Celebrating Women

The fifth edition of the annual International Women’s Film Festival, to be held in Chennai from July 14, promises to be different. Apart from the 130 odd award-winning films from different parts of the world that will be screened this year, a host of allied events will take place at various cultural venues across the city.

Dr. Rathib Jafar, Director of INKO Centre, which is organizing the festival, says, “In terms of programme content, the festival will have the same theme as the last four years. The focus, however, is on the ‘women’s perspective’. A host of filmmakers are coming from all over the world to discuss their films with the audiences, with an opportunity to understand the director’s vision better. This year, we will also screen documentaries and short films. The common perception is that documentaries are boring, but this edition promises to address such issues with tact and humour.”

This year, Chennai will also host the Network of Asian Women’s Film Festival (NAWFF) Awards, where women filmmakers, particularly from Asia, will be honoured. Last year, the winner was Leena Manimekalai for Senggade. “The aim of the festival is to expose the audience to a plurality of viewpoints,” she adds. The festival will additionally have a windows for independent entries, where filmmakers are encouraged to submit their entries for the festival.

While the festival promises a great deal of variety, one cannot help but wonder if the commercial pull of mainstream films will lure the audiences away. Rathib says, “There is a reason why we restrict the number of films that we screen every year. It is not about screening the most number of films, but to provide the audience with a more qualitative experience. The films we screen are different from commercial cinema.” The organizers have also tied up with various colleges in the city in order to rope in the younger audiences. “Every year, there is a great turnout from the student community. This year, we have tied up with around 10 colleges in the city who will be sending their media studies students to the festival,” notes Rathib.

Vazhakkku Enn 18/9 is one of the films that will be screened at the festival.