
India

FIRE IN OUR HEARTS

2011

27:32 minutes



16-year-old Jayshree Janu Kharpade illuminates the immense social and economic potential of educating girls in the developing world.

Jayshree Janu Kharpade of India has made BYkids' third film during January-February, 2011. When Jayshree was 7 years old, her mother took her out of school so that Jayshree could stay at home to raise her four younger brothers as well as contribute to her parents' labor at a brick kiln site. Exceptionally bright and motivated, Jayshree tried desperately, but unsuccessfully, to persuade her parents to allow her to continue her studies.

Finally, four years later, Sanghatana activists convinced her parents to allow Jayshree to return to her studies at the Eklavya Parivartan School. Despite the years of education missed, Jayshree quickly became the best student in her school, excelling at both her academic work and her extra-curricular activities. She is now committed to voicing the importance of allowing girls to pursue an education. Jayshree's story sheds a personal light on the immense social and economic potential of educating girls in the developing world.

Jayshree's film mentor is the renowned Joyce Chopra, a pioneer of documentary cinema whose numerous titles include *That Our Children Will Not Die*, about primary health care in Nigeria, and the autobiographical *Joyce at 34*, which is in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art. Chopra has produced and directed a wide range of award-winning films, ranging from *Smooth Talk*, winner of the Grand Jury Prize for Best Dramatic Feature at the Sundance Film Festival, to the A&E thriller *The Lady in Question* with Gene Wilder.

BYkids is a global educational movement, which tells stories through film to inspire cross-cultural understanding and galvanize action to further our common humanity. **BYkids** provides kids around the world with video cameras to make short documentaries about their lives. Renowned filmmakers mentor these young people and teach them the art of filmmaking enabling fresh, new voices to be heard. Millions of people are joining our movement by seeing our films, developing educational programming and supporting our work. Join us at www.bykids.org.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

My name is Jayshree Janu Kharpade and I made this movie.

I am a 16-year-old girl from the Warli tribe in Maharashtra State, India.

Me, and all the girls here at my school, are the lucky ones.

We are the first generation who will not be illiterate like our mothers.

80 million tribal people live in India today.

Their cultures and traditions are the foundations of India's ancient civilization.

But many worked as slaves to landlords because they could not repay small loans.

They were illiterate and did not know that this bondage was against the law.

In the late 1970s a movement to free these slaves began near the city of Mumbai.

Tribal men and women formed a labor movement and succeeded in freeing themselves from bondage.

Ten years ago, the union's members built a residential school for their daughters.

Nearly every girl at the school is the first in her village to receive an education.
