



SPACE initiates events to eclipse myths on Lunar Eclipse

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On 15th June, 2011, India witnessed the darkest and the longest lunar eclipse of the century. On this special celestial day, SPACE Foundation initiated a myth breaking movement named 'Chaand Ka Langar' to remove the superstitions related to eclipses. As many people still believe that eating food during the time of the eclipse harms the body, thus it was an effort to bring about a change in the society and aware the masses. SPACE Foundation has been changing the face of science and astronomy awareness and education in India through such path-breaking concepts, programs and projects.

About the Eclipse

This was the first of two total lunar eclipses in 2011, the second will occur on December 10. It was a relatively rare central eclipse where the moon passed in front of the center of the Earth's shadow. This eclipse could be seen nicely from India and in many locations of Delhi people gathered to watch this rare eclipse.

The total phase itself was quite long and lasted 100 minutes. The last eclipse to exceed this duration was in July 2000. The Moon's contact time with Earth's umbral and penumbral shadows from Delhi was in totality from 00:52 hours to 2:33 hours. The Moon passed deeply through Earth's umbral shadow during this rather long event, making it one of the darkest eclipses as well.

Observation during the eclipse

SPACE Foundation has always believed in public outreach to build scientific temperament among the masses. SPACE Foundation organised an observation on the rooftop of its office building where around 70 people including many kids and families participated. Three telescopes were placed to watch the moon play the game of hide and seek, while everybody prayed that it does not rain. However, the sky was partly clouded but everybody especially the kids enjoyed the cruise of the moon through different eclipse phases as they participated in an eclipse sketching competition.

Eclipse Chaser's Athenaeum (ECA) - SPACE Group's another wing established to bring together all eclipse chasers enthusiasts under one roof, hosted a webcast live from the office building. Over five thousand people from around the world logged into this webcast as in parts of the world such as North America the eclipse could

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not be seen, and enjoyed this view. A team of astrophotographers from SPACE and Astronomicans, amateur wing of SPACE visited Sakras in Haryana to capture the fascinating visuals of the Moon.

Feasting during the Eclipse – ‘Chaand Ka Langar’

SPACE Foundation organized an exclusive campaign to shun the myth of fasting during the eclipse. A street theatre was performed by the staff to make the general masses aware that lunar eclipse is a scientific phenomenon and it has nothing to do with the food one eats. This campaign was initiated by the youngest eclipse chasers Asmi & Chavvi who are only 10 & 7 years. Asmi is the youngest eclipse chaser to witness the eclipse from different locations in 2006(Turkey), 2008 (Russia) & 2009(China) total solar eclipse. Both the kids have been out under the shadow of the total solar eclipse for 10minutes in totality. The kids became the torchbearers of this movement and actively watched the eclipse through the telescope and enjoyed their food.

SPACE recorded pregnant ladies wanting to become a part of this movement to break the myth and contribute towards the development of a better society.

SPACE Foundation had also stationed two vans around the city (near Nehru Planetarium and near Apeejay School, Filmcity, Sector-16A, Noida) to distribute free langar during the eclipse time. More than 1000 people came out to watch the eclipse and break the myth by feasting during the total eclipse. Most people appreciated the campaign and shared their experiences of feasting during the eclipse.

SPACE Foundation will compile a report containing pictures, description of event and general medical report of the people who participated in this movement. The report would also include any adverse medical health condition which was previously not present starting from 1 day prior to 7 days later. A cumulative report will be then drafted and sent to UNESCO and other scientific organisations.

SPACE Foundation, Science Popularisation Association of Communicators and Educators is an NGO, founded in 2001, with the goal of popularising science via Astronomy and Space Sciences. This organisation targets the public, the media and the students.

Attached find a photograph of the eclipse shot by SPACE team members at Sakras, Haryana, Chaand Ka Langar, Observation in SPACE office.