A question of livelihood



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Henna Rakheja, Sep 4, 2012

Visuals are appealing, there is no denying to the fact and that is why the Delhi based NGO, Centre for Civil Society (CCS) recently organised the 9th Annual Jeevika: Asia Livelihood Documentary Festival where 18 documentary films (13 professional and 5 students) were screened over three days. The unique festival highlighted livelihood issues of individuals and communities in Asia to initiate public debate and stimulate critical thinking on issues affecting various communities, through an interesting choice of documentaries.



The Amaltas Hall at India Habitat Centre brimmed with young and old who enjoyed the screenings that had a fresh approach to it and raised thought-provoking guestions. The festival received 68 documentaries this year out of which 18 were shortlisted by the jury.

Filmmakers joined the screenings and

the panel discussions that were made interactive by audience questions. On day one, among others, Supriyo Sen screened the documentary Wagah that talks about emotions shared by two nations across the border and Amalan Datta spoke about his latest film, BOM - aka one day ahead of democracy, where he raises issues such as decriminalisation of cannabis and how it is much more than just a source of sustenance for groups of people.

Their discussions paved the way for the audience, for an evening of some promising documentaries and interactions.

The session Law, Liberty and Livelihood discussed several important issues such as the right of the street vendors to the license permit quota raj which kept the audience engaged and certain examples regarding how simple administrative decisions have played havoc with millions of lives were discussed with fervour.

One of the longest documentaries, I was Born in Delhi by Bishnu Dev Halder, gathered a lot of audience appreciation. The film is based on the life of two sisters, Josna and Hasina, who run away from poverty, marriage and their impending kitchen centric lives in village to Delhi and captures their real life experiences through an emotional journey.

Bishnu said, "The toughest part of the filming was dealing with personal issues. But Chennai, Goa, it is while making this documentary that I learnt, 'to not let anything bother you." He also quoted Alfred Hitchcock, "In feature, director is the God. In documentary, God is the director and so happened in my film as well." No wonder then that the film won the award for the Best Documentary 2012!

The concluding day was graced by renowned filmmaker Subhash Ghai who felicitated the winners at the prize distribution ceremony. But the Award Ceremony was preceded by enthralling performances by dance groups, Oorja (from Hans Raj College) and Nritya (from Sri Venkateswara College).

Amit Chandra, national coordinator, Jeevika shared the motive behind the festival, "Documentaries are more close to real life and if based on livelihood issues then they identify and challenge a lot of policy issues. We are also planning to introduce animations next year."

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