



**Chicago South Asian Film Festival Announces 2011 Film Selection- *Art, Life, Respect* to be this year's theme.**

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CHICAGO, IL – August 15, 2011 - [Chicago South Asian Film Festival](http://www.csaff.org) (CSAFF) announces their film selection for its second year. Starting on September 30, this three-day festival hosted by Chicago Cultural Center and Columbia College Chicago, is proud to showcase 28 films, including 2 world premieres, 7 US premieres and 15 Chicago premieres. The 2011 CSAFF theme is "**Art, Life, Respect**" which applies not only to the films, but also to our own personal worlds.

Kicking off the festival is *Rang Rasiya*, from director Ketan Mehta. This Randeep Hooda- Nandana Sen starrer offers a compelling look at the life and work of 19th century Indian painter, Raja Ravi Verma. The opening night red carpet event and gala will be held on Friday, September 29, 2011, at the Chicago Cultural Center and will be adorned by the film's cast along with many other prominent South Asian and Bollywood celebrities.

The centerpiece film, *I Am Kalam*, celebrates the human spirit, specifically that of a child's struggle against all odds to receive an education. The closing night film, *I Am*, is a very personal story of lesbian filmmaker Sonali Gulati, who returns home to confront the loss of her mother whom she never came out to, showing us the true meaning of family by interviewing the parents of other gay and lesbian Indians.

The lineup cuts across a variety of genres, such as comedy, drama, romance, fantasy, and yes, reality. While pieces such as *XXWhy* and *Jason* touch upon LGBT issues, shorts like *Do I?* and *Have I Shared Too Much?* provide a fresh perspective on how a lot of us "connect" with each other these days. *Made in Pakistan* gives audiences a view of the country's citizens that may not quite fit with what we're used to seeing in the media, while *Ring Laila*, from local filmmaker Anu Rana, profiles aspiring female boxers in India. While *In the Name of the Family* will give you a chilling account of honor killings in the Western hemisphere, the team from Pennywise Films shows us about inspiration, in *Shuttlecock Boys*, and *Still Standing*. Finally, stories and concepts like *Return Address* and *The Eggie Files* remind us that being a South Asian artist doesn't necessarily require you to create something about only that culture. The carefully handpicked films for CSAFF 2011 will have something everyone can either relate to, or at least learn from.

"We were extremely happy with our lineup when we selected these films, and we're even more excited for you to see them. It's time to get inspired!" said Mileen Patel, Programming Director.

The festival has added another day of free movies and audiences can watch even more free films at the Chicago Cultural Center. Keeping in tune with the goals of the festival to create a film market place, the special panels and workshops open for both moviegoers and moviemakers will be soon announced.

For more information on the full list of film selections, please visit [www.csaff.org/filmselections](http://www.csaff.org/filmselections)

**Feature Films Include:**

***Rang Rasiya* (Director: Ketan Mehta):** A fascinating tale of the famous artist Raja Ravi Varma's passions, obsessions and his fierce struggle for creative freedom. He hurt the religious sentiments of the people by painting nudes of Indian mythological characters. Later on, his muse Sugandha inspires him to create exquisite paintings based on mythological themes and classic literature.

***I Am Kalam* (Director: Nila Madhab Panda):** Chhotu, an inventive child with a cheerful disposition labors in a roadside food stall. One day, upon hearing a speech from Dr. Abdul Kalam, the former President of India, he vows to change his future. The local prince, with whom an effervescent Chhotu strikes an unlikely friendship, which defies the stringent class barriers of the village,

aids him in his mammoth quest.

**Stanley ka Dabba (Director: Amole Gupte):** Stanley Ka Dabba throws light on the everyday life of school child Stanley, who tugs at your heartstrings with his indomitable spirit, while warding off the hostile world he is surrounded by at all times. The film reveals how this child-soldier rises above his choking real life situation, on the way setting a template for all whiners to learn from.

**Bambara Wallala (Director: Athula Liyanage):** An ordinary meaningless existence can suddenly change by life and death. Bambara Walalla takes viewers on a brilliant yet unconventional route through one man's journey to find passion and courage in a seemingly meaningless life.

**Shuttlecock Boys (Director: Hemant Gaba):** Shuttlecock Boys revolves around the lives, success and failures of four friends who hail from lower middleclass backgrounds in Delhi. Should we accept what life offers to us on a platter or should we try to chase our dreams, choosing the path less taken?

**Spring in the Colony (Director: Moinak Biswas & Arjun Gourisaria):** Atin, the young and dreamy poet from a refugee colony, searches for the girl he loves while his home the threat of demolition from a housing giant. His search ends up finding much more than his ladylove.

**Troublemaker (Director: Geeta Malik):** Rekha is broke, jobless and often drunk. When she overhears surprising news about her absentee father, she embarks on a road trip with her best friend to find him.

#### **Documentary Films:**

**I Am (Director: Sonali Gulati):** I Am chronicles the journey of an Indian lesbian filmmaker who returns to Delhi, eleven years later, to re-open what was once home, and finally confronts the loss of her mother whom she never came out to. As she meets and speaks to parents of other gay and lesbian Indians, she pieces together the fabric of what family truly means, in a landscape where being gay was until recently a criminal and punishable offense.

**In The Name of the Family (Director: Shelley Saywell):** A 16-year-old girl was strangled to death, her father & brother charged with murder. Three weeks later, teenage sisters were shot to death in Dallas, their father wanted for murder. Six months later, her brother, who is now in jail, stabs a college student. This human rights film challenges the tradition that lie behind these tragedies committed against girls caught between two cultures.

**Made In Pakistan (Director: Nasir Khan):** Made in Pakistan follows the lives of four young, middle-class Pakistanis during Musharraf's state of emergency in 2007 – Waleed Khalid, a lawyer, Rabia Aamir, a journalist and a working mother, Mohsin Waraich, an aspiring politician, and Tara Mehmood, an event & PR manager. The film is an attempt to break the oft-negative depictions of Pakistan in the news media by re-examining the country through the eyes of these four citizens.

**Ring Laila (Director: Anu Rana):** Ring Laila is a short documentary about women, empowerment and the fighting spirit that inspires one to dream for something better amidst seemingly insurmountable odds. Razia Shabnam, India's first Muslim woman choosing boxing lives this struggle. Alam Ara aspires to follow in her footsteps.

**Roots of Love (Director: Harjant Gill):** Told through the stories of six different men ranging in age from fourteen to eighty-six, Roots of Love documents the changing significance of hair and the turban among Sikhs in India. We see younger Sikh men abandoning their hair and turban to follow the current fashion trends, while the older generation struggles to retain the visible symbols of their religious identity. The choice of cutting one's hair is one that not only concerns the individual and his family, but an entire community.

**Still Standing (Director: Pankaj Johar):** Still Standing is an awe inspiring story of courage, determination and the unbreakable spirit of a man who defied all odds after doctors pronounced him 100% disabled. Paralyzed neck downwards and bedridden for the last

24 years, Rajinder Johar has been helping other disabled people stand on their feet and become self reliant.

**XXWhy (Director: Dr.Bharathy Manjula):** The film XXWHY on Sree Nandu, an F2M transgender from Kerala, India, poses many uncomfortable issues that question the notions of social positionalities and fixed gender identities. Twenty five year old Sree Nandu is the first in Kerala to come in public with transgender identity. Suffering and redemption, destruction and self destruction, love and hatred, pain and joy all go entwined and entangled in Sree Nandu, while the under current is accumulating trauma and the determination to survive in a society where transgenders are still invisible and inaudible.

### Short Films:

**Do I? (Director: Vikram Ahuja):** Do I? is a roller coaster ride into the mind of a man about to face his greatest fear. It is a story that will resonate with every member of the male species and give women a unique insight into how men think.

**Have I Shared Too Much (Director: Sameer Acharya):** Coworkers that are heavy users of social networking websites discover that information overload brings about a new set of problems.

**Homecoming (Director: Gursimran Sandhu):** Nina Patel is nominated to represent her class at Homecoming, but when trying to convince her traditional Indian parents, she finds her father in a compromising position with his secretary. In an effort to buy her silence, he agrees to let her go to the dance, but no pretty dress or beautiful crown can make a fairytale of her shattered reality.

**Jason (Director: Pulkit Datta):** A drama in which Jason explains his decision to undergo a major life change to his parents, and in the process learns more about himself.

**Portrait in Bombay (Director: Sandeep Sharma):** Documentary short that offers a look at a chance encounter with a Bombay rickshaw driver, revealing his view of the world.

**Ronnie (Director: Kenneth Lawrence):** It is a story about life and filling the missing blanks. Ronnie, whose father makes life hard for him, craves for a father figure until one day, he meets a fisherman who deeply craves for his long lost son.

**Return Address (Director: Abi Varghese):** A boy, who is forced to take care of his aging grandfather, escapes himself through photography, and decides to play cupid in a small northeastern town.

**Second Best (Director: Jason Wong):** The film follows, sisters Taila and Deepa and their widowed father Raajesh during an annual Hindi Speaking. But when the girls' sibling rivalry erupts onstage, the family must reconsider what it means to be a "winner".

**Seeking Single White Male (Director: Vivek Shraya):** The film is about the study of a brown body in (queer) white spaces.

**Small Voices (Director: Sofian Khan):** A drama based on child camel jockeys and the practice of human trafficking.

**The Bridge (Director: M.S. Srikanth):** A surreal take on evoking emotions with minimal visuals. The short film is set on a bridge that stands as a metaphor for life.

**The Eclipse of Taregna (Director: Rakesh Chaudhary):** The film is about a disengaged man's realization about his grandson's need for a father figure and how he could no longer remain a bystander to life.

**The Eggie Files (Director: Snehal Patel):** It's just another day in the office when Eggie uncovers a sinister plot. Being in charge of both office supplies for Universal Cargo, and the safety and protection of beautiful office girl Susan, can get real tiring. But the rewards are worth it.



#### **About CSAFF**

Chicago South Asian Film Festival is dedicated to fostering a diverse cinematic experience by promoting films that represent South Asian perspectives and by connecting audiences, emerging filmmakers and industry members. This festival is brought to you by Chicago South Asian Arts Council, Inc. an Illinois based non-profit organization. For more information, please visit [www.csaff.org](http://www.csaff.org).

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