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Film on queer issues screened at JU to protest Ravenshaw row in Kolkata

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KOLKATA: Campuses across India are organizing screenings of Debalina Majumder's 'Gay India Matrimony (GIM)' - the film which along with Shabnam Virmani's 'Had-Anhad' was stalled from screening at Cuttack's Ravenshaw University recently. Protest screening of 'GIM' began on March 15 at Auroville Film Institute. The first Kolkata screening took place at SRFTI on March 16. Jadavpur University held its first screening on Monday.

"The film is being shown on the very day when a trans-identifying research scholar of JU was manhandled by a family member for being gender non-conforming. Awareness building is absolutely important, and, films like 'GIM' need to be circulated on a larger

scale for enabling gender minorities to live their lives on their own terms," said Kaustav Bakshi, associate professor of the English department.

The English dept of JU will hold another screening on March 30. Students of Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata, will watch this film on Tuesday. TISS will have a screening on March 22 followed by a Centre for Studies in Social Sciences Calcutta screening on March 29. "These protest screenings are opening up a dialogue about the connection between homophobia and right wing politics and the rise of fascism," Majumder said.

Bakshi highlighted the importance of 'GIM' in the current political environment when debates on the "legalization of same-sex marriage are making headlines while queerphobia is also on the rise". "The

decriminalization of homosexuality in 2018 was a moment to celebrate; but, paradoxically, it bred hitherto unseen anti-queer discourses, when homophobes began taking the law in their own hands in the absence of IPC 377," Bakshi said. 'GIM', he added, was a victim of violent queerphobia. "I fear this is going to become more intense with the passage of time. As a queer-identifying person, I stand by Debalina, and, screening the film at Jadavpur University is our response to all the queer bashing we are victims of on a daily basis," Bakshi added.