “The marketing thing. It is not always that easy. I am sure that most of the documentary makers first get funding to make a documentary and secondly, to get people to be interested to watch that documentary”.

Finally at the conclusion of the forum many suggestions came from the filmmakers as well as the audiences such as it is important that the films are shown to the concerned authorities as well as the films should reach to the masses so the possibility of multiplexes showing these documentaries need to be explored.

Vatavaran screenings contd...

- *Healers for All Reasons*, 28' by Vijay S Jodha on two village healers of Gujarat and their respect for biodiversity
- *Cute Bunny*, 3' by Dhimant Vyas about basic civic sense
- *Save Trees, Trees Save 30"* by Amer Jameel on how trees can save lives
- *Shadows of Tehri*, 45' by Anirban Datta on the essence of Old Tehri town in Tehri Garhwal, Uttaranchal before it was submerged
- *A Blossom Begins To Sing*, 6' by Premraj R about a young girl's devotion to preserve forests and wildlife.



- *Stolen Water*, 22', Prasanth and Daya, about the environmental and social impact of ground water extraction by Coca Cola in Plachimada, Kerala

## **VATAVARAN SCREENINGS**

**21 November 2005**

10:30 am – 1:30 pm, Amaltas Hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

- *Panna – Jewel of central India*, 15' by Shekar Dattatri
- *Living on Thy land*, 32' by Anirudh Rastogi, Vanshaja Shukla, Vikas Upadhyay
- *The Way To Dusty Death*, 28' by Syed Fayaz
- *It's the Fish Speaking!*, 8' by Jyoti Patil
- *Pastures in the Heaven*, 38' by K Mohan Kumar
- *The Apatani of Arunachal Pradesh*, 54' by Anu Malhotra

## **VATAVARAN SCREENINGS**

**22 November 2005**

9:00 am – 7:30 pm, Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

- *Just Another Death*, 25' by Vilas Kane focuses the road deaths of snakes at Mahabaleshwar in the Western Ghats
- *Invocations to the Mountain Goddess* 64' by Christopher Rego explores how declaring the Niti valley in the Garhwal a protected area changed the life of the pastoral community
- *The Jaws of Death* 18' by Gautam Saikia discovers the road deaths of animals in Kaziranga National Park while crossing the national highway to escape the annual flood



- *Shadows 3'* by Vishal Furia seeks consequences of the destruction of nature through animation
- *The Policing Langur 30'* by Ajay and Vijay Bedi shows the use of langurs in dealing with the monkey menace in Delhi
- *A Hunter's Tale, 6'*, Abhishek Singh seeks the transformation of a hunter into a friend of animals through animation
- *Prayer for Rebirth 10'*, Ambika illustrates the impact of the spraying of pesticides on humans and other living beings in Kasaragod in Kerala
- *In the Forest Hangs a Bridge 50'*, Sanjay Kak explores how the villagers of Adi in Siang valley of Arunachal Pradesh completed the unique task of building a more than a thousand feet long bridge of bamboo and cane in less than three days

**Open Forum:** School students, students from colleges and mass communication institutes, filmmakers and general public participated in the open forum on the second day. Issue discussed was on the number of animals of Kaziranga National Park being killed on roads and the government's seriousness in dealing with the issue. Christopher Rego, filmmaker said "It is always a dilemma for a filmmaker about what exactly would you like to narrate or bring out through the film and what you keep out because ideally you would like to probably make that film double its length. I wanted to bring out every issue and the complexity involved through my film; the length was never a concern."

Sanjay Kak, filmmaker replied about duration of the film "this question of film length is essentially a problem not of audiences but of programmers and broadcasters...Sometimes complex arguments cannot be reduced to 40 minutes. You can in 40 minutes provide a précis of the argument but a précis is a no substitute for the real understanding of an issue...It is not an excuse for laziness or sloppiness."

Abhishek Singh, filmmaker said, "If a road kill is happening the serpent can't do anything and it's a great problem but in animation a serpent can actually come back and stop the truck and can say 'please don't kill me'. Animation has got that power in it."

The question was raised if using langurs to tackle the monkey menace was just a temporary solution or a long term one. The need of a Sanctuary for the langurs and monkey, due to encroachment on the forest areas leading to shrinking habitat of the wildlife was also a topic of discussion. The question was also raised about the experience of the directors of 'The Policing Langur' in getting the permission to shoot in the North and South Block.

Responding to queries, Iqbal Malik, primatologist commented, "in spite of our repeated request a monkey sanctuary has not come up. We are still fighting for it, the proposal is still with the government and what they have come up with is just a cage." She insisted "Wild animals have to be treated with respect for what they are."

#### **Vatavaran Screenings Contd...**

- *Vanishing Giants*, 5', Mike Pandey explores the cruel and archaic methods of capturing elephants followed by the government;
- *Only An Axe Away*, 40', P Baburaj and C Saratchandran seeks the impact of the construction of a dam at the fringes of the Silent Valley National Park in Kerala;
- *Mindless Mining - The Tragedy of Kudremukh*, 12', Shekar Dattatri discloses the impact of an iron ore mining operation in Kudremukh National Park in Karnataka
- *Some People*, 2', Paritosh Kumawat dwells the need to care for nature
- *Our Present Their Future*, 40", Lavanya presents the need to use natural resources wisely as it is we who decide the future of the next generations
- *The Home Coming*, 15', Sujata Kulshreshtha presents on the 'Save the Whale Shark Campaign' in Gujarat
- *Images of Development*, 25', Pramod Gupta finds the violent eviction of the slum dwellers as a process of urban planning and development in Kolkata
- *The Last Flight*, 24', Nutan Manmohan says how diclofenac was responsible for the mystery deaths of vultures

- *Fistful of Steel*, 29', Leena Rani Narzary, Nidhi Bal Singh and Sabir Haque presents the ecological and social impact of the illegal constructions including Akshardham temple in the Eastern Yamuna River bed.
- *The Source of Life for Sale*, 58', K P Sasi presents the environmental and social impact of the privatization of water bodies in South India
- *Wild India 24 Hours*, 13', Rupin Dang dwells the wilderness of the entire Indian subcontinent in one 24-hour period;
- *Hitler*, 25", Rani Jeyaraj illustrates how everyone responsible for pollution is as guilty as Hitler; and last but not the least
- *Elephant - God or Destroyer*, 30', Krishnendu Bose presents the elephant habitats and their behaviour and how the villagers handle the attack of an elephant herd on their paddy fields.

**Discussion:** Saratchandra, Shekhar Dattatri, Sujata Kulshreshtha, Pramod Gupta, Leena Rani Narzary, Nidhi Bal Singh, Sabir Haque, Krishnendu Bose were present in the interaction with the audience. Saratchandra spoke on how he and Baburaj were involved in the campaign for almost a decade and how the film helped them in taking the issue forward. Shekhar Dattatri narrated the entire story of the iron ore mining and its consequences and how this small film worked as an eye-opener for the Supreme Court Judges, which led to the closing of the iron ore mining process in Kudremukh. The campaign on the whale sharks, how the community was mobilized and took the campaign further to save the whale sharks were discussed. The directors of *Fistful of Steel*, narrated how they fought against illegal constructions especially the Akshardham temple and “lost the battle” yet decided to document it.



## VATAVARAN SCREENINGS

23 November 2005

9:00 am – 7 pm, Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

- *Development Flows From The Barrel of A Gun*, 54' by Biju Toppo and Meghnath reflects state violence against people affected by development projects in the country.
- *Leopards of Bollywood*, 47' by Animitra Chakravarti tells the frightening tale of leopards that have struck terror in the suburbs of Mumbai.
- *Devta Activists*, 28' by Sanjay Barnela studies the impact of the creation of the Great Himalayan National Park and the Parvati Hydro - Electric Project on the local traditions of the Kullu Valley of the Indian Himalayas
- *Oshobano (The Hunt)*, 23' by Anuj Singh looks at how the ways of life of the Lotha tribe in Nagaland are adversely affecting environment and ecology.
- *Save Petrol Save Money*, 1' by Samir Chadha dwells on how to save petrol.
- *CNG*, 1' by Debanjan Nandy impresses upon one on the issue of how CNG can help us go faster and stay healthier
- *Once Upon A Time*, 20' by Pawanpreet Kaur focuses on the two long-lost streams of Delhi and how estrangement from one's resources eventually leads to the obliteration of the art of sound management of them
- *Bhopal – The Survivor's Story* 25' by Rumah Rasaan draws out the grim reality of life of the lakhs of survivors of the Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984.

**Open Forum:** Some of the issues raised were: The present position in the five areas where state violence was shown in Meghnath's film and the local media's reaction to the film ('Development Flows From The Barrel of A Gun'), How did the people in the film react when the filmmakers were shooting for 'The River Taming Mantras'. C. Saratchandran's experience in terms of making films and generating public awareness ('Only An Axe Away') also if taking 'Bhopal – The Survivor's Story' to north America





and showing it there would be possible. It was enquired that why Nutan Manmohan's film came down on diclofenac so emphatically and if the drug attacked only gyp vultures. The impact on vultures of another steroid given to baby cattle ('The Last Flight') and if some degree of sensationalization in 'Leopards of Bollywood' could have been avoided. Views were expressed that there should be some line and one cannot shoot the grief of the parents who lost their child as it is a very private moment for them.

The need to question the whole development model of India as well as of the rest of the world was the focus in 'Once Upon A Time'. On the film 'Oshobano - The Hunt' issue raised was whether there was any consciousness on the part of the local tribe that wildlife populations were going down and if the hunting shown in the film was legal or illegal.

Vijaya Mule, president, Indian Documentary Producers Association (IDPA) as suggested that at some point of time when Vatavaran becomes bigger, don't only bring the children, ensure that there is a discussion with the children also. She also mentioned that this film.... 'Once Upon a Time' should really be talked about in every mohalla of Delhi city". She further added that in this country, our developers, our govt. and all those who take decisions talk only of development.... which is only for a selected few... In order to protect our future generation we have to make sure the films, which are shown here, are shown publicly at various places. She said that another problem which people talk about is that people don't like documentaries. That is wrong.

Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Dada Saheb Phalke Award Winner also highlighted that we cannot allow ourselves that kind of freedom to encroach of what little is left of these (wildlife) in the nature. He said that this medium has suddenly become a very important weapon in the enactment of democracy and what Vatavaran has initiated is a remarkable movement and I hope it spreads. It is very important that the children... and people who take policy decisions see these films. He also stressed that we have to impress upon the govt. that these restrictions should go. There should be no censoring and we are very much aware of our responsibilities in the society".

### Vatavaran Screenings Contd...

- *Ways and Words* 26', R G Gopnarayanan how narrow alleys can evoke nostalgia and memories in Malayalees
- *A Shivalik Monsoon* 25', Rupin Dang the life of the Paradise Flycatcher in the Shivaliks;
- *The Revival*, 23' by Jobin Thomas narrates the true story of a man and his mission towards the regeneration of a forest of his own at a rural village in Kerala.
- *Irony*, 50" by R. Sathya Narayanan is a poignant portrayal of the irony of publishing books on saving trees and drives home the need to look for alternate ways to generate awareness, particularly on environmental issues.
- *Why Not?* 4' by Anitha Balachandran is an educational film on urban environmental problems and appropriate solutions for them.
- *Living with Giants*, 50' by Ashish Chandola dwells on the state of elephant conservation in India.
- *Kanha-Protecting Paradise*, 18' by Shekar Dattatri is a journey through the life of the Forest guards in Kanha National Park, the well known Project Tiger reserve in India.
- *Indian Leopards – The Killing Fields*, 53' by Praveen Singh captures the attempts by scientists and conservationists to understand leopards and dwells on the need to strike a balance between the necessity to conserve wildlife and the need to protect people.
- *A Second Hand Life*, 26' by Nutan Manmohan poignantly portrays the hazards and big business of the e-waste recycling.

**Discussion:** Issues raised in the interaction between the filmmakers and audience were:

- Whether the producers and directors of the revival have themselves planted any tree after the realization of how important trees are to human lives.
- Sathya Narayanan got this idea when a little boy had pointed out the amount of paper wasted during campaigns on conservation issues.
- About the forest guards, their salary, working conditions and occupational hazards.
- On the electronic waste that is exported from developed countries and are dumped in developing nations and the environmental impact of such e-waste



## VATAVARAN SCREENINGS

**23 November 2005**

5:45 pm – 7:15 pm, Amaltas Hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

- *The Hunt*, 10', by Saurav Dutta
- *Life Goes On*, 5', by Suparna Gangal
- *Dance With Hands Held Tight*, 62', by Krishnendu Bose

**24 November 2005**

3:15 pm, Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

- *Still the children are here* 85' by Dinaz Stafford

5:45 pm – 7:00 pm, Amaltas Hall, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

- *A Silent Killer*, 23', by Dhananjoy Mandal
- *Development at Gun Point*, 36', by K P Sasi

## Vatavaran Screenings of Award Winning Films

**24 November 2005**

2:30 pm – 7:30 pm, Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

All the award-winning films were screened.