

# Small films with a big heart

The New York Indian Film Festival awards throw in a few surprises as new filmmakers shoot past big names, says **Arthur J Pais**



Nagraj Manjule, second from right, won the best director award for his autobiographical Marathi language film *Fandry*.

**N**agraj Manjule has received strong reviews, many awards in India and a warm audience reception for his autobiographical Marathi film *Fandry*. But the poet and filmmaker, who won the best director nod at the New York Indian Film Festival, said the acclaim he values the most came from his mother, even before *Fandry* went on to win plaudits at film festivals and national competitions.

When she hugged him at the end of the screening and blessed him saying that she liked the film, he said he felt he had done the right thing.

The competition was fierce this year at NYIFF as the independent jury had to weigh half a dozen extremely well made films from the selections made by Program Director Aseem Chhabra for the 14<sup>th</sup> edi-

tion of the festival.

The top awards went to: *Liar's Dice* (best picture), Naseeruddin Shah (best actor, *The Coffin Maker*), Geetanjali Thapa (best actress, *Liar's Dice*), *Gulabi Gang* (best documentary) and *Blouse* (best short)

NYIFF 2014 will be remembered for the triumph of new directors, who shot past big names like Anurag Kashyap (*Ugly*), Buddhadeb Dasgupta (*Anwar Ka Ajab Kissa* (*Sniffer*)) and Aparna Sen (*Goynar Baksho*).

The five-day festival, May 5 through 10, organized by Aroon Shivdasani's Indo-American Arts Council has become a sought after event in New York every year.

"It is good to see so many good films in this festival," said an audience member. "But shouldn't we see these films on television or



Naseeruddin Shah and his wife Ratna Pathak Shah in a scene from *The Coffin Maker*