

BREAKING FREE

BREAKING FREE a film by **Sridhar Rangayan**

SOLARIS PICTURES PRESENTS 'BREAKING FREE' DIRECTED BY SRIDHAR RANGAYAN EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS SRIDHAR RANGAYAN SAAGAR GUPTA
EDITORS PRAVIN ANGRE SRIDHAR RANGAYAN SUPERVISING DOP SUBRANSHU DAS BACKGROUND MUSIC SURESH IYER SOUND MIXING MADHU APSARA



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SHORT SYNOPSIS

Filmmaker and gay activist Sridhar Rangayan embarks on a personal journey to expose the human rights violations faced by the LGBTQ community in India due to a draconian law Section 377 and homophobic social mores of a patriarchal society. The gritty documentary *BREAKING FREE*, shot over 7 years, features searing testimonies of gay and transgender persons who have been victimized or exploited, as well as wide-ranging interviews with advocates and activists across India. See-sawing between despair and joy, anguish and hope, the film is an emotional roller-coaster journey of the Indian LGBTQ movement - from invisibility to empowerment.

LONG SYNOPSIS

Journeying across India and filmed over seven years, *Breaking Free* interweaves anguished testimonials of the LGBTQ community with voices of advocates, activists and opinion builders who have fought a decade-long battle to have the law read down. But neither the courts, not the government have paid heed to the plight of the community, even as strident voices of religious homophobes attempt to influence a larger society.

Kokila, a transgender person was gang-raped by goons, refused justice and brutalized by the police; Pandyan, an effeminate man, was repeatedly raped by five policemen and he finally set himself on fire; Madhumita, a transgender person was put in prison for forty-five days because it was alleged their community spread AIDS; a support center for gay men was raided and its outreach workers imprisoned for forty-seven days in inhuman conditions; a gay man was blackmailed for thousands of rupees; a lesbian couple was repeatedly raped under threat of exposure – all of them had one thing in common – Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code that criminalizes same-sex sexual activity with an imprisonment of 10 years to life. The law has been used and misused to torture, blackmail and harass gay, lesbian and transgender persons.

As the film journeys through seven years with personal narrative of the filmmaker himself, a gay man from a small town who battled his own internal demons to come out openly, it bears witness to the Indian LGBTQ movement journeying from invisibility to empowerment.

LGBTQ youth, armed with cyber strength and social media power are now ready to stand up and be counted. Assertion of their gender identity and sexual orientation openly in public spaces through pride marches, flash mobs, queer events prophecies a new confidence and determination that underlines that the Indian LGBTQ community is ready to 'breaking free'.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Duration: 82 mins
Country: India
Year of Production: January 2015
Languages: English, Hindi
Subtitles: English
Format: HD
Aspect Ratio: 16: 9
Keywords: Documentary, LGBTQ, gay rights, human rights

CAST & CREW

Director: Sridhar Rangayan
Produced by: Sridhar Rangayan, Saagar Gupta
Production Company: Solaris Pictures
Supervising DOP: Subhransu Das
Editor: Pravin Angre, Sridhar Rangayan
Music: Suresh Iyer
Sound: Madhu Apsara

TRAILER

http://youtu.be/ESpLy_BEBO4

FESTIVAL HISTORY

- November 2015 – International Film Festival of India, Goa
- October 2015 – Beijing Queer Film Festival, China
- October 2015 – Prague Indian Film Festival, Czech Republic
- October 2015 - Quezon City International Pink Film Festival, Philippines
- October 2015 – Queen City Film Festival, USA
- September 2015 – Q Film Festival, Indonesia
- September 2015 – Scottish Queer Film Festival, UK
- August 2015 – 27th Vancouver Queer Film Festival, Canada
- May 2015 – 6th KASHISH Mumbai International Queer Film Festival, India (*World Premier on May 29, 2015*)

Other Screenings

- November 2015 – Transcreen at Cavia, Amsterdam
- October 2015 - Godrej Culture Lab, Mumbai
- September 2015 - Alliance Francaise de Delhi, New Delhi
- August 2015 - Films Division, Mumbai
- June 2015 - Alliance Française de Bangalore, Bangalore

AUDIENCE REACTIONS

“India is home to the most vibrant and diverse queer movement in the world, one which combines a rich and complex tradition of understanding sexuality and gender with an urgent need to abolish the legacy of colonialism, and a criminal law that has not yet been abolished, three generations after Independence. Breaking Free is an essential guide to the contradictions of contemporary Indian queer life and politics, and introduces us to many of the key activists and thinkers who are reimagining sexuality in the twenty first century.”

~ Prof. Dennis Altman, queer theorist and author, Australia

“Breaking Free is heartfelt, emotional, highly personal, yet deeply informative. The film shows us not only the contemporary consequences of criminalizing homosexual behavior in India, but delves into its history in British colonialism and the absence of stigma in the far older Indian culture. Further, in a moving and stark contrast, it exposes the life and death consequences for the impoverished, as well as detailing the costs for the privileged classes.”

~ Jim Hubbard, Filmmaker and activist, USA

“For the first time in the history of LGBT documentation, the experiences and voices of the entire gamut of LGBT activists across India has been captured. The documentary manages very well in putting in perspective the history and context of the movement through the eyes of activists across a generation. The documentary would be interesting to both activists and academics who study social movements and particularly interesting to the LGBT movement of the future.”

~ Pallav Patankar, Director, HIV programs

“Breaking Free is a beautiful documentary capturing the history of the abuse of Section 377 of IPC. For the younger generation who do not know how the fight against Section 377 started in India, this film is a great repository of information. Poignant with personal stories of victims and filled with wisdom from lawyers and activists, this film is a great inspiration to keep the fight going and gives hope that one day we will succeed indeed to break free from this law.”

~ Sriram Kumaran

“Law-makers and those in power, have often conveniently disposed off the argument against section 377, by saying that convictions have been extremely rare. This movie serves an eye-opener, showing us real examples of abuse, extortion, fear-psychosis, moral-policing and victimization of the LGBT population, due to the presence of this law. A must watch for LGBT youth for them to know that the (fair) degree of openness they enjoy today has come from two decades of continued struggle of many known-unknown people-organizations. Breaking Free beautifully chronicles this journey of what the courts then called a "non-existent" community to a vibrant and fearless community now.”

~ Ritesh Rajani

"I hope this film helps us in breaking free the bondage of the colonial era laws. I hope the law makers realize this soon and this film acts as an eye opener to many. We deserve to be treated as equals. Sadly we have to strive for something which shouldn't be a struggle actually if we start treating each person as humans." ~ Jay Cee

"It is not actually a movie, it is a journey that the filmmaker and the audience cover through the duration the movie runs. From highs and lows, from hopes to despairs, from weakness to strength, this movie touches every aspect of Section 377 and LGBT people in India. I hope not just every LGBT person, but those who think Section 377 doesn't affect lives, must watch it once." ~ Sushil Rathi

"Broke me into tears... the way each and every story has been said was fabulous... our fight on Section 377... has been just shown fabulously... thanks Sridhar Rangayan..." ~ Parween Sharma

"Every aspect of our struggle and fight for equality so far was beautifully captured. Stories of a few unknown heroes were so heartwarming. A big salute to them and to you, for the selfless efforts." ~ Anonymous

"It was informative and sensitive. When I told some incidents to my friends they were shocked to know such things are happening in recent times. This film is more important to be shown to general public who are homophobic or insensitive towards LGBTQ. Let it not be visible only in gay film festivals." ~ Rohit Joshi

"I would not say much except it was just too good and informs everyone about the various incidents of the past and how the law affects people. On a personal level it took me back to the Supreme Court verdict day and the protest thereafter and made me feel empowered again to fight a strong battle." ~ Darshil Sh

"It was heart-breaking, it was painful; but inspiring and encourages us all to keep our head high and keep the movement alive!" ~ Cleston D'Costa

"I have nothing but gratitude. Thank you for the documentary. Thanks to everyone who's even remotely involved in making it happen." ~ Harsha Atmakuri

"I think it is a very important film for the youth to watch. My journey in the community actually began post the Delhi High Court judgment, so I had little knowledge of what has been happening throughout the country that led to the historic judgment. The movie brings out the real suffering of the community at the hands of the law and why we need to break free from the medieval law. Beautiful film." ~ Kamlesh Gade

"I was emotionally charged sitting there watching our journey over so many years with all those who were involved in the movement sitting in the audience." ~ Dodo Bhujwala

DIRECTOR'S BIO

SRIDHAR RANGAYAN is an Indian filmmaker whose compelling films present hard-hitting social issues with warmth, compassion and humor. His award winning films *The Pink Mirror*, *Yours Emotionally!*, *68 Pages*, *Project Bolo*, *Purple Skies* are at the forefront of India's emergent queer cinema movement – ground-breaking in a country where homosexuality is still illegal . These films have screened at over 150 national and international film festivals; won several awards and received critical acclaim.

He has served as Teddy Jury at Berlinale, Germany (2010) and as Jury at *Movies That Matter*, Netherlands (2010), *Outfest*, Los Angeles (2012) and *Iris Prize Festival*, Wales (2013).

He is one of the Founder Trustees of *The Humsafar Trust*, one of the largest LGBT organizations in India, and served on its board for 19 years. He has been actively involved with championing for gay rights for the past two decades.



STILLS







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