

Documentary on beef 'Caste On The Menu Card' banned by the Films Division

A documentary on the beef eating practices made by five students from the Mumbai based TISS is the only film to be denied permission from screening during this weekend's Jeevika Asia Livelihood Festival in Delhi.



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Organisers of the Jeevika Asia Livelihood Festival are not likely to screen a 21 minute long documentary which focuses on the beef eating practices in Mumbai.

The documentary titled *Caste on the Menu Card* was the only one to be denied permission for screening among the 35 films that were sent to the Ministry of Information and Broadcast. *Caste on the Menu Card* was set to be screened on October 31 during the 12th Jeevika Asia Livelihood Documentary Film Festival scheduled to be held between October 30 to November 1 at the Siri Fort Auditorium, New Delhi.

The film was a joint effort of 5 students - Ananyaa Gaur, Anurup Khillare, Atul Anand, Reetika Revathy Subramanian and Vaseem Chaudhary from the School of Media and Cultural Studies of Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai.

Reetika Revathy Subramanian told IndiaToday, "The film was a part of the larger course work called *"Castemopolitan Mumbai Series"* which broadly explores livelihood, gender, the intricate link between food and caste and questions why most of these issues are swept under the carpet".

According to a statement by the filmmakers, they were informed just a day before the festival by Manoj Matthew, one of the organisers, who said the film cannot be screened because the Joint Secretary of the Films Division, Ministry of Information denied the permission when they found the mention of 'beef' in the synopsis of the film. Manoj Mathew did his best to convince the officials the movie is not 'religious' in nature.

According to the synopsis, available on www.jeevika.org "The film delves into the idea of food as a site of exclusion by focusing on beef-eating practices in Mumbai."

"It attempts to portray the prevalence of caste differentiation as seen in the food choices of people in the city, and touches upon concerns related to livelihood, social inclusion and human rights."

"By tracing the mythological and historical roots of the meat-eating culture in our country, the film discusses the hierarchy maintained by Brahminical preferences and its intended subversions."

"This is seen in the stand taken on dealing with the political economy of the leather and meat industries. The film follows the ruptured background of universities' caste politics over the demand of inclusion of beef in institutions. It observes that many restaurants in Mumbai offer beef delicacies, but off the menu. Thus, the film title reads 'Caste on the Menu Card.'" reads the synopsis.

Reetika said, "The documentary was made from August to September 2014, before the ban in Maharashtra. The grounds for denying permission on the basis of watching only the synopsis is completely unjustified."

"We are planning to get the film screened on college campuses, and civil society organizations across the country to encourage a dialogue. The screening this weekend is likely to take place in Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. We will also be releasing the film online in the days ahead," adds Reetika.

The film's first public screening was held in Mumbai on January 5, 2015 during the Student Film Festival at TISS. It had subsequent public screenings at the University of Hyderabad in March 2015, at the Society for Rural Urban and Tribal Initiative (SRUTI) last week and at the Rolling Frames Film Summit 2015, Bangalore.