

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
ON THE OCCASION OF PRESENTATION OF THE 65TH
NATIONAL FILM AWARDS**

New Delhi, May 3, 2018

1. I am happy to be here with the cream of our cinema industry for the 65th National Film Awards ceremony. I must begin by congratulating each of the 125 award winners, as well as the countless artistes who have worked on the films that are being recognised today. This is a special moment for all of you.
2. I must also make special mention of two actors who are being honoured posthumously– and who are unfortunately not with us anymore. Sridevi is this year’s winner of the Best Female Actor Award. And Vinod Khanna has been named for the Dadasaheb Phalke Award for his lifetime contribution. We miss them today, and we will miss them forever. Their finest films – “Mere Apne”, “Lamhe”, so many come to mind – were more than just box office successes; they tugged at our hearts and captured our emotions.
3. When Vinod Khanna and Sridevi passed away, for millions of film lovers the loss seemed personal. Their fans and followers – those who had watched their films and laughed and cried to scenes on the screen – could be found all over the country, in every state and region. This is the beauty of cinema. Our film industry unites us as few others do.
4. हमारी अनेकता या विविधता ही भारत की सबसे बड़ी ताकत है। हमारी फिल्में न केवल इस विविधता को व्यक्त करती है बल्कि इसमें अपना योगदान भी देती हैं। हमारी फिल्मों के कथानक हमें यह प्रेरणा देते हैं कि हम अपनी सभ्यता और अपने समाज की साझा विरासत से जुड़े रहें। हमारी फिल्में शिक्षा और मनोरंजन दोनों ही प्रदान करती हैं। वे उन सामाजिक चुनौतियों को भी दर्शाती हैं जिन पर हमें अभी

काबू पाना है। और सबसे बड़ी बात यह है कि यह सब फिल्मों द्वारा ऐसी भाषा में किया जाता है जिसे हर कोई समझ सके।

[Our films both represent and contribute to the diversity that is India's biggest strength. In their narrative our films inspire us to stay true to the ideals of our civilisation and of our shared society. They educate and they entertain. They also hold a mirror to the social challenges that we still have to overcome. And they do this in a language that is universal.]

5. Films are made in a variety of languages in India, from Bhojpuri to Tamil, Marathi to Malayalam to several others. And yet cinema is a language in itself. Hindi cinema has probably done more than any other institution to popularise Hindi as a language across the country. One doesn't have to be a Bengali to appreciate the humanism and the nuance of a Satyajit Ray or a Ritwik Ghatak. You need not know Telugu to be mesmerised by the epic of "Bahubali". And let us not forget that A.R. Rahman – who has won the National Award again – made an early impression even among those who did not understand the Tamil words of the songs, but were nevertheless enchanted by his music.

6. मुझे बताया गया है कि 'लद्दाखी' भाषा में बनी एक फिल्म ने राष्ट्रीय पुरस्कार प्राप्त किया है। इसी तरह लक्षद्वीप में केवल कुछ हजार लोगों द्वारा बोली जाने वाली 'जासरी' भाषा में बनी एक फिल्म भी पुरस्कृत हुई है। सर्वश्रेष्ठ फीचर फिल्म का पुरस्कार असम में बनी 'विलेज रॉक-स्टार्स' को दिया गया है। विभिन्न क्षेत्रों में उत्कृष्ट फिल्म-निर्माण के ऐसे अनेकों उदाहरण हैं। यह हम सभी के लिए बड़े ही गर्व का विषय है। साथ ही, कला के रूप में सिनेमा के लिए यह एक महत्वपूर्ण उपलब्धि है।

[This year I have been told that a film made in Ladakhi has won a National Award. So has a film in Jasari, a language spoken by only a few thousands in Lakshadweep. The award for the best feature film has gone to an Assamese film, "Village Rockstars". There are innumerable examples of accomplished film-making from different regions. This is a matter of pride for us, and an achievement for the craft of cinema.]

7. The history of Indian cinema can be traced to 1913, when Dadasaheb Phalke made “Raja Harishchandra”, the first full-length feature film in the country. Our film industry has come a long way from those pioneering days. Technical excellence, sound effects, cinematography, experiments with forms, out-of-the-box scripts, and excellence both behind and in front of the camera have revolutionised our cinema in the past few decades. Creative scale, artistic ambition and production budgets have all expanded. And I am confident we can do even better.
8. Cinema is culture and cinema is also commerce. The Indian film industry is among the largest in the world, with about 1,500 films a year. It is an expression of Indian soft power and has a transcontinental footprint. Our films are watched and appreciated in Japan and Egypt, China and the United States, Russia and Australia and so many far-off countries. Films are one of our foremost cultural exports and an important device for connecting the global Indian community to the rhythms of life back home.
9. I am told that the Indian film industry employs two hundred thousand people directly and many more indirectly. Thanks to a healthy rise in domestic collections, as well as overseas releases and satellite rights, the industry grew 27 per cent in 2017. In 2018, I am given to believe, it is expected to grow by a further 18 per cent. These are very impressive numbers.
10. We are living in exciting and transformational times for cinema and for the wider entertainment economy. Technology has changed the way films are made as well as the way they are consumed. With the advent of low-cost data and smart phones and tablets, there is a clear shift in viewership patterns. The Indian film industry is adapting to these changes and I am sure it will continue to devise strategies to convert challenges into opportunities. Film-makers could also find that the economics and the delivery of niche productions will become increasingly feasible. Hopefully this will encourage them to raise the bar.

Ladies and Gentlemen

11. Cinema connects societies and the film industry too is increasingly global in its collaboration. A film may be produced in one country, actually shot in a second country, and outsource post-production and animation work to a third country. India is a part of this integrated ecosystem, but it needs to climb up the value chain. It is gaining traction as a film-making destination. The success of several India-based films has attracted many international studios. We need to build on this process and create jobs and opportunities for our creative and talented young people.
12. The government has taken various initiatives to promote India as a global film-making hub. A new category of visas for foreign film-makers has been created. The Film Facilitation Office has been opened as a single-window agency to spur film making by international production houses. Separately, I am optimistic that the recently launched E-Cine-praman, the Online Film Certification System of the Central Board of Film Certification, will also be an enabler of transparency and efficiency.
13. Before I conclude, a word about the ultimate stakeholders of our film industry – the millions who queue up to buy tickets and to loyally watch films. We often see films in communities, in a movie theatre or a multiplex, or before a television set. But in its essence watching a film is an individual experience. As the lights dim and as the screen comes alive, the magic of the movies explodes before the individual film lover. It does something to our hearts and our minds, our eyes and our senses.
14. That magic is a result of your efforts and your brilliance, of all of you who have won awards today and of your many exceptional colleagues. May you and may our film industry go from strength to strength. To borrow a line from a film that some of you may remember, “Picture abhi baaki hai” – the best is ahead of us.

Thank you
Jai Hind!