



Word Within the Word

Director: Rajula Shah, India, 2008, 74 minutes

CURATED BY DEEPA DHANRAJ

Word Within the Word is a cinematic coming together of words, memories, and the human landscape through 14th century mystical Bhakti poetry. The film looks at how the Word resonates in and of ordinary lives across centuries. Beginning from a cloudy monsoon morning in the city of Bhopal, it travels to Malwa, Madhya Pradesh (the hub of tribal India), also known as the second home of Pt. Kumar Gandharva, one of the greatest musicians of our time. Here, within the fast-altering fabric of a challenged rural life, we encounter common people. Regardless of age, caste, or gender, they fight hard to earn a daily square meal. And they keep music alive at the bosom of a gnawing fate. As they sing the poetry of Kabir and Gorakhnath they embody, far beyond the scope of any intellectual resolve, a refusal to die and a bid to seize eternity from historic annihilation.

Still highly respected today, the most influential Bhakti poet is Kabir. In his teachings, ideas from Islam and Hinduism flow into one another. He rejected religion centred on formalities. His lore advocates, instead, inner experiences on the road to higher spiritual awareness. It is an unorthodox philosophy, which warns against religious fanaticism and sanctimonious hypocrisy. In modern India, the ancient oral traditions are under threat of falling into oblivion. Bhakti devotees, as a result, feel driven to paraphrase their poetic language and explain its complex meanings.

Word Within the Word is a crucial gateway to the India we are fast forgetting, one that is difficult to classify and categorise but simpler to understand if you hear its people speak. Within this human landscape, one can aspire to face our contemporary dilemmas stemming from learned responses and fragmented dreams.

Winner, Horizons Award, Munich International Documentary Film Festival

DIRECTOR'S BIOGRAPHY

Rajula Shah, born in 1974, has a Diploma in Film Direction from the Film & Television Institute of India. She is an independent filmmaker based in Bhopal. Her films include *Sabad Nirantar* (2007) and *Beyond The Wheel* (2005). Rajula publishes poetry and short stories regularly in various literary journals. Her poetry collection *Parchhain ki Khidki Se* was awarded the Navlekhan Puraskar by Bharatiya Jyanpeeth in 2004. She also translates literary work and has a regular column on cinema in the journal *Rang Prasang* published by the National School of Drama, New Delhi.

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