

The International Women's Film Festival provides movie lovers with a plurality of cinematic viewpoints

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The fifth edition of the annual International Women's Film Festival, to be held in Chennai from July 14, promises to be different. Apart from the 130 odd award-winning films from different parts of the world that will be screened this year, a host of allied events will take place at various cultural venues across the city.

Dr. Rathi Jaffer, Director of INKO Centre, which is organising the festival, says, "In terms of programme content, the festival will have the same theme as the last four years. The focus, however, is on the 'woman's perspective'. A host of filmmakers are coming from all over the world to discuss their films with the audiences, with an opportunity to understand the director's vision better. This year, we will also screen documentaries and short films. The common perception is that documentary films are boring as they deal with certain serious issues. But I can assure you that there are several interesting ones that tackle these issues with tact and humour."

This year, Chennai will also host the Network of Asian Women's Film Festival (NAWFF) Awards.



Celebrating Women

where women filmmakers, particularly from Asia, will be honoured. Last year the winner was Leena Marimakkal for *Sengodol*. "The aim of the festival is to expose the audience to a plurality of viewpoints," she adds. The festival will additionally have a window for independent entries, where filmmakers are encouraged to submit their entries for the festival.

While the festival promises a great deal of variety, one cannot help but wonder



Rathi Jaffer

if the commercial pull of mainstream films will lure the audience away. Rathi says, "There is a reason why we restrict the number of films that we screen every year. It is not about screen-



Uma Varughese

ing the most number of films, but to provide the audience with a more qualitative experience. The films we screen are different from commercial cinema." The organisers have also tied up with various colleges in the city in order to rope in the younger audiences. "Every year, there is a great turnout from the student community. This year, we have tied up with around 10 colleges in the city who will be sending their media student students to the festival," notes Rathi.



Vazhakku Enn 28/9 is one of the films that will be screened at the festival.

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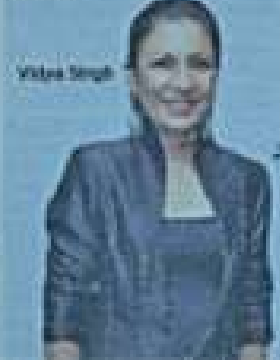
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From their commercial success, they have branched out into documentaries and short films. We have their movie actresses, including Parvati, Vidya Singh, who has been involved with the film festival in the past year. "The event that comes to be considered a very wide event, then having their members. Despite the fact that we have a lot of film screenings happen every other week in the city, I think there is a need for more curated and well-thought-out events such as the Women's International Film Festival and the ones that support in Goa and Orissa. When there are more festivals, there is better exposure to great cinema and the number of audiences will multiply across."

With festivals such as this opening up greater avenues for aspiring filmmakers and movie lovers, then the concept of plurality in cinema could become the motto for the city. Uma Varughese, the executive filmmaker and co-ordinator of the organising committee this year says, "In the last decade, the diversity level of the audience has grown substantially."

"It may seem that mainstream enjoy commercial cinema on a certain level, but their hearts are actually much beyond that. Personally speaking, exposure to more films from all across the globe goes a long way in celebrating the very richness of cinema," she points out.



Vidya Singh