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Artistes, leaders step out & respond to Sadhguru's call, vow to save rivers

Mohua.Das@timesgroup.com

The bond between humans and rivers is an obvious one. Not surprisingly a motley mix of artistes, state leaders and corporate bigwigs descended on the NSCI Dome in Worli on Monday evening to join forces with Rally for Rivers to highlight the depletion of rivers in India.

The evening kicked off with shadow artiste Prahlad Acharya wielding his fingers to play with light and shadow and paying an ode to the relationship between humans, animals and nature before singers Kailash Kher and Shaan reminded the audience of songs that have over generations celebrated the country's rivers.

The auditorium erupted in joy as Sadhguru rose from his seat to jump, jive and lead the crowd in a fevered call-and-response chant of "Oh nadiya", a special song composed by Sachin Gupta as an anthem celebrating the sacred role of rivers in people's lives. Amruta Fadnavis, wife of CM Devendra Fadnavis, who has lent her voice to the anthem, said, "Time is running out and rivers are dying out. With our helping hands, things will fall into place so let us plant as many trees as we can."

Vineet Jain, MD of Times Group, who was present at the event, spoke of the need for "the ecological balance" which trees provide. If actor Varun Dhawan stressed on the need for the youth to come forward "because our today will define tomorrow", actor Anupam Kher dwelled on how human instincts were linked to nature.

In a gesture of goodwill, the Wockhardt Foundation felicitated the Sadhguru as 'World Peace Ambassador'. A shot in the arm for Rally for Rivers came from the minister of forest, finance and planning, Sudhir Mungantiwar, who gave a thumbs-up to the plan and assured inclusive and sustainable solutions starting in the state.

Sadhguru who embarked on the campaign call on September 3 driving down from Coimbatore through six states before entering Maharashtra emphasised on the marriage of economic and ecological concerns. "There is much emotion invested in this country for our rivers but just being a emotional about it will not spring solutions. It needs strategies and long term commitments in terms of augmentation of water and managing the usage. The kind of biodiversity our land has, it will respond like no other if we do the right things," he said urging the government to convert 25% of the land it owns into a forest cover.

The Sadhguru also made a clarion call to "200 youths" to stand by him and work for the cause for the next three years. "I promise you two meals and a place to stay," he smiled as the crowd roared in response.

Shriram Vernekar

(Above L-R) Times Group MD Vineet Jain, Sadhguru, actors Anupam Kher and Varun Dhawan, CM's wife Amruta Fadnavis and minister Sudhir Mungantiwar

> Our thoughtlessness has turned our rivers into a mass of toxic sludge and sewage. With sustained efforts, we can reverse the trend and regenerate them
>
> **Vineet Jain** | TIMES GROUP MD