

Tripura film bags first National Film Award



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Internationally acclaimed Kokborok film YARWNG (Roots) won the first national film award for Tripura at 56th National Film Awards (2008) held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi, 19 March, 2010. The President of India Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil handed over the medal and certificate to Don Bosco priests Joseph Kizhakechennadu (producer) and Fr. Joseph Pulinthanath (director) for their second feature film.

Pulinthanath dressed in white cassock and Kizhakechennadu in his preferred saffron lungi and half-sleeved white kurta were among 52 film award winners of 2008, including high-profile Bollywood actor Priyanka Chopra and the doyen of Indian Cinematography V.K. Murthy who was awarded country's highest honor in cinema - the Dada Saheb Phalke Award.

Union Minister for Information & Broadcasting, Smt. Ambika Soni and Dr. S. Jagathrakshakan, Minister of State for Information & Broadcasting, and other officials accompanied the President.

Accent on People's Cinema

The award winning 95 minute film Yarwng (Roots) tells the story of large-scale displacement of tribal people that took place in the tiny Northeastern state when a hydel project was set up there in the late 1970s. Yarwng was the opening film at the prestigious Indian Panorama section of the 39th International Film Festival of India (IFFI) in Panaji, Goa, November 2008.

According to the filmmakers, the script of Yarwng emerged from the numerous encounters they held with displaced people in the sanctity of their ramshackle homes. "All the incidents and emotional turmoil we see in the film were etched in the subconscious psyche of the people. All we did was to get close to them and feel their stories as they recalled them with looks, sighs, tears and also words," recalled the priest director and winner of national and international awards.

"Although the technical team came from Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala) and the support team from Guwahati (Assam), the best part of the production was the involvement of the local people," says producer Kizhakechennadu who claims cinematic traditions from his legendary relative John Abraham, a genius in Malayalam cinema and founder of a people's cinema movement called Odessa.

All the artistes and production hands were from Tripura state including noted actors Meena Debbarma who plays the lead role of Karmati, Amulya Ratan Jamatia, Nirmal Jamatia and Surabhi Debbarma.

Yarwng has traveled throughout India and has been screened in major cities around the world including New York, Brisbane, Moscow, Taipei, Stuttgart and Dhaka.

Yarwng also won a Special Jury Mention Award at the 3rd Eye Asian film festival held in Mumbai in 2008.

The film, part-financed by Church organizations – Missio Germany, Signis and the Salesian Congregation is also a compelling testament to the commitment of the Church and the Don Bosco Society to preservation of local, indigenous cultures and people.

C.M. Paul, New Delhi

editor

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