

**A Report on SAMA-BHAV FILM FESTIVAL on Gender,  
Masculinity and Gender Diversity**

**organized by**

**Men Against Violence and Abuse (MAVA), Society for Women's  
Action and Training Initiatives (SWATI)**

**Department of Languages, Literature and Aesthetics, SLS, PDPU &  
Women's Cell, PDPU**

**January 10<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup>, 2018**

The event was organized by the Department of Languages, Aesthetics and Literature in collaboration with MAVA or Men Against Violence & Abuse, an organization based in Mumbai which is supported by the High Commission of Canada, SWATI, an NGO based in Ahmedabad and Women's Cell PDPU. It was an attempt by the department to bring the understanding of gender to the fore.

The two day film festival screened 18 films. The effort was to generate awareness against violence on women in India.

**Dignitaries Present:**

The event was graced by the Director of School of Liberal Studies Prof. Nigam Dave, Mr. Harish Sadani, Director MAVA, Ms. Poonam Kathuria - Director, Society for Women's Action and Training Initiatives (SWATI) and Prof. Neeta Khurana – Festival Organizer, Prof. Pradeep Mallik, HoD, Prof. Harmik Vaishnav, Prof. Niyati Trivedi, Prof. Urmi Satyan from Department of Languages, Literature and Aesthetics, Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University (PDPU) and Prof. Poonam Savsani, Convener Women's Cell, PDPU and few professors from Central University of Gujarat.

**Audience:**

There were around 200 students from School of Liberal Studies, School of Technology and Central University of Gujarat, TISS, Mumbai and faculty of CUG and SLS, PDPU.

## **Main Points:**

A total of 18 films were screened followed by discussions on the pertinent questions raised in the films. All session breaks had refreshments for the audience so that discussions could continue. Listed below is the summary of the films screened at the Festival

### ***1. KhuleAasmanKe Niche (Under the Open Sky)***

**Directors :Shilpa Phadke, Faiz Ullah and Nikhil Titus**

**Produced by** School of Media and Cultural Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences

**Documentary / 2016 / India / 35 mins.14 secs. / English, Hindi and Urdu**

What changes when a girls' football initiative begins to claim open public spaces to play in Mumbra, a far-flung suburb in the Mumbai Metropolitan region? Quite a lot actually! For women and girls occupying open public space in the city to play is an act of feminist claim staking. This film follows the Parcham women's football team as they play and coach a younger generation of girls, in the process transforming not just the way they see themselves and their bodies but potentially transforming the way we see our cities. *Khule Aasman ke Niche* speaks to some of the girls who play football who talk about how both their capacities and attitudes transform!

### ***2. Broken Image***

**Director :Aravind VK**

**Narrative Short / 2015 / India / 18 minutes / Tamil**

When in front of a tragedy, would you rather film it or prevent the tragedy from happening? There is a thin fine line that separates basic humanity and a material value for certain people. This line is blurred and unclear to many. A photographer is placed in a dilemma whether to stop an incidence of violence or rather film it. At those certain moments, some moral values seem to become blurred when in need for a material raises as a greater priority.

### ***3. The Mask You Live in***

**Documentary / 2015 / US / 90 minutes**

**Director : Jennifer Siebel Newsom**

*The Mask You Live In* follows boys and young men as they struggle to stay true to themselves while negotiating America's narrow definition of masculinity. Pressured by the media, their peer group, and even the adults in their lives, the film's protagonists confront messages encouraging them to disconnect from their emotions, devalue authentic friendships, objectify and degrade women, and resolve conflicts through violence. These gender stereotypes interconnect with race,

class, and circumstance, creating a maze of identity issues boys and young men must navigate to become “real” men. Experts in neuroscience, psychology, sociology, sports, education, and media also weigh in, offering empirical evidence of the “boy crisis” and tactics to combat it. *The Mask You Live In* ultimately illustrates how we, as a society, can raise a healthier generation of boys and young men.

#### **4. *Ozhivudivasathe Kali* (An Off-Day Game)**

Director :**SanalSasidharan**

**Feature film / 2015 /India / 106 minutes / Malayalam**

‘Ozhivudivasathe Kali’ narrates the story of five friends from varied backgrounds, who on a rain-soaked assembly election day in Kerala escape their usual routine for a booze party in a guest house deep in the jungles. Their only intention is fun and merriment. During the course of the day, they start to open up the hidden wildness of their real nature. Tired and bored in arguments, they plan to play a game they used to play in their childhood. The Director has powerfully portrayed the direct and subtle layers of gender-caste-class biases and their intersectionality in the film. The film reflects the social realities in both its microcosm and macrocosm. The film has won the Best Feature Film and the Best Sound Recordist Award at the 46<sup>th</sup> Kerala State Film Awards. The movie was also selected as the best Malayalam film at the International Film Festival of Kerala in 2015.

#### **5. *Mardistan* (Macholand)**

Director :**Dr.Harjant Gill**

Produced by Public Service Broadcasting Trust, India

**Documentary / 2014 / India / 28 minutes / Hindi & Punjabi (with English Subtitles)**

Mardistan (Macholand) is an exploration of Indian manhood articulated through the voices of four men from different generations and backgrounds. A middle-aged writer trying to make sense of the physical and sexual abuse he witnessed studying in an elite military academy, a Sikh father of twin daughters resisting the pressure to produce a son, a young 20-year old college student looking for a girlfriend with whom he can lose his virginity, and a working-class gay activist coming out to his wife after twenty years of marriage. Together, their stories make up different dimensions of what it means to be a man in India today. Mardistan (Macholand) starts a conversation on critical issues including patriarchy, son preference, sexual violence and homophobia in a nation increasingly defined by social inequalities.

#### **6. *Boys cannot be Boys***

Produced by **Continuing Education and Training Centre, Mumbai**

Narrative Short / 201 / India / 30 minutes / English and Hindi

The film defines sexual harassment interfering with work to create a hostile environment at the workplace. It portrays a woman employee who complains against her team members, who use bad language and slander their bosses at work within the team. The woman conveys her disapprobation about the nature and content of the conversation happening within the team on a couple of occasions, but the team members taking part in the conversation ridicule her and react negatively to her remarks. She takes recourse by filing a complaint with the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) in her organization. The ICC goes over the complaint document, deliberating on the facts of the case and come to a conclusion.

### ***7. Walking the Walk***

**Director :Moses Tulasi**

Documentary / 2015 / India / 32 minutes / Telugu & English

*Walking the Walk* follows the participants of Hyderabad's queer pride march in February 2015. The walk draws inspiration from the social movement which led to formation of a brand new state in India, Telangana. With its unique culture and traditions, Telangana becomes the backdrop of the queer pride walk led by transgender activists and marginalized dalit women and men of the state.

### ***8. Majma(Performance)***

**Director :Rahul Roy**

**Documentary / 2001 / India / 54 minutes / Hindi with English sub-titles**

Majma is centred around the lives of two men. Aslam sells medicines for sexual problems on the pavements of Meena Bazaar, near Jama Masjid in Old Delhi. Khalifa Barkat presides over an aakhadaa (wrestling arena) in the adjacent park and puts a group of young men through the moral and physical grind of wrestling. Through the park and the market, pass hundreds of men every day. 'Majma' explores the instability of working class lives and its impact on male sexuality and gender relations. It is about power and the layers of complications of power. The film deals with anxieties, fears, stress on 'performance' whether it be in the sphere of sexuality or even in terms of physical prowess or the challenges of standing up to the unexpected twists of fate. It is a sensitive portrayal of the inner-world of men. It is what men talk about when they let their collective hair down. It lets you visit a world, which would be otherwise difficult to penetrate for a woman. It also does so with warmth and humour, so that the characters become people you can empathize with.

### ***9. Khel Badal # Change the Game***

Narrative Short / 2016 & 2017 - 6 videos / total 16 minutes / Hindi with subtitles in English

*Khel Badal* was launched in 2016 as a campaign to dismantle patriarchy, motivated by the belief that every woman should have the tools to question the inequality and restrictions she experiences. Community Correspondents are trained to identify and film gender stereotypes, which start conversations to challenge and question everyday sexism at home, at work, and in public spaces. Currently, we have 63 Gender Correspondents across 13 states and 63 districts who have produced over 140 videos for the campaign. Our correspondents also conduct Gender Discussion Clubs as part of the campaign and as of now, we have 216 clubs with 1,968 members. The campaign is supported by UNFPA. 6 out of the 140 videos made under 'Khel Badal' addressing issues of menstruation and priesthood, oppression of the veil, home-work, fasting, gender norms and marital conflict would be screened at the Fest. Video Volunteers, established in 2003, is a community media organisation that empowers some of India's most disadvantaged communities through journalistic skills and critical thinking. VV's model for locally-owned and managed media production teaches people to articulate and share their perspectives on the issues that matter to them – on a local and a global scale. Currently, they have 238 Community Correspondents working across 16 states and 192 districts of India.

### **10. Daaravtha(The Threshold)**

Director :**Nishant Roy Bombarde**

Narrative Short / Marathi/ 30 minutes

An adolescent Pankaj is discovering his sexuality. Torn between a patriarchal Indian upbringing full of gender stereotypes and his natural urge to identify with the opposite gender, he finds an opportunity to express his desires within the bounds of cultural ethos. An engineer by degree, Nishant Roy Bombarde later acquired a Masters in Mass Communication from Symbiosis, Pune specializing in Audio-Visual Communication. After working with Zee TV for three years as an Executive Producer on successful shows like *Fear Files & Yahaan Main Ghar Ghar Kheli*, he shifted to Zee Studios. At Zee Studios, he worked on well known Marathi films like *Killa*, *Fandry*, and *Elizabeth Ekadashi* as an Executive Producer. He is also a credited writer for Television and heads the Digital Media promotions at Zee Studios.

### **11. I am Nojoom, Age 10 and Divorced**

Director :**Khadija Al-Salami**

Feature Film / 2014 / Yemen - UAE - France /96 minutes / Arabic

A little girl walks into a court room, looks at the judge straight in the eye and tells him: 'I want a divorce'. In Yemen, where there is no age requirement for marriage, ten-year-old Nojoom is forced to marry a 30-year-old man. The dowry offers the family a small income and one less mouth to feed. Legitimate and acceptable arrangements for all, except for Nojoom, who will soon see her life take a turn for the worse. A beautiful plea on behalf of all those girls forced into womanhood too soon and for their right to a life on their own terms. Khadija Al-Salami is

Yemen's first female film-maker and producer. Forced into marriage at the age of 11, she rebelled – daring to leave her husband and seek a divorce. With determination and courage, Khadija gained her freedom and changed her fate. At 16, she received an educational grant to study in the US for a Master's Degree in film production and directing. She has directed more than 25 documentaries, mostly addressing the role of women and young girls in contemporary Yemen. She has received numerous international prizes for her work, including the French Legion of Honor. *I am Nojoom* is based on her book 'Nojoom', published in 2009.

## ***12. A Pinch of Skin***

**Director :by PriyaGoswami**

Documentary / 2012 / India / English – Hindi / 27 minutes

'A Pinch of Skin' is about the practice of Female Genital Cutting in India. A secretive practice that exists in the name of faith and tradition to 'curb / check' female sexuality. The documentary juxtaposes both – the voice of the community, which views this as tradition; as well as the small voice of questioning dissent considering this as sexual politics. Unfortunately, the most effected from this practice is un-consenting, pre-adolescent girls, who neither have the understanding, nor have any say over the norm.

## ***13. Breaking Free***

**Director: Sridhar Rangayan**

Producer: Solaris Pictures

Documentary / 2015 / 82 mins / English, Hindi – with English subtitles

Filmmaker and gay activist Sridhar Rangayan embarks on a personal journey to expose the human rights violations faced by the LGBTQ community in India due to a draconian law Section 377 of Indian Penal Code and homophobic social mores of a patriarchal society. The gritty documentary BREAKING FREE, shot over 7 years, features searing testimonies of gay and transgender persons who have been victimized or exploited, as well as wide-ranging interviews with advocates and activists across India. See-sawing between despair and joy, anguish and hope, the film is an emotional roller-coaster journey of the Indian LGBTQ movement - from invisibility to empowerment. The film has been screened at over 30 film festivals worldwide and won the National Film Award for Best Editing in India and Barbara Gittings International Human Rights Award at qFLIX Philadelphia, USA.

## ***14. Sundar*** (Beautiful)

**Director :Rohan Kanawade**

Narrative Short / 2015 / India / 24 minutes / Marathi & Hindi /

Sundar is a short film project that speaks about freedom of expression and freedom of living in a society the way one wants! It talks about Indian taboos that suppress a person and snatch away his basic right of choosing his own path to live. And this is what the film's protagonist faces after he cross-dresses on Navaratri. The story is about a person who wants to just express his feelings that wouldn't hurt anyone ever! It's about him living his happiness. It's about letting people be the way they want to be. And finally it's about appreciating people for what they are, and not for what you want them to be. It's a story, born in our own land; and then re-written many times in lives of uncountable cross-dressers.

### ***15. Thanks***

Director :**Devendra Balsaraf**

Narrative Short /2005 / 8 minutes / Marathi

This is a story of four teenage boys, who on one of their night-outs become the only witness to a woman being abducted by strangers. Dumbstruck, they find themselves unable to help her. When they regain composure, they find her purse lying there. Uncertain, they pick it up. After much agitated deliberation, they decide to return the purse to the woman. Next morning, they reach her small house in a chawl. Instead of her, a man, apparently her husband receives them. Finally she appears...a little bruised, but composed. She maintains silence about last night's incident. The situation becomes intolerably embarrassing for them all. They hand her the purse quickly and leave her place hurriedly. Outside her chawl, she stops them. Approaches them, but simply says "thanks". The boys watch on confused...and gradually return to their lives, a little matured. 'Thanks', based on late Actor-Director Chetan Datar's One Act Play, was featured at several national and international film festivals including 9th Mumbai International Film Festival, South Asian International Film Festival, New York and No Masala Indian Short film festival in Germany.

### ***16. YuvaMaitri : Young Men Breaking the Moulds***

***Director : Leading Lines***

**Produced by Men Against Violence and Abuse (MAVA)**

*Documentary/ 2016 / India / Hindi – English – Marathi/ 24 minutes*

Men Against Violence and Abuse (MAVA) has been since 2006 running an innovative Program among young men in 9 districts of Maharashtra state. The Gender Sensitization and Mentoring Initiative among college-going young men is first of its kind in India. Using out-of-the box methods, hundreds of youths especially young men are engaged and mentored on a wide range of contemporary gender and sexual health matters, promoting gender-sensitive behaviour and peer dialogue. The Program began in August 2006 as 'YuvaMaitri '(meaning Friendship Amongst

Youths') in Pune district with 33 mentees and has been gradually up-scaled to 8 newer districts of Maharashtra, mentoring over 700 young men in their twenties. This documentary, produced as a part of Research Project with support from the Harvard University South Asia Institute, Tata Trusts and Direct Action for Women Now – DAWN Worldwide, highlights the innovative tools used at the Youth Program and its impact over the years.

### ***17. Driving with Selvi***

**Director :Elisa Paloschi**

Director & Producer - Elisa Paloschi

Documentary / 2015 / Canada / Kannada with English sub-titles / and Hindi / 74 & 54 mins

Selvi, like so many girls living in India, is forced to marry at 14, only to find herself in a violent marriage. One day in deep despair, she chooses to escape, going on to become South India's first female taxi driver. We first meet Selvi at a girls' shelter in 2004 – timid, soft-spoken, a fresh runaway from a difficult life. Over a ten-year journey, we see a remarkable transformation as Selvi finds her voice and defies all expectations – learning to drive, starting her own taxi company, leading educational seminars, and much more. This character-driven story highlights the challenges that millions of devalued women and girls in India face. In a society where women are often considered expendable or worthless, Selvi is exceptional – a charming, strong, and utterly courageous young woman who moves beyond the pain she's experienced to create a new life. Paloschi's latest feature, *Driving With Selvi* premiered at Raindance Independent Film Festival in 2015; since then it has appeared at festivals around the world, winning a number of awards and accolades (best doc, and New Mavericks awards at Atlanta, best doc Reel Asian, best director Yorkton etc.) and was selected as an IDFA Top 10 Audience Favourite.

### ***18. Mina Walking***

**Director :Yosef Baraki**

Feature Film / Canada, Afghanistan / 110 minutes

#### ***Mina Walking***

Mina is a typical 12-year-old girl — feisty and energetic. But Mina lives in modern day Kabul, Afghanistan, and her circumstances are anything but typical. War claimed the life of her mother, the sobriety of her father and the sanity of her grandfather. Intent on keeping her fragmented family together, Mina spends her days peddling souvenirs with a group of urchins on the street. But Mina wants to be normal so she secretly attends classes. Her determination to live a childhood amid a life of responsibilities creates friction with unintended consequences. Told in an observational style, *Mina Walking* is a timeless and timely story about the lasting effects of



conflict from the perspective of a shattered Afghan family. Mina Walking premiered at the 65th Berlin International Film Festival where it competed for the Crystal Bear and the Best First Feature Award. It is the recipient of the 2016 Canadian Screen Award© for best Canadian feature film under \$250,000

## **Conclusion:**

The event was a huge success with students openly deliberating on issues which are mostly taboo and swept under the carpet in the society. It was an eye opener. The concluding ceremony had all the dignitaries presenting their views on the issues raised. Mr. Harish Sadani presented the faculty of PDPU with letters of appreciation for the effort put in to organize the event. The consensus arrived was to hold more such events. Vote of Thanks was proposed by Prof. Neeta Khurana.