

Beyond Borders: Unveiling Common Threads in the Environment–Development Dilemma

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Quoting Somali–British writer Warsan Shire, ‘I held an atlas in my lap, ran my fingers across the whole world and whispered, where does it hurt? It answered... everywhere, everywhere, everywhere’. This sentiment resonates profoundly when addressing the conflict between environment and development. At the forefront of such conflict are indigenous communities, whose very livelihoods are intertwined with the lands they call home.

The world is beginning to recognize that indigenous communities world over serve as custodians of their land. Celebrations of indigenous culture can be seen in instances such as Hana-Rawhiti Maipi-Clarke, a 21-year-old Maori Member of Parliament performing a native ‘war cry’ addressed to Maori children. As they stand their ground in battles against corporations and governments, this year’s Pune International Film Festival (PIFF) showcases a selection of stellar films that reflect their struggles in the ‘Global Cinema’ category.

Featured within the carefully curated ‘Global Cinema’ selection of PIFF, ‘Crowã (The Buriti Flower)’ invites viewers on a journey through three pivotal periods in the history of the indigenous people of the Brazilian forest. This film is a collaborative labor of love between Portuguese film director João Salaviza, Argentinian director Renée Nader Messori, and three locals from the Krahôlândia reservation Ilda Patpro Krahô, Francisco Hyjnô Krahô, and Henrique Ihjãc Krahô. The film blends fictional elements into the non-fictional tale of the struggles of resistance of the Krahô community. Ilda Patpro Krahô and Francisco Hyjnô Krahô not only serve as the screenwriters but also take on roles in front of the camera, offering a notable instance of indigenous voices authentically narrating their own stories in this film. The characters in this film struggle not just to protect their land and nature, but also to preserve their freedom.

An excellent film directed by Sudabeh Mortezaei is ‘Europa’, which delves into the intricate themes of corporate ‘wokewashing’ and neoliberal exploitation. Through the lens of the protagonist Beate, employed by the enigmatic corporation Europa, the narrative unfolds as the company, under the pretext of promoting philanthropy, attempts to acquire land from the locals in a remote Albanian valley. Beate meets her match when Jetnor, a determined farmer who refuses to leave his ancestral land, enters the scene.

From Japan, we have ‘Aku Wa Sonzai Shinai’ (Evil Does Not Exist) by Japanese filmmaker Ryusuke Hamaguchi. In this film, the idyllic life of the protagonist Takumi and his daughter Hana in Mizubiki Village (a village close to Tokyo) is threatened by a proposed glamping site project. The local community vehemently opposes the initiative, foreseeing its potential repercussions on the local water supply, the ecological equilibrium of the plateau, and their cherished way of life.

Another film addressing the complexities of modernization, ‘A Road to a Village’ unfolds as a cinematic exploration into the challenges posed by modernization. Maila, a traditional basket weaver living in rural Nepal with his family, must deal with the changes brought on by a road that results in his occupation losing its significance. Plastic items easily transported to the village replace the humble baskets woven by Maila. Nepalese filmmaker Nabin Subba navigates this conflict between tradition and modernity with a humane touch.

In the documentary film selection, a film that serves as an ode to a vanishing continent and its inhabitants is 'Antarctica Calling' by Luc Jacquet. Watch all these films and more by purchasing a pass for Rs. 800 at www.piffindia.com. A complete schedule of the festival can be found here: <https://www.piffindia.com/pdf/2024/22nd-piff-screening-schedule.pdf>