



## **German Star of India for Director Rahul Nair**

### **'Ottamuri Velicham' Impresses the Jury**

### **Winners of the 15<sup>th</sup> Indian Film Festival Stuttgart**

*Stuttgart – The drama 'Ottamuri Velicham - Light in the Room' by Rahul Nair was awarded the German Star of India for the Best Feature Film at the closing ceremony for the 15<sup>th</sup> Indian Film Festival Stuttgart at Metropol cinema in Stuttgart on Sunday. The German Star of India for the Best Short Film went to 'Pawasacha Nibandi - An Essay of the Rain' by Nagraj Manjule. 'Kho Ki Pa Lü - Up Down & Sideways' by Anushka Meenakshi was honoured with the German Star of India for the Best Documentary. The feature film 'Love and Shukla' by Siddhartha Jatla has won the Director's Vision Award. The awards came with prize money in the total amount of 7,000 Euro. More than 5,000 visitors attended on the five Festival days.*

The cinematic journey to India delighted audiences with brilliant film art and entertaining summer film hits from India. The programme had a particular focus on Mumbai, Stuttgart's partner city in India for 50 years now. Gerson da Cunha, almost 90 years old and a wise son of the metropolis, provided the audience with an intelligent and charming portrait of his native city, in an autobiographical talk with Festival Director Oliver Mahn. One film block was dedicated to India's language diversity. And in the sold-out school screening of the film 'Ubuntu' by Pushkar Shrotri, school children in the Indian state of Maharashtra fought for the human right to education.

Over a dozen directors, actors, actresses and producers mingled with the audience at Europe's largest festival of Indian film, including director Onir and Geetanjali Thapa, the lead actress of his WhatsApp romance 'Kuchh Bheege Alfaaz - Rain Soaked Words'. Her Excellency, Mrs. Mukta Dutta Tomar, Ambassador of India to the Federal Republic of Germany in Berlin, was one of the celebrities received on the red carpet leading to Metropol cinema which was decorated in Indian style.

### **The Feature Film 'Ottamuri Velicham' is the Festival's Big Winner**

The programme selection for the 'German Star of India' competition again distinguished itself by its determination to explore the freedom of cinema. The Festival's big winner is the film 'Ottamuri Velicham - Light in the Room' by Rahul Nair. It was awarded with the German Star of India for the Best Feature Film, which comes with 4,000 Euro prize money donated by the Festival's main sponsor, Honorary Consul Andreas Lapp. The film deals with the taboo topic of marital rape which has not drawn much attention in India so far. Director Rahul Nair, who comes from Kerala in South India and borrowed the money for his first feature-length film from friends, particularly impressed the jury with his film's imagery and intense narrative style. The film location, an old tea plantation surrounded by green hills, first seems like an idyll, before turning into a place of threat and imprisonment for young, naive Sudha.

The young woman – brilliantly played by young actress Vinitha Koshy – is married off to Chandan and finds herself helplessly exposed to his increasingly violent outbursts of rage. But Sudha decides to defend herself. A further reason for the jury to honour 'Ottamuri Velicham' was its language: Malayalam is spoken in the Indian state of Kerala, a region beyond the Bollywood film industry.



### **Short Film Award for 'An Essay of the Rain' by Nagraj Manjule**

The award for the Best Short Film along with 1,000 Euro prize money went to 'Pawasacha Nibandh - An Essay of the Rain' by Nagraj Manjule, who "impressed" the jury "with every minute" 10-year-old Raja, son of a poor family, has homework to do: write an essay on the rain. In the words of the jury, this results in "a film like a poem, or perhaps not at all." "The discreet camera observes a burdensome everyday life and gives the grippingly authentic protagonists all the space they need for their splendid acting", so the jury members commend the film.

At first, the jury says, it was easy to find poetry in the ordinary, as the film recommends at the beginning, thanks to its picturesque images. But soon, the beautiful appearance is washed away by the film's real main protagonist, the ceaseless monsoon rain. "In the film it is ubiquitous, soaking the actors, making a permanently murmuring sound, infiltrating even the sparse interiors and thus creating a constant pull which neither protagonists nor audiences can resist." so the jury in their statement.

### **'Kho Ki Pa Lü' wins the Award for Best Documentary**

The jury was deeply impressed with the documentary 'Kho Ki Pa Lü - Up Down and Sideways' by Anushka Meenakshi and Iswar Srikumar, a portrait of the village of Phek in Nagaland, its people, their work-songs and music, and especially so with its cinematic and narrative form and style. According to the jury statement, the documentary offers an intimate perspective on life in Phek without ever being intrusive: "We enter the remote mountainous terrain, feel the physicality of work in the rice terraces and the singing's rhythm creating community and giving strength. The camerawork and slow, but rhythmic editing create a sense of proximity and space for exploration, which we found daring and generous at the same time."

For the jury, the film develops a simple, but powerful idea: "As one finds one's place through music in the communal rhythm of work, this may extend to the rhythm of life in the community as a whole." And the jury continues: "This happy notion is later juxtaposed with information about the conflict-ridden existence of the Naga people in modern India and their struggle to retain their way of life in the face of external imposition of control."

The Director's Vision Award went to the feature film 'Love and Shukla' by Siddartha Jatla. For the first time, the award also came with prize money in the amount of 500 Euro sponsored by FilmIndia Worldwide Magazine. The prize is awarded to an ambitious director whose film has the focus on a cultural, social or political deficit.

The Audience Award sponsored by Bollywood TV channel Zee.One in Munich comes with 1,000 Euro prize money and goes to 'Sisya - The Disciple' by Saraswathi Balgam. The new Ishq Dil Se Critic's was awarded for the first time to ('Love & Shukla' by Siddartha Jatla).

To Petra Olschowski, State Secretary in the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts, the Indian Film Festival Stuttgart is a platform for political and social issues. Andreas Lapp, Honorary Consul of the Republic of India for Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate, commended the Festival organisers at Filmbüro Baden-Württemberg e. V. for their dedication in providing Stuttgart audiences with a realistic perspective on India. The City of Stuttgart congratulated Festival Director Oliver Mahn on the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Indian Film Festival Stuttgart, hoping for 15 further successful Festival years.