

# No wild shots these

On the third day of the Vasundhara International Film Festival at the National Film Archive, two short films by Ashima Narain (*In The Pink* and *The Last Dance*) were screened along with the works of other filmmakers.

Though she's better known as a fashion and film photographer, Narain has "always been interested" in making wildlife films but could not carry forward her wishes. Finally, when the opportunity came, Narain decided to make *In The Pink*, with an aim to make a "light" film that is "full of information about the flamingos" that were once found in the urban settings

of Mumbai. About 20,000 of these birds used to visit the city but they gradually seemed to have vanished from Mumbai and that had "shocked" Narain.

More surprising was perhaps was the "lack of awareness" about them even among Mumbai residents. "So many of them would say 'Oh we know nothing about the flamingos at all' and I had to tell them all about the birds," Narain says. Not surprisingly then she made it a point to take the 24-minute film to the schools where children were introduced with the "quirky birds." And the response from the youngsters has been encouraging.

Another "fantastic out-

come" was to get people from abroad come to Mumbai for scientifically studying the flamingo-related issues. "It feels great to see a film can prompt someone this way," Narain says.

The 26-minute film *The Last Dance* was funded by the UK Environmental Film Fellowship for making films on the theme of wildlife crime. Narain was intrigued by the way Indian Sloth Bears have been used as dancers on streets, despite a law banning such treatment of the animals. As for her take on the problem, Narain says, "One has to look into the wider problem that is involved with any such wildlife crime."

Talking about her experience while filming, Narain mentions the Qalandar community that generally earns their livelihood from bear dancing. Many of the community members were encouraged to give up the illegal occupation and were rehabilitated with alternative livelihood. In this journey Narain collaborated with the Wildlife SOS Team founded by Kartick Satynarayan. Referring to the language of the film, Narain informs that it has been dubbed in Hindi so as to reach out the non-English speaking communities in northern India.

According to the filmmaker, "The approach should be holistic, people should be not good. However, Narain sounds disheartened as much is "not being done" to tackle the wildlife crime in India with this holistic approach. "Experts must consider this concept in case of tigers, for example," Narain adds.

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