

Jeevika 2008: South Asia Livelihood Documentary Competition

Chilika Banks-Stories from India's Largest Coastal Lake –1970-2007 (1st Award)

(Chilika Bank\$ / Hindi / 1:65:00 / 2008 / Orissa / Akanksha Joshi)

In a canvass spread over four decades, a banyan tree on the banks of the Lake Chilika, silently whispers tales of the lake and her fisher folk. From the times when there was no export bazaar to the time when there may be no lake.

Lakshmi and Me (2nd Award)

(Lakshmi and Me / English, Tamil, Marathi & Hindi / 0:59:00 / Nov. 2007 / Mumbai / Nishtha Jain)

"What sin did I commit to be born a woman?" Lakshmi wonders aloud. A 21-year-old housemaid in Mumbai, she works ten hours a day, seven days a week. One of her employers, Nishtha, begins to make a documentary exploring their relationship. Lakshmi's is a precarious existence to begin with; illness and romance compound her problems. As the filmmaker is drawn deeper into Lakshmi's life, she is forced to question many of the things she takes for granted. During a year and a half of dramatic changes, the process of filming has its own impact on the relationship between the two women.

Hollow Cylinder (3rd Award)

(Hollow Cylinder / English / 0:23:50 / 9th July 2007 / North East India / Nandan Saxena / Kavita Bahl)

The making of the Hollow Cylinder was partly triggered by the controversy amongst India's Foresters and Policy-makers on whether Bamboo was a tree or a grass.

This confusion led to a muddled up policy - bracketing a grass with the trees and shackling it for fifty years or more. Little wonder then if the livelihood potential of Bamboo has largely been unutilised in India.

When we place this policy-lapse in the context of the lack of employment opportunities in the rural non-farm sector in India, we realise how policies impact lives. Bamboo grows easily in most parts of India, barring the arid regions like Rajasthan and Ladakh. There are pockets with abundant Bamboo forests. The irony is that these are the pockets that are known for extreme poverty.

The Bamboo map and poverty map of India look the same. Our country has a strong tradition and legacy of skill and craft. The resource is there, so is the skill... and yet, the poor remain poor.

Bamboo is not a material that transports well because it traps air and moisture.

This challenge is also an opportunity to create avenues of employment in farflung areas, where it is otherwise difficult to create sustainable livelihoods.

This hollow cylinder could have transformed millions of lives.

However, the potential of this hollow cylinder remains locked up somewhere in the corridors of power.

What is the Point of Stories if They Aren't Even True? (Best Students Film)

(What is the Point of Stories if they aren't even true? / Hindi, English & Gujarati / 0:11:15 / 15-04-2008 / Ahmedabad / Aditi Banerji)

This is a story of storytelling through the eyes of an eighty-year-old storyteller. This film takes a look at the purpose of storytelling in the past and current context. In doing so, it addresses the larger purpose of life and art itself.

Hearts Suspended (Special Jury Mention)

(Hearts Suspended / English / 0:27:00 / July 2008 / Jersey City, NJ, USA / Meghna Damani)

Hearts Suspended is a short autobiographical documentary that reveals how highly educated South Asian immigrant women struggle to survive in the United States on their H4 or dependent spouse visas, which der them work authorization. Once independent, now completely dependent, they face loneliness, depression, loss of self-identity, strained marital relations and - in extreme cases - exploitation and abuse.

Through a unique expressionistic combination of visuals, monologue, verite footage and interviews, the film takes us on a journey into the director inner turmoil's, search for spiritual strength and eventual resolve to bring hope and political change for other women who are frozen in time because of the restrictive nature of this visa.

Jeevika 2007: South Asia Livelihood Documentary Competition

AMBI JIJI'S RETIREMENT (1st Award)

(Ambi Jiji's Retirement / Garo / DVC Pro / 0:28:00 / 10-09-06 / West Garo Hills, Meghalaya / Ms Nandini Bedi)

Ambi Jiji always planted her crops on soil on which forests have been burnt. At the end of each year, this 'jhum' field would be abandoned and left to regenerate into forest and a new one burnt. When Jiji was a young woman, she didn't need to buy food.

Now Jiji is about to retire. Chekjak, her daughter has been converting her jhum fields to orchards. Waljak, another daughter, continues to depend on jhumming with very little returns. Chekjak and other villagers' orchard produce give them cash and food security. Waljak's jhum field cannot meet her food needs.

Through the women, we see the passing of a way of life in a remote village in Meghalaya
First Prize

SERUPPU (Footwear) (2nd Award)

(Seruppu (Footwear) / Tamil/Mini DV / 1:14:00 / 02-12-06 / Tirudi / Mr Amudhan R P)

This is a socio-cultural documentary on the lives of catholic Arundhatiyars (Dalits / harijans/ untouchables) of Dharmanathapuram, an old slum located at the heart of Tiruchirapalli in Tamil Nadu a southern state of India.

The people of Dharmanathapuram are involved in making footwear, one of the traditional occupations of a dalit with in Indian caste based society.

According to the presidential order 1950: para3, by the Union Government of India, dalits or the people from the lower caste in Indian caste system who do not follow Hindu religion (or those converted to Christianity or Islam) are not considered Schedule Caste (as any other Hindu dalits); and they do not have access to the reservations for jobs or in educational institutions or other support mechanism that otherwise are available to the Schedule Caste according to the Indian constitution.

Besides the upper caste Hindus who have converted to Christianity also follow their caste based practices such as discrimination, exclusiveness, unsociability and at times violence against their fellow Christians who happens to be dalits.

This film brings upon the discrimination and struggle faced by the catholic Arundhatiyars of Dharmanathapuram who also face stiff competition in the economic grounds as mechanization in the footwear manufacturing continues to grow in the era of globalization.

Third prize

THE RIGHT TO SURVIVE (3rd Award)

(The Right to Survive - Turtle Conservation and Fisheries Livelihoods / English / DV Cam / 0:52:00 / Oct-06 / Orissa Coast, India / Ms Rita Banerji /Ms Shilpi Sharma)

Each year the eastern coast of India witnesses a truly spectacular occurrence of nature-the arrival en masse of hundreds of thousands of olive ridley turtles in the coastal region of the state of Orissa. Last year, for instance, an estimated 240,000 adult olive ridleys congregated

at Rushikulya on the Orissa coast to breed. Coincidentally the breeding season also happens to be the peak fishing season in orrisa, one of the poorest state of India. Thousands of fishing families rely on this season to fish, and around 70,000 fish workers are entirely dependent on Orrisa's coastal fisheries for their livelihoods.

As the pressure to conserve ecosystems and their resources rises steadily all over the world, so have conflicts between conservations imperatives and livelihood interests of the communities that interact with these ecosystems. This film discusses these issues. By taking an intense look at the concerns revolving around turtle conservation and the protection of the livelihoods of traditional fishing communities, it offers some insights into the dilemmas facing the various stakeholders and attempts to provide a solution for tomorrow.

Prakash Travelling Cinema (Best Students Film)

(Prakash Traveling Cinema / Hindi / Mini DV / 0:14:00 / 12-02-06 / Ahmedabad, Gujarat / Ms Megha Lakhani)

It attempts to capture the spirit of an age old medium of entertainment through a bioscope film projector owned by two friends who share a deep friendship, unceasing optimism and most of all an undying passion for their traveling cinema. The documentary takes you through their lives on street where they walk around the city lugging their antique traveling cinema, which they lovingly refer to as the "lorry" and lure the people into watching glimpse of the movies which the cinema has to offer. A stiff competition from movie theatre, television & technology has pushed this medium to the brink of extinction. Yet this sole traveling cinema has been able to dodge these hardships and continues to roll the path undeterred. Prakash Traveling Cinema is simply just a subject employed actually explore those innate tendencies of human nature and constantly fuel unfathomable emotions such inspiration, hope and endurance, that tend to survive even when all odds are against them.
Best Students

Jeevika 2006: South Asia Livelihood Documentary Competition

One Show Less (1st Award)

(Hindi/19 minutes/MiniDV/2005/Dir:Nayantara C Kotian/National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad/ India)

One Show Less concerns itself with the increasing numbers of single screen cinemas that are shutting down all over the country. The film focuses on one theatre, Usha Talkies, whose spirited employees and raucous, seat-breaking public make it one of a kind. As the ticket seller puts it, this cinema is meant for the masses- if this theatre shuts down as well, the question raised is 'are the masses to be deprived of the incomparable experience of watching cinema on the big screen?' Through a series of evocative arguments put forth by the employees of Usha Talkies, a vivid portrait is painted of a unique way of life which might soon become extinct.

One Show Less is a very accomplished film that uses the craft of cinema with finesse. It tells a complex tale in a manner that brought to fore the quirky, funny, engaged and resilient human spirit. It makes its points with sophistication and avoids the pitfalls of documentary. Most importantly, it takes a human look at an institution that has survived at the edges of polite societies, familiar but unknown: the cinema of the poor.

Fight for Survival (2nd Award)

(Gujarati-Hindi/ 20 minutes/MiniDV/2004/Dir:Dakxin Nandlal Bajarange/India)

The *madari* community in Gujarat depends on their traditional business of snake exhibition and performance in villages and cities, fairs and *haats*. They have their own Panchayat system and follow specific rules and provisions about catching, keeping, performing with and releasing snakes in the jungle. For thousands of years, the *madaris* have treated the snakes as their children. They know how to take care of them and when to release them into the jungle.

Now, the Animal Cruelty Act and other animal acts have made it difficult for the *madaris* to keep snakes with them for public performance. Animal rights activists and Animal Help Foundation, along with the police and forest department, raid *madari* ghettos or the places where they are performing their shows. It has now become a question of survival for the entire *madari* community.

Fight for Survival was successful in bringing out very clearly the conflict between sets of activists, between man and nature, and between law and people. The film adds a new twist to the old tale: the inhuman treatment of the madaris by the animal lovers, a brutal act that is criticized even by other animal activists.

Jury comments

Treacling Down (3rd Award)

(Sinhalese/14 minutes/DV format/2005/Dir:Upali Gamlath/Sri Lanka)

The remote village "Meemure" surrounded by a range of mountains is a place famous for the production of jaggery. It sells its produce to towns after a tiresome journey from the village. The towns bag these cherished products for a mere pittance and sell them in luxury supermarkets at exorbitant prices.

This production attempts to generate a feeling for the Meemure villager using only a combination of the rhythm of the nature, the economic shape, the cultural angle and expression interwoven with nature. The film shows the villagers tapping the *Kithul* tree to make jaggery and the bees, wasps and butterflies collecting nectar from flowers. The bee does a lot of work, an outsider reaps the benefit. The bee gets no honey. The bee and the *Kithul* taper suffer the same lot.

Without using any narration or interviews the filmmaker makes a loud statement indeed, about labour and its lack of value.

Aamchi Kasauti (Best Students film)

(Hindi-Marathi/12 minutes/DV Format/2005/Dir:Rrivu Laha /Film and Television Institute of India, Pune/India)

Dawn breaks in the city of Pune....Sita, Shewanta, Kaushalya are seen dusting the streets around the town. ...What could they possibly be looking for? They are a rare breed of traders. They scavenge dust from daybreak to dusk and take their harvest at the end of the day to the gold traders who mark it against a *kasauti* or a testing stone to evaluate the harvest. The film is their story-Aamchi Kasauti...Our Test.

Aamchi Kasauti dealt with a very novel subject. It was a well-shot and well-constructed film that developed visual text on an unknown facet of Pune life.

Jury comments

Pretty Dyana (Special Jury Mention)

(Serbian/45 minutes/DV format/2003/Dir:Boris Mitic/Serbia)

The film is an intimate look at gypsy refugees in a Belgrade suburb who make a living by transforming Citroen's classic 2cv and Dyana cars into Mad-Max-like recycling vehicles,
Centre for Civil Society

which they use to collect cardboard, bottles and scrap metal. These modern horses are much more efficient than the cart-pushing competition, but even more important—they also mean freedom, hope and style for their crafty owners. Even the car batteries are used as power generators in order to get some light, watch TV and recharge mobiles! Almost an alchemist's dream come true! But the police doesn't always find these strange vehicles funny...

Pretty Dyana celebrates the spirit of life in the face of adversity and tells the story of resilience. It steps away from the usual victim mode and presents the life of gypsies—a community feared and rejected by Serbian society—and paints a picture of humour, passion and zest for life.

Jury comments

Jeevika 2005: Livelihood Documentary Competition

Aftershocks: A Rough Guide to Democracy (1st Award)

(Aftershocks: A Rough Guide to Democracy/ Eng-Kutchhi-Gujarati / Eng ST / 64 minutes / 2003 / Dir: Rakesh Sharma/ India)

On January 26, 2001, Kutch (Gujarat, India) was devastated by a massive earthquake. Over 20,000 people died and tens of thousands of homes were destroyed. Bhuj, Anjar, Rapar and Bhachau, the most severely affected areas, received attention from many international relief agencies, national and international media, even personal visits from Prime Minister Vajpayee and Citizen Clinton.

This film is set in **Julrai** and **Umarsar**, two villages in Lakhpat, near the India Pakistan border, close to the Gujarat coast, and too far away from Bhuj to be in focus. Umarsar is an upper caste Durbar village, while Julrai's entire population comprises low class Rabbaris, semi-nomadic shepherds, who began to settle down into permanent villages only in the last couple of hundred years. The two villages have nothing in common except that both were almost totally destroyed during the quake and both are sitting on top of lignite reserves. The Government-controlled Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation has a monopoly over any mining activity in the region. GMDC is likely to be privatised completely over the next few years; 26% of its shares were sold to corporates, financial institutions and investors in 1997-98.

This film traces the story of GMDC's attempts to acquire the two villages. Eight weeks after the quake, on March 26, 2001, our camera accidentally bumps into the GMDC acquisition survey team in Umarasar. Over the next few months, the film moves in and out of Julrai, Umarsar and the GMDC's existing lignite mines and probes the processes of displacement and resettlement.

...3..2..1..0...? Who can Change me? (2nd Award)

(...3..2..1..0...? Who can Change me? / Tamil / Eng ST/15 minutes/ 16mm / 2004 / Dir: Biju KC/ Loyola College, Chennai / India)

This is a real and a simple story about an old cycle rickshaw man in the city of Chennai. He works hard and meets the daily bread by pulling the rickshaw. The title of the short film is selected very purposefully. It conveys the full meaning of the theme. The number starts from higher value and decreases to zero. Zero is the lowest value. There is a question mark adjacent to it, which says what is next to zero. In the case of the rickshaw puller this is same. Once upon a time there was a lot of demand for rickshaw pullers. But look now they are unwanted, jobless. Their value has come to nothing. Can they survive in this pathetic and sad condition?

Pedal Soldier of India (3rd Award)

(Pedal Soldier of India// Hindustani / Eng ST / 27 minutes/ MiniDV/ 2004/ Dir: Raza Haider & Kaukab / India)

Centre for Civil Society

Two feet, bundles of muscles and miles of road ahead – the pedal soldiers of India, the Rickshaw Drivers carry India in installments in their low cost non-polluting vehicles. This film highlights the current state of cycle rickshaw industry in the Indian cities. The numerous legal restrictions, administrative curbs and license regimes are juxtaposed with the rickshaw drivers' right to earn a living with dignity.

The crowded roads of NCR form the backdrop for the film. The film presents the day to day routines, joys, recreations and miseries of the thousands of rickshaw drivers dwelling in the NCR. The story gives an account on the lives of people who earn an honest livelihood to support their families by driving a completely non-polluting public vehicle.

The film tries to raise the vital question of how in today's monetary world of speed and pollution, this non-polluting, economical and humane public transport has to fight for space in the crowded roads of cities and face a status of degradation instead of elation.

Zarina (Best Students Film)

(*Zarina* / Urdu / Eng ST / 22 minutes / DVCam / 2004 / Dir: Suhail Bukhari and Piyush Pushpak / College of Media & Communication, Rai University, Delhi/ India)

Zarina: a film on the dying art of *Mujhra*. The film recreates the golden era of *Mujhra*, which now has been eclipse amid glamour and glitz of modern day entertainment – sensationalism.

Contribution of *tawaif* (nautch girl) to art and culture has rarely been perceived in positive light in a society mired in dubious puritanical standards.

The film aims at changing certain popular and often simplistic, stereotyped misconceptions held by the society as well as an establishment that has failed to accept them as artist. The film also reflects how this art was socially accepted in the era of *nawabs* but the changing socio-economic and religious conditions made the common folk indifferent to it, leading to a much mistaken notion about its identity.

This film is the story of *Zarina*, a '*tawaif*' and her struggle to eke her meager livelihood. It traces the life and experiences of *Zarina* to her present and incessant struggle. *Zarina* stands for many others like her who have lost their bread and butter to the music of the changing times.

Finally, the film concludes on the echoes of the past that left many questions for us to ponder over.

Jeevika 2004: Livelihood Documentary Competition

Tales of The Night Fairies **2002, 74 minutes (1st Award)**

Direction: Shohini Ghosh

Five sex workers--four women and one man--along with the filmmaker embark on a journey of story telling. The film explores the power of collective organising and resistance while reflecting upon contemporary debates around sex work. The simultaneously expansive and labyrinthine city of Calcutta forms the backdrop for the personal and musical journeys of story telling.

The film attempts to represent the struggles and aspirations of thousands of sex workers who constitute the DMSC (*Durbar Mahila Samanyay Committee*) an initiative that emerged from the Shonagachi HIV/AIDS Intervention project. A collective of men, women and transgendered sex workers, DMSC demands decriminalisation of adult sex work and the right to form a trade union.

Shohini Ghosh is Reader, Video and Television Production at Mass Communication Research, Jamia Millia Islamia University.

***The City Beautiful* , 78 minutes (2nd Award)**

Direction: Rahul Roy

The film is the story of two families struggling to make sense of a world, which keeps pushing them to the margins. Radha and Bal Krishnan are at a critical point in their relationship. Bal Krishnan is underemployed and constantly cheated. They are in disagreement about Radha going out to work. However through all their ups and down they retain their ability to laugh. Shakuntala and Hira Lal hardly communicate. They live under one roof with their children but are locked in their sense of personal tragedies.

Rahul Roy is an independent documentary film maker.

***Turf Wars* , 41 minutes (3rd Award)**

Direction: Sanjay Barnela and Vasant Saberwal

In 1999, the Great Himalayan National Park (GHNP), in the Kullu Valley of the State of the Himachal Pradesh in northern India, was finally notified and brought under the regulations of the Indian Wildlife Protection Act. As a result, local rights to graze animals and extract medicinal herbs within the national park were terminated. Simultaneously, however a part of the project was deleted from the originally demarcated boundaries of the park, to enable construction of a hydro-electric power project. *Turf wars* explores the contradictions that seem to characterise the governments policies towards conservation-wherein local livelihoods are expendable in the interest of biodiversity, but biodiversity must make way for national development.

The film engages with a number of debates in conservation. Eco-development as the latest recipe for humanising exclusionary conservation; the nature of scientific evidence, routinely used to support the notion that humans must be separated from nature; the notion of the "oppressive" state further marginalising "powerless" communities. It is an open ended film, one that aims to provoke discussion rather than provide answers to problems that are inevitable complex, contested and heavily politicised.

Sanjay Barnela and Vasant Saberwal are part of a Delhi based production team with specific interests in the environment and development.

Third Prize