

4 AROUND TOWN

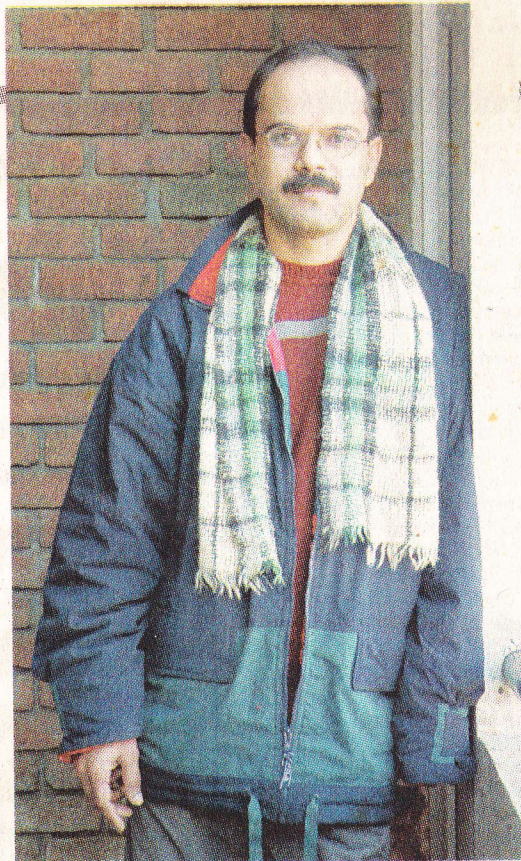
Documenting Dilemmas...

Nonika Singh

ONLY the other day, Parvez Imam was a psychiatrist... and today a talented documentary filmmaker whose films have been nominated for MITIL, screened at prestigious festivals. But be it then when he probed into individual case histories or now, when he weaves films around mental health, women issues, and forestry, his mantra remains - let truth be known. Whatever be the odds. Needless to say the odds are many. The very first insurmountable roadblock is 'how to raise funds'. And if money pours in as in his case a NGO commissions him to make films on disability, the next dilemma - how and where to exhibit - looms large. Rues

Imam, "In the last ten years, whatever spaces - to exhibit short films - existed have been wiped off." So at times, he finds a way to beat the system. Like in 2002, instead of making grave commentary on disabled, he made a music video *Kinara* that won him best film award... voicing much the same thing but subtly. But often he insists "subjects demand to be treated only through films." Like his acclaimed *Between The Lines* in which investigating the unenviable fate of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh landed him at the centre of the murky happenings. He recalls: "Triggered by chance statement of my maid servant, following a lead I found myself in thick of things and had to even hire a lawyer."

No, he doesn't see filmmaker as a crusader but an objective chronicler who must be 'clear about what he wants to say'. He nods: "often short films - yes those aired by flagrantly 'shy of truth' foreign channels too - are mere propaganda films... a reason why the common man on the streets baulks at the idea of watching one." But a good film he insists "isn't merely issue based but has to be riveting. If I want to communicate it must hold, must reach out." Sure reaching out process is stilted... Makers forever under siege. With censorship imposed on short films, platforms such as Mumbai International Film Festival too have been snatched away from genuine Indian filmmakers. So at macro level, while about



PAWAN SINGH

200 makers are coming together to battle the Draconian law by exhibiting their films right opposite the venue, at individual level too the fight is on. So what keeps this maker of 40 films going? A simple belief: "only if such films are made... shall these find space." And truth be not only known but also disseminated to those who deserve to know nothing but the truth. ■

Parvez Imam was in City for the play *Bheed Mein Akele* where he assisted in set, sound & lighting

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