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PREVIEW

Jeevika: Asia Livelihood Documentary Festival

An upcoming documentary festival brings to life untold stories and unheard voices: of livelihood and its challenges faced by the rural and urban poor. FirstCity Film previews the tenth edition of Jeevika: Asia Livelihood Documentary Festival

GYPSY REFUGEES IN A BELGRADE SUBURB MAKE A LIVING BY TRANSFORMING CITROEN'S CLASSIC 2CV and Dyana cars into recycling vehicles to collect cardboard, bottles and scrap metal; a group of organised sex workers reclaim their bodies and voice their control over it; an entrepreneur fights cynicism in Asia's biggest slum; a published writer who's also a tea-seller; broom-makers in remote corners of Rajasthan; *jutti*-makers in Punjab, folk artists in China, primitive tribes in Kerala; and young break dancers B-boying in Mumbai.

For the last nine years, Centre for Civil Society, a not-for-profit public policy think-tank has been promoting livelihood challenges faced by the rural and urban poor through a one of a kind documentary festival. Manoj Mathew, Festival

Director, Jeevika, tells us that the festival started as a complimentary exercise for the "academic research" done at CCS aimed at "communicating policy issues to the common man". Part of a larger campaign, *Livelihood Freedom Campaign*, which advocates the cause of small entrepreneurs, self-employed individuals, street vendors, sex workers, rickshaw-pullers, child labourers, farmers and forest dwellers; the festival has become a distinct and credible record of not just the livelihood challenges faced by rural and urban poor but their existence, lifestyles, dream and aspirations.

The directors of some of the documentaries to be screened at the upcoming festival, tell us about their visions.

Redboxx by Rukshana Tabassum

When producer Pankaj Sharma intro-

duced Rukshana Tabassum to Chandana, a 19-year-old boy in Mumbai, there was nothing about him or his demeanor (dressed in jeans and shirt, selling sandwiches at a small cart in Santa Cruz, a hotspot for youngsters to hang around) that could tell her that he had run away from his hometown in Bihar when he was seven, for a better life in Mumbai. Rukshana assures us, "He doesn't have an image of the guy you sympathise with." An inspiration for young entrepreneurs (not only did he finance his own education and support his siblings, Chandana now owns an outlet in the city which has been garnering many a 'like' on Facebook), *Redboxx* is the story of Chandana and his journey so far.

Shepherds of Paradise by Raja Shabir Khan

"Ever since I was young, I have been fascinated with a tribe of shepherds in Kashmir called Bakerwals. Their energy, their lifestyles..." This fascination led Raja, a graduate from Satyajit Ray Institute of Film and Technology to follow 75-year-old Gafoor and his family on their journey - 300 kilometres in a month on foot from Ping Gala in Jammu to Kashmir, crossing one of the highest ranges of the Himalayas - the snow peaked Pir Panchal, along with his herd of 200 goats, sheep, one cow and 10 horses. What ensues is a seemingly regular affair (camping, eating, fighting storms, looking after their kids and animals) captured beautifully - not just the moon which wanes away but their ap-



A still from *Shepherds of Paradise* by Raja Shabir Khan



Sons and Daughters by Jyotsna Khatri

won the Best Documentary at the UN Global Wake-Up Film Festival, 2011. The film follows the director and former reporter, from the villages of Punjab to the capital of India with the children of farmers, who have committed suicide to confront the government's highest officials.

The upcoming festival will screen 30 documentaries followed by discussions with the directors and features three-livelihood workshops.

(10th Jeevika: Asia Livelihood Documentary Festival from August 29 onwards at India Habitat Centre. Nearest Metro Station: Jor Bagh, Yellow Line. Turn to Calendar, pages 123 to 138, for details.)

proach and beliefs (*With his power Allah has made the sky without pillars and the amount of light he put in it, can any human beings create it?*). The documentary won the Best Film (non-fiction) and Best Cinematography award at the 60th National Awards.

Sons and Daughters by Jyotsna Khatri

For Jyotsna Khatri, issues of trafficking, migration and livelihood are intricately linked together. *Sons and Daughters*, her documentary on children who are kidnapped or lured from rural India to work as domestic servants in urban homes, highlights the third largest illegal industry in the world, after arms and weapons, through the voices of these children from Assam, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Jharkhand. The film is an insight into the ways in which the industry functions - how placement agencies source children, how they are convinced to migrate to a city, strung together with interviews with employers and a sting operation on an agent.

A Little Revolution - A Story of Suicides and Dreams by Harpreet Kaur

"We have seen farmers come out and protest (against farmer suicides) in Delhi but not children...During my research (for the documentary), I realised that children were being left out (from the statistics). So, I wanted the children to be empowered, stand up and fight for their rights (instead of) accepting what's the aftermath of bad policy," Harpreet tells us about the documentary which

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