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A film about people

Reporters Name | Anjali Jhangiani | Friday, 18 March 2016 AT 09:41 PM IST

Anjali Jhangiani, Black Sheep, documentary, four transgender females



Whatever our age — young, old, or half way through our lives, we should be able to pick our own destiny.' When you see the trailer of Black Sheep opening with this line, you know that the film is not just another documentary, but a compilation of footage that gives you a sneak peek into the lives of transgender females without painting a sad picture.

The four protagonists of the film are Manisha, Sneha, Mariya and Kaif, who are seen dancing, relishing a Pav Bhaji party and hanging out with other friends. "I had done a lot of research on non-profit organisations helping the LGBT community in Mumbai and the main one that kept coming up was Humsafar Trust. I had messaged them and they were absolutely lovely people. Initially, I had a meeting with them over the phone and they said the best thing to do is come to their office and meet a few of their TGs that work with them. So I did just that, I went with my crew, we flew there and we met Sneha. She had such positivity and warmth. The next day, we met up with her friends, Kaif, Manisha, Mariya, Manjuri, Shyna and in total about 15 kinnars (transgenders)," recalls Reshel Shah, film maker.

The plot of the film is that these transgenders have a heart, mind and soul just like everyone else. "I got the nickname black sheep because I wanted to be a filmmaker and didn't want to follow cultural norms. It intrigued me to meet other black sheep in the world and how we are actually sheep in so many ways and how ironic it was to be judged and be seen as the outsider only because you decided to pick your own destiny. Kinnars are exactly that, they are judged because they took their own choices in life," says Shah on the title of the film.

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She talks about how the days spent with them has changed her as a person. "I was stuck in the whirlwind running after success as it equals money. But these girls happily shook me out of it. They taught me to bask in what you have and to live for the moment. These women have had it hard, more than I can imagine, yet they showed me how to live with love and laughter," says Shah.

Of all the experiences she's tried to catch on celluloid, there are two things Shah couldn't bring out on tape due to technical restrictions, but she cherishes them nonetheless. "People constantly asked if I had asked them why they changed their gender and of course I did. But not at any point in the film will you see it because that's not the point. It shouldn't matter why you made certain decisions in life, because it's your life and you shouldn't have to answer for your decisions if you decide not to," says Shah, adding, "The kinnars also mentioned a number of sad stories on how they had been bullied. But we didn't put it in or even record it because the film isn't meant to enforce negativity. It's meant to celebrate freedom. Plus both points have been done in a number of films in the past, yet no film has looked at them as people, and we wanted to concentrate on that."

The film has been pre-selected for London International Film Festival and will be screened on March 30 at the Bollywood International Film Festival, Columbia.



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