

## Open Frame has India focus

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New Delhi

EVERY year in September as the leaves begin to fall, the Public Service Broadcasting Trust (PSBT) offers film lovers an eagerly awaited eight-day festival of documentaries called Open Frame.

This medley of films tackles a long list of contemporary topics which can make you laugh, cry, smile or sigh. Sexuality, schizophrenia, feminism, dysfunctional cities, morality, all come under the lens as film-makers explore a variety of topics.

This year too, from 9 to 17 September at the India International Centre (IIC), the 11th edition of Open Frame will present some 35 documentaries on India's changing social, political, environmental and cultural landscape. On offer are workshops and discussions, which are an integral part of the festival.

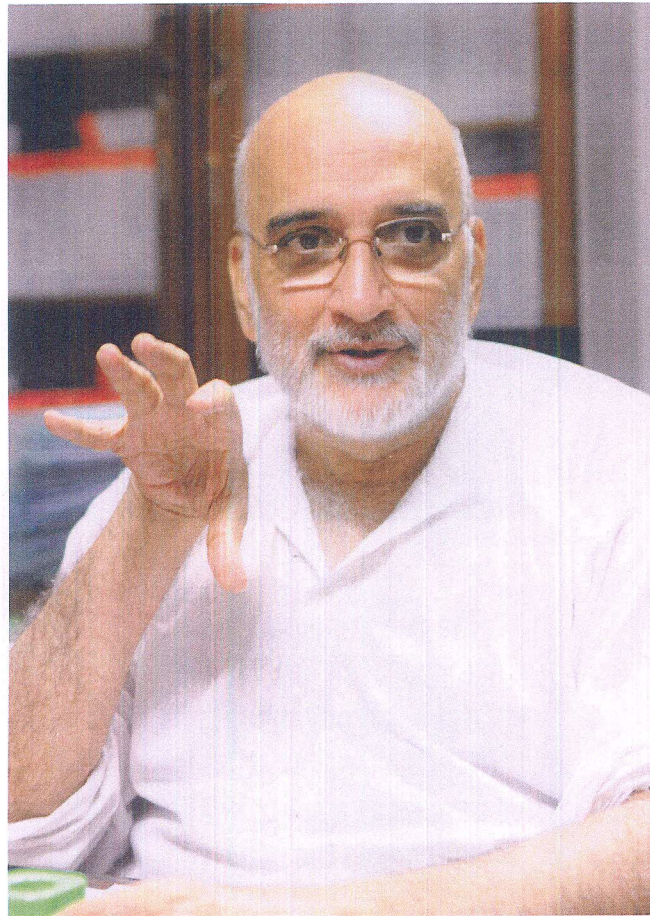
But unlike previous years there is no central theme to Open Frame. The focus is on PSBT films, on celebrating their richness and diversity over the years. There will also be films which have been recently produced over the last one year. These films will be screened for the first time. Many of the selected films have been given awards at prestigious film festivals around the world in Chicago, Kerala, London and Sheffield.

"This time the festival is really like a pause button," explains Rajiv Mehrotra, managing trustee of PSBT. "I think a larger perspective is being served through that process. After 10 years of work it is time to review ourselves, it is time for other people to review what we are doing."

The festival will showcase PSBT films by well-known names in the documentary stratosphere like Paromita Vohra, Pankaj Butalia, Avijit Mukul Kishore, Sameera Jain, Ajay Raina and Pankaj Rishi Kumar. There will also be mid-career and fresh faces that have recently worked with PSBT which include Harjant Gill, Nirmal Chander, Samreen Farooqui and Shabani Hassanwalia.

The film titles and themes are attractive. 'Morality TV and the Loving Jihad' (2007) by Paromita Vohra, which won the best documentary award at the Kerala Film Festival, looks outside the box at breaking news, love and sexuality.

Sameera Jain's short film 'Mera Apna Sheher' (My Own City) which has been selected for the festival in Yamagata in Japan this year, probes



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Rajiv Mehrotra

relate to space, with how much freedom and under whose surveillance? And can observing this surveillance free one's gaze in some way, free oneself?"

Harjant Gill's 'Roots of Love' (2010) which was an official entry in film festivals in Kerala, Chicago and Vancouver, explores the growing chasm between the older and younger generation of Sikhs in their attitude to the turban.

Gill says the subject is close to his heart. "I can relate to the topic because I was born in Chandigarh. I grew up there in a traditional Sikh family and I had unshorn hair. I didn't cut my hair until I was 14 when my family was getting ready to migrate to California. Because I was so young when I cut my hair, for me personally, the transition was not as emotionally traumatizing. But my grandfather who is a turbaned Sikh felt betrayed by the act. He never fully forgave me and my brother for cutting our hair. In his mind, we are no longer full Sikhs. But my parents knew that we would have problems assimilating in high school in California and we might get bullied if we kept our turbans."

Aparna Sanyal's 'A Drop of Sunshine', also an official entry in Kerala, tackles the issue of schizophrenia and turns conventional theory about the illness on its head. "My

research for the film – the books I'd read, the stories I'd heard, the people I'd met – convinced me that there was more to schizophrenia than what mainstream psychiatry would have us believe, that the stories of real recovery could lie outside the predominant medical paradigm," says Aparna.

Workshops and discussions will help audiences to "move beyond the passive viewing of films to engaged viewing," says Mehrotra. The Documentary Film Appreciation and Fiction Film Appreciation Workshops by Professor Suresh Chabria from the Film and Television Institute of India are likely to be a popular draw. Aspiring film-makers will benefit from intensive workshops on film-making by Paromita Vohra on script writing, Avijit Mukul Kishore on using the camera, Suresh Rajamani on sound and Sankalp Meshram on film-editing.

But be warned that Open Frame will be less accommodating this year. The festival is moving to the India International Centre which has smaller venues. Be an early bird.

For more information: [www.psbtt.org](http://www.psbtt.org)

**This year Open Frame will present some 35 documentaries on India's changing social, political, environmental and cultural landscape. Workshops and discussions are included.**

what it means for a woman to be in the 'gendered urban landscape' of Delhi.

"When one grows up in a place, one knows it from the inside, from under its skin. And it gets under one's skin too," says Sameera Jain explaining the theme of her film. "How are city spaces negotiated by a woman who lives in the city and how do those spaces define her? How does one