

Nainital film fest to screen 'Caste on the Menu Card'

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NAINITAL: A day after historian Shekhar Pathak declared he was returning his Padma Shri over growing intolerance to freedom of expression, the fourth edition of Nainital Film Festival was again abuzz with excitement on Tuesday following an announcement that 'Caste on the Menu Card', a 21-minute controversial documentary would be screened on Wednesday.

The documentary was banned from screening in Delhi for its "communal" and "provocative" content amid concerns that it would spark unrest. In fact, the ministry of information and broadcasting refused clearance for its screening at an ongoing film festival.

But in Nainital, Sanjay Joshi, one of the organizers, said, "This festival is dedicated to the cinema of resistance and this film will be screen despite all odds to signify that message."

The 'Caste on the Menu Card', was a joint effort of five students from the School of Media and Cultural Studies of Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai.

Speaking to TOI, Atul Anand (23), director of the documentary, a postgraduate from Tata Institute of Social Sciences said, "It was our project depicting how food habits are related with normal daily life including business and other day-to-day activities."

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."

It was the only documentary among 35 others that failed to get an exemption from certification (given to documentary films) for screening at the 12th Jeevika Asia Livelihood Documentary Festival, organized by the Centre for Civil Society (CCS), New Delhi.

The film makers then decided to go ahead with independent screenings, the first of which was scheduled to be held at the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University. It was screened on JNU campus on November 2 by a students' group despite the varsity administration taking a surprising U-turn and revoking permission which was granted earlier.

On Tuesday, the Charlie Chaplin starrer 'The Great Dictator' was screened besides other films.