

JUST A STORY?

— A Festival of Feminist Films —

Documentaries, Docufiction & Shorts
curated by

Anveshi

RESEARCH CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES

February 27 & 28, 2026

LV Prasad Preview Theatre
Banjara Hills
Hyderabad



JUST A STORY?

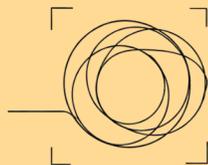
— A Festival of Feminist Films —

PROLOGUE

This two-day film festival brings together contemporary practitioners of the documentary, docufiction and short film formats who use the medium of film to allow for different ‘ways of seeing’ in Indian contexts. Working across languages—Telugu, Bangla, Marwari, Gujarati, English, Hindustani, Malayalam—the films in our selection allow the gendered world of everyday lives to unspool in new ways. Their frames take in the tenderness of personal relationships, the promise and difficulties of navigating spaces—public, semi-public, or private—and the perennial dilemmas of desire and the meaning of freedom.

Just a Story? centers the act of narrativizing women’s experience in contemporary India. The festival begins with Deepa Dhanraj’s recently restored *Idi Katha Maatramena* (1983), from which we borrow the title of the event, as a way of marking feminist departures in film-making. The festival then cuts to film-makers of a new generation exploring diverse filmic languages and strategies. In all of them we find not just new ways to feel the familiar, but also a persistent engagement with the old feminist question: what does it mean to be made and remade as gendered beings as we go through life?

We invite you to ask this question and many others, in the company of some of our most thoughtful contemporary artists and commentators on their work.



FILMS

Day One: February 27

Idi Katha Maatramena

(1983/Telugu/25 minutes).

Deepa Dhanraj



In *Idi Katha Maatramena*, the protagonist, Lalitha, is burdened by domestic pressures while studying and running a household. Will she manage to find a glimmer of hope through female friendships?

Deepa Dhanraj co-founded Yugantar, India's first feminist film collective formed in 1980.

Her filmography spans pioneering shorts like *Tambaku Chaakila Oob Ali* (1982), and later work such as *Something Like a War* (1991) and *We Have Not Come Here to Die* (2018).

Uma Bhrugubanda teaches in the Department of Culture Studies, EFL University. Her work includes scholarship on gender and cinema and Telugu translations.

Anju Rao G. is a lawyer associated with Anveshi. Her research explores gender politics within Indian courtrooms.

Raat

(2022/Hindi/34 minutes).

The Third Eye

Raat is a powerful short documentary born from a unique collaboration between The Third Eye's Learning Lab and its Digital Educators, where women and men from small towns in UP, Rajasthan, & Jharkhand, step out into the night with just their cameras and curiosity.

The Third Eye's Learning Lab is an arts-based pedagogical filmmaking initiative that mentors grassroots storytellers in visual, sonic and narrative

practices to articulate lived experiences from small towns and marginalised spaces.

Sherin B S teaches in the Department of Comparative Literature and India Studies at EFL University. Her research spans work on gender, Islamic modernity and Indian art history.



Mohammed Abdul Aleem is an engineer with an MBA who loves languages. As a Short Term Fellow at Anveshi, his work explores the Urdu public sphere in Hyderabad.

Avaar Navaar Chhoriyān
Shefalee Jain & Shivi Bhatnagar

(2025/Marwari/21 minutes).

अवार-नवार छोरियां (Every Now and Then Girls...) is a hand-drawn, hand-cut stop-motion animation inspired by the Rajasthani folktale Dohri Joon, collected by Vijaydan Detha in his celebrated *Batan Ri Phulwari*. The story is lovingly relocated to Sheoganj, Rajasthan, where folklore meets the lives of little girls as they listen and dream with the magical storytellers.



Shefalee Jain & Shivi Bhatnagar are visual artists and animators collaborating for the first time on this stop-motion animation grounded in folktales and feminist reinterpretation with handmade aesthetics.

Nikhila S teaches at the Department of Film Studies at the EFL University. Her research examines gender, visualities and Kannada New Age Cinema.

Eye Test

Sudha Francis

(2017/Malayalam/15 minutes).

Eye Test is a 15-min National Award-winning short in which a 27-year-old woman's routine eye clinic visit turns into a quiet journey through memory, loss, and a mother's lingering presence.



Sudha Padmaja Francis is a filmmaker and researcher who completed her postgraduate studies in film from the UK. Her filmography includes *Ormajeevikal* (Memory Beings, 2018) and *Ginger Biscuit* (2024).

Deeptha Achar retired as professor of English, MS University, Baroda. She has a wide range of scholarly expertise from the field of contemporary Indian art to literary and cultural studies.

Anna Lynn is an Outreach Fellow at Anveshi. Her research interests include gender studies, queer theory and Indian art.

If You Dare Desire...

Debalina Majumder

(2016/Bangla/52 minutes).



Abar Jodi Iccha Karo reimagines a tragic true event from West Bengal, in which two young women in love took their own lives after facing violence and rejection of their relationship.

Debalina Majumder is a Kolkata-based filmmaker, photographer and writer whose cinema consistently engages with queer identity, gender and socio-political narratives across genres. Her diverse filmography includes *Gay India Matrimony* (2019) and *Porsbi Neeler Arshinagar* (Beyond The Blues: 2023).

Navaneetha Mokkil is at the Centre for Women's Studies, JNU. She is the author of *Unruly Figures: Queerness, Sex Work, & the Politics of Sexuality in*

Kerala (2019), with an interest in feminist theory and methodology, print cultures, and public formations of sexuality.

Day Two: February 28

Umbro

(2024/Gujarati/34 minutes).

Prachee Bajania



Umbro, named after the threshold of a home, explores this liminal space as a site of connection, joy, solidarity and quiet resistance among the filmmaker's mother and her friends.

Prachee Bajania is a filmmaker, editor and writer based in Gujarat. An alumna of NID, Ahmedabad and FTII, she has written and directed four short fiction films, including *The Spell of Purple* (2020).

Shefali Jha teaches the Humanities and Social Sciences at DAU, Gandhinagar. Her areas of interest include Anthropology, Cultural Studies and feminist thought.

Deepesh N S is a student of BA English, at EFL University. An avid Manga fan, he is interested in the intersections of language, culture, and technology.

Mod

(2016/Hindi/69 minutes).

Pushpa Rawat

Mod is a raw, immersive documentary that takes you into the lives of young men who gather at a notorious water tank in Pratap Vihar, Ghaziabad. The film is an empathetic exploration of the masculinities that surround these so-called no-gooders.

Pushpa Rawat engages with community spaces and social dynamics through observational cinema rooted in her own neighbourhood contexts. She directed the acclaimed *Nirnay* (2012) and was part of the film, *Kyon* (2007).



Madhumeeta Sinha is affiliated to the School of English Language Education, EFL University. Her research lies at the intersection of feminism, education, and documentary filmmaking in India.

Arunya E. is an Outreach Fellow at Anveshi who is also a Climate and social justice activist, freelance journalist, content creator, writer and holistic educator.



FILMMAKERS' ROUNDTABLE

Moderated by Navaneetha Mokkil

ABOUT ANVESHI

Anveshi Research Centre for Women's Studies was founded in 1985 by a group of Hyderabad-based feminist activist-researchers. It hosts and promotes research on gender in the broad areas of Dalit studies, Law, Minority Studies, Health, and Education. Anveshi collaborations have resulted in the publication of a range of books; among others: the two volumes of *Women Writing in India* (1991- 1993), *Taking Charge Of Our Bodies: A Health Handbook For Women* (2004), and more recently, *Towards A World Of Equals: A Bilingual Textbook on Gender* (2016) and stories in the *Different Tales* series of books for young readers in six languages.

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SCHEDULE

Friday, February 27, 2026

9.30 AM

Registration

10.00 AM:

Welcome & Introduction

10.15 – 11.30 AM

Idi Katha Maatramena
(1983/Telugu/25 min)

Director: Deepa Dhanraj

11.45 – 1.00 PM

Raat (2022/Hindi/34 min)

Directors: The Third Eye

2.00 – 3.00 PM

Avaar Navaar Chhoriyan
(2025/Marwari/21 min)

Directors: Shefalee Jain and Shivi
Bhatnagar

3.00 – 4.00 PM

Eye-Test (2017/Malayalam/15
minutes)

Director: Sudha Francis

4.30 – 6.00 PM

If You Dare Desire...
(2016/Bangla/52 min)

Director: Debalina Majumder

Saturday, February 28, 2026

10.00 – 11.15 AM

Umbro (2024/Gujarati/34 min)

Director: Prachee Bajania

11.30 – 1.15 PM

Mod (2016/Hindi/69 min)

Director: Pushpa Rawat

2:30 – 4:30 PM

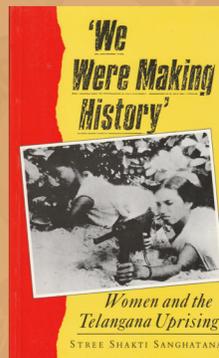
*Filmmakers Roundtable

Moderator: Navaneetha M.

4.30 PM

Concluding Remarks &
Vote of Thanks

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



Anveshi invites you to a seminar celebrating the new edition of the 1989 book, *We Were Making History: Life Stories of Women in the Telangana People's Struggle*.

ON MARCH 27 & 28, 2026