

TRAVELING FILM SOUTH ASIA 2004

A festival of 19 compelling documentary films from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan

*March 12 - 21
Mission Cultural Center, San Francisco*

*March 26 - 28
India Community Center, Milpitas*

EKTA
P.O. Box 2302
Berkeley, CA 94702-0302

February 9th, 2004

To:

Film Writer
Entertainment Section

Re: Traveling Film South Asia 2004, a festival of 19 compelling documentary films from South Asia, March 12-28, San Francisco and Milpitas

Dear Sir/ Madam :

Ekta and Friends of South Asia, two Bay Area organizations are hosting a documentary film festival showcasing some of the best documentary films from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, from March 12 to March 28 in San Francisco and Milpitas. Detailed information can be obtained from <http://www.ektaonline.org>

For the two weekends of March 12-14 and March 19-21, 15 of the 19 documentaries will be screened at the Mission Cultural Center in San Francisco. On the next weekend, March 26-28, the venue will shift to the India Community Center in Milpitas, where 7 documentaries will be screened.

Fourteen of the documentaries that will be screened are from the biennial documentary festival, Film South Asia 2003, hosted by the Himal Association in Kathmandu, Nepal for showcasing the best of non-fiction film-making on South Asian subjects. Another five groundbreaking documentaries have also been added to the Bay Area Festival, including two by the acclaimed Pakistani director, Sabiha Sumar, highlighting women's issues in Pakistan.

In the accompanying package, please find enclosed the following information:

- Joint press release by Ekta and Friends of South Asia announcing Traveling Film South Asia 2004
- Schedule and ticket information
- Information on the host organizations
- Calendar listings for the festival
- Brief information on each of the films and their directors
- Related press coverage:
 - "Sharing South Asian angst", by Nupur Basu, The Hindu, Oct 26, 2003
 - "Censorship Unofficial might", The Hindu Dec 7, 2003
 - "Visuals speak louder than words", by Huned Contractor, Infochange, January 2004

We would be happy to provide you with any additional information or preview copies that you may require. If you have any questions, please get in touch with us at press@ektaonline.org

Thank you,

Ekta, Friends of South Asia.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 10, 2004

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Shared History and Diverse Cultures Find Voice as EKTA and Friends of South Asia (FOSA), in collaboration with Himal Association, Present Traveling Film South Asia 2004

SAN FRANCISCO – February 10, 2004 – Showcasing the groundbreaking work and emerging talent of non-fiction filmmakers from South Asia, Traveling Film South Asia 2004 (TFSA 2004) debuts on March 12 as the only festival of its kind in California. Organized by Ekta and Friends of South Asia (FOSA), in collaboration with Himal Association, the festival offers Bay Area filmgoers a rare opportunity to view a selection of 19 compelling documentaries that chart the shared history and complex lives of the people of the sub-continent. Covering a wide range of important political, social, and economic issues and giving voice to many of the region's people—women, religious minorities, and indigenous communities—the films focus the lens on life in contemporary South Asia, while celebrating its rich cultural diversity. Representing filmmakers from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan, this year's festival is a compilation of award-winning and thought-provoking films that include a selection of films from the 2003 Film South Asia (FSA) festival in Nepal, six films that screened at the recently concluded World Social Forum in India, and two films by the internationally acclaimed Pakistani filmmaker, Sabiha Sumar. The event runs from March 12-21 in San Francisco and from March 26-28 in Milpitas.

As the only such event solely dedicated to supporting contemporary South Asian non-fiction films, TFSA 2004 provides a unique platform for filmmakers to exhibit new works that examine critical and often provocative issues. This year's festival is particularly noteworthy because it screens three films that were censored by the recent Mumbai International Film Festival due to their anti-establishment content. The rejection of the films spawned a massive protest in the documentary film community, with over 170 Indian filmmakers threatening to boycott the festival. In a political climate that threatens freedom of expression, festivals such as TFSA 2004 play an important role in advocacy and social change. For this reason, Film South Asia—the festival that TFSA draws upon—has gained a deserving recognition in the international community as a world-class festival that gives voice to visionary documentary filmmakers. Since its beginnings in 1997, Film South Asia has traveled to more than 45 international venues.

TFSA 2004 will be held over three weekends in March at two Bay Area venues: at the Mission Cultural Center, San Francisco, during March 12-14 and March 19-21, and at the India Community Center, Milpitas, during March 26-28. The March 12 program opens at the Mission Cultural Center at 7 p.m. with a screening of Amar Kanwar's, **A NIGHT OF PROPHECY** (India, 2002). One of the films censored at the recent Mumbai International Film Festival but shown at the World Social Forum, this poetic documentary travels through different parts of India to reveal how poetry and music can unify a nation's people even in the face of severe conflict and oppression. The program continues with the groundbreaking **RESILIENT RHYTHMS** (India, 2002), a dynamic and truthful portrayal of India's caste system and the Dalit response to their marginalization. Gopal Menon, known for his compelling and acclaimed documentary, *Hey Ram: Genocide in the Land of Gandhi*, directed the film.

Reflecting the current political situation in India, religious fundamentalism and the need for tolerance was a powerful and recurrent theme explored by many of the films. In **GODHRA TAK: THE TERROR TRAIL** (India, 2003), director Shubrudeep Chakravorty investigates the Godhra train burning and subsequent rioting that killed 2000 Muslims in Gujarat, India in February 2002. Chakravorty retraces in chilling detail the route of the first batch of *kar sevaks* from Gujarat to Ayodhya and back and carefully reconstructs the terror they unleashed en route leading to the Godhra fire and the riots that followed. In a climate of increasing religious divides, directors Jayasankar and Monteiro provide a glimmer of hope in their film, **NAATA – THE BOND** (India, 2003). The film is a moving tale of two friends who work on promoting communal harmony in Bombay's largest slum. Naata was one of the films removed from the Mumbai International Film Festival, but shown at the World Social Forum in Mumbai in January 2004.

From body image to struggling for personal freedom in a male-dominated society, some of the most outstanding films of the festival focus on women's issues. **SKIN DEEP** (India, 1998), by Reena Mohan, is an exploration of body images and self-perception among contemporary urban, middle class women in India. The film is a playful, engrossing, and articulate rendering on women's complicated and contradictory relationships with their bodies. **SWARA – A BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER** (Pakistan, 2003), by Samar Minallah, is a hard-hitting commentary on the Pakhtun practice of giving minor girls in marriage to an "enemy family" in reparation for serious crimes committed by male members of the girl's family. The issue is now before the Pakistan's Supreme Court and Minallah is hoping that legislation is brought soon to ban the practice of "swara." Also from Pakistan, is director Sabiha Sumar's film, **DON'T ASK WHY** (1999). Based on a diary, the film takes us into the life of Anousheh and provides a moving account of the dreams and fears of a 17-year-old girl growing up in a conservative and patriarchal society. Most of Sumar's films are banned in her native country.

Two films from Bangladesh reveal that the nation's freedom struggle of the 1970s continues to be an important theme for its filmmakers. In **WORDS OF FREEDOM (MUKTIR KOTHA)** (1999), directors Tareque Masud and Catherine Masud tell the story of musicians traveling through refugee camps and war zones during the Liberation War in 1971. The film blends documentary and fictional genres in a musical structure to follow the birth of a nation and the ideals of secularism and tolerance on which it was founded. In **TALE OF THE DARKEST NIGHT (SHEI RATER KOTHA BOLTE ESHECHI)** (2001), director Kawsar Chowdhury recreates the horror of the massacre by the Pakistani army in Dhaka University. The film won the Second Best Film Award at Film South Asia 2003.

Other important themes explored in the films include the harmful effects of migration, displacement of rural and indigenous communities due to large development projects, and environmental degradation.

Ekta and Friends of South Asia (FOSA) present the festival, in collaboration with Himal Association. Ekta is a local nonprofit organization that provides a platform for social change through art, dialogue, and education within the South Asian community. FOSA is a Bay Area group that works towards a peaceful, prosperous, and hate-free South Asia. Located in the Kathmandu Valley region of Nepal, Himal Association is a nonprofit organization whose goal is to raise awareness of local, national, and international issues among Nepali people. Festival co-sponsors include the Center for South Asian Studies (University of California at Berkeley), the Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology at the California Institute for Integral Studies, and the India Community Center.

For a complete list of films and show times, further information, or to purchase tickets online, visit <http://ektaonline.org/tfsa> or email tfsa@ektaonline.org. Tickets per show are \$6 online (\$9 at the door) at the Mission Cultural Center. For screenings at the India Community Center, tickets are \$5 (at the door or online). A festival pass that covers films at both venues can be purchased online for \$25.

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TRAVELING FILM SOUTH ASIA 2004

A festival of 19 compelling documentary films from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan

March 12 - 21
Mission Cultural Center, San Francisco

March 26 - 28
India Community Center, Milpitas

SCHEDULE:

March 12 - 21

Venue: Mission Cultural Center
2868 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
415-821-1155

Fri, Mar 12th, 7 - 10 PM

- A Night of Prophecy (77 min)
- Resilient Rhythms (64 min)

Sat, Mar 13th, 3 - 6 PM

- For a Place Under the Heavens (53 min)
- Swara - A Bridge Over Troubled Waters (40 min)
- Voices of Dissent (22 min)

Sun, Mar 14th, 3 - 6 PM

- Shei Rater Kotha Bolte Eshechi: Tale of the Darkest Night (43 min)
- Muktir Kotha: Words of Freedom (80 min)

Fri, Mar 19th, 7 - 10 PM

- Don't Ask Why (58 min)
- Skin Deep (83 min)
- The Unconscious (19 min)

Sat, Mar 20th, 3 - 6 PM

- Godhra Tak: The Terror Trail (60 min)
- Naata: The Bond (45 min)

Sun, Mar 21st, 3 - 6 PM

- Vikas Bندوق Ki Nall Se: Development Flows from the Barrel of the Gun (54 min)
- Buru Sengal: The Fire Within (57 min)
- Hunting Down Water (32 min)

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March 26 - 28

Venue: India Community Center
555 Los Coches Street
Milpitas, CA 95035
408-934-1130

Fri, Mar 26th, 6 - 10 PM

- Made in India (39 min)
- A Night of Prophecy (77 min)
- The 18th Elephant (62 min)

Sat, Mar 27th, 6 - 10 PM

- Itihaas Jitneharuka Laagi: History for Winners (67 min)
- Don't Ask Why (58 min)
- Skin Deep (83 min)

Sun, Mar 28th, 11 AM - 1 PM

- Sand and Water (109 min)

TICKETS

At the door

\$9 per day, Mission Cultural Center
\$5 per day, India Community Center

Discount Tickets (available ONLINE only)

\$6 per day, Mission Cultural Center
\$5 per day, India Community Center
\$25 Festival Passes (good for all shows)

ICC members

\$3 per day, India Community Center shows only

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Host Organizations:

EKTA:

Ekta is a Berkeley based organization that works to provide a platform for social change in the South Asia diaspora through art, dialogue, and education. It supports the artistic endeavors of South Asians in the literary, musical, performing and visual arts; aims to provide social and educational services to the South Asian community; and supports charitable projects in South Asia.

This is the third time that Ekta is hosting Traveling Film South Asia in San Francisco, having hosted it in 2001 and 2002 before. Ekta routinely holds documentary screenings of leading film makers in South Asia such as Anand Patwardhan, Lalit Vachani and Pankaj Rishi Kumar. It has also held spoken word events, music concerts and fundraisers for victims of ethnic violence in India and Bangladesh.

Friends of South Asia:

Friends of South Asia (FOSA) is a Bay Area group that works towards establishing a peaceful, prosperous, and hate-free South Asia. The group works towards a demilitarized, nuclear-free South Asia; bringing together people with roots in various parts of South Asia, as well as other well-wishers of the region. FOSA promotes respect for and celebrates the diversity and plurality of South Asia, promoting amity between countries and communities and working towards a South Asia where the rights of all minorities are respected and protected; regardless of religious, ethnic, sexual or other differences.

FOSA was founded in the Silicon Valley/San Francisco Bay Area at the turn of 2001/2002 when tensions between the two largest countries in South Asia threatened to break out into a nuclear conflagration. In the beginning, it organized monthly peace vigils in Palo Alto during the period of war-like tensions between India and Pakistan. Since then, it has also organized documentary screenings, political discussions and socio-cultural events aimed at bringing diverse communities in South Asia together.

Himal Association:

Himal Association is a not-for-profit institution based in Kathmandu, Nepal, which is dedicated to spreading knowledge and information in Nepal and South Asia all over the Subcontinent and the world. Every two years, Himal organizes Film South Asia, a competitive biennial festival of documentary films on South Asian subjects that provides a quality platform to exhibit new works and to promote a sense of community among independent filmmakers. In the seven years of its establishment, Film South Asia, the only such event that is solely dedicated to showcasing contemporary South Asian non-fiction film, has gained a deserving recognition within the region and globally as a world-class festival.

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CALENDAR LISTINGS

March 12 - 21

Traveling Film South Asia 2004. A festival of 19 compelling documentary films from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan. Charting the complexities, diversity and dynamism of South Asia, these documentary films are unified in their search for untold stories and buried histories, and provide a unique and moving perspective into the myriad and rapidly changing cultures and countries of South Asia. All films are subtitled in English and will be followed by discussion. Organized by Ekta and Friends of South Asia. Sponsored by the Center for South Asian Studies at the University of California Berkeley; the Department of Cultural and Social Anthropology at the California Institute for Integral Studies; and the India Community Center. March 12 - 21, Mission Cultural Ctr, 2868 Mission Street, San Francisco. March 26 - 28, India Community Center, 555 Los Coches Street, Milpitas. www.ektaonline.org/tfsa .

Fri, Mar 12th

Film Screening of "A Night of Prophecy" by Amar Kanwar and "Resilient Rhythms" by Gopal Menon at Traveling Film South Asia 2004. Organized by Ekta and Friends of South Asia. 7 - 10 PM, Mission Cultural Ctr, 2868 Mission Street, San Francisco, \$9 at the door, \$6 online, www.ektaonline.org/tfsa

Sat, Mar 13th

Film Screening of "For a Place Under the Heavens" by Sabiha Sumar, "Swara - A Bridge Over Troubled Waters" by Samar Minallah, and "Voices of Dissent" by NoorKhan Bawa at Traveling Film South Asia 2004. Organized by Ekta and Friends of South Asia. 3 - 6 PM, Mission Cultural Ctr, 2868 Mission Street, San Francisco, \$9 at the door, \$6 online, www.ektaonline.org/tfsa

Sun, Mar 14th

Film Screening of "Tale of the Darkest Night" (Shei Rater Kotha Bolte Eshechi) by Kawsar Chowdhury and "Words of Freedom" (Muktir Kotha) by Tareque & Catherine Masud at Traveling Film South Asia 2004. Organized by Ekta and Friends of South Asia. 3 - 6 PM, Mission Cultural Ctr, 2868 Mission Street, San Francisco, \$9 at the door, \$6 online, www.ektaonline.org/tfsa

Fri, Mar 19th

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Film Screening of "Don't Ask Why" by Sabiha Sumar, "Skin Deep" by Reena Mohan, and "The Unconscious" by Manisha Dwivedi at Traveling Film South Asia 2004. Organized by Ekta and Friends of South Asia. 7 - 10 PM, Mission Cultural Ctr, 2868 Mission Street, San Francisco, \$9 at the door, \$6 online, www.ektaonline.org/tfsa

Sat, Mar 20th

Film Screening of "Godhra Tak: The Terror Trail" by Shubradeep Chakravorty, "The Bond" (Naata) by K.P. Jayasankar and A. Monteiro at Traveling Film South Asia 2004. Organized by Ekta and Friends of South Asia. 3 - 6 PM, Mission Cultural Ctr, 2868 Mission Street, San Francisco, \$9 at the door, \$6 online, www.ektaonline.org/tfsa

Sun, Mar 21st

Film Screening of "Development Flows from the Barrel of the Gun" (Vikas Bندوق Ki Naal Se) by Biju Toppo and Meghnath, "The Fire Within" (Buru Sengal) by Shriprakash, and "Hunting Down Water" by Sanjaya Barnela and Vasant Saberwal at Traveling Film South Asia 2004. Organized by Ekta and Friends of South Asia. 3 - 6 PM, Mission Cultural Ctr, 2868 Mission Street, San Francisco, \$9 at the door, \$6 online, www.ektaonline.org/tfsa

Fri, Mar 26th

Film Screening of "Made in India" by Madhusree Dutta, "A Night of Prophecy" by Amar Kanwar, and "The 18th Elephant- 3 Monologues" by P. Balan at Traveling Film South Asia 2004. Organized by Ekta and Friends of South Asia. 6 - 10 PM, India Community Ctr, 555 Los Coches Street, Milpitas, \$5 at the door or online, www.ektaonline.org/tfsa

Sat, Mar 27th

Film Screening of "History for Winners" by Pranay Limbu, "Don't Ask Why" by Sabiha Sumar, and "Skin Deep" by Reena Mohan at Traveling Film South Asia 2004. Organized by Ekta and Friends of South Asia. 6 - 10 PM, India Community Ctr, 555 Los Coches Street, Milpitas, \$5 at the door or online, www.ektaonline.org/tfsa

Sun, Mar 28th

Film Screening of "Sand and Water" by Shaheen Dill-Riaz at Traveling Film South Asia 2004. Organized by Ekta and Friends of South Asia. 11:30 AM - 1:30 PM, India Community Ctr, 555 Los Coches Street, Milpitas, \$5 at the door or online, www.ektaonline.org/tfsa

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Buru Sengal (The Fire Within) Jharkhand/India, 2002, 57'

Sun, Mar 21st, 3pm, Mission Cultural Ctr

Winner of Grand Jury Award at Film South Asia '03

Original language
Hindi/Santhali

Direction
Shriprakash

Camera
Shriprakash/Pankaj/Man Singh

Editing
Sekala Sen

Sound
Sanjay/Danik

Script
Shriprakash

Production
Kritika

Contact
Sanjay
Kritika
30, Randhir Pd Street
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India
Tel: +91-651-2317461
email: kritikashri@hotmail.com

Film

This documentary is a portrait of a painful transformation. The land of the Tana Bhagats, a peaceful sect of the Oraon tribe who follow a Gandhian lifestyle and philosophy, is today besieged by Naxalite violence. In tracing the impact of the underground Maoist guerillas, the film touches upon corruption, the mafia, energy politics and displacement of villages, and tribal identity in an area where coal has been mined for the last 150 years. Buru Sengal won the best film award at the XVIII Black International Cinema, 2003.

Director

Born in 1966, Shriprakash has directed several films and won awards at the Earth Vision Film Festival, Tokyo, the Thunderbird Film Festival, USA, and Film South Asia, Kathmandu. Shriprakash is also chief coordinator of Kritika, an organization located in Ranchi that works in the field of culture and communications in India's Jharkhand region.

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Don't Ask Why Pakistan, 1999, 58'

Fri, Mar 19th, 7pm, Mission Cultural Ctr

Film

Anousheh lives with her strict Muslim parents and two brothers in Karachi. At 17, she is at an age where daughters are usually married off. But Anousheh wants to study and refuses to accept the restrictions her religion and culture have imposed on her personal freedom. It causes conflict with her mother and lengthy discussions with her father. Her desire to be 'as free as her brothers' is drawing her close to the Islamic political party, Jamaat-i-Islami which, although dominated by men, promises the liberating power of Islam for both men and women. The film, by one of the few independent filmmakers in Pakistan, follows Anousheh as she struggles to realise her dreams and cope with her share of disappointment.

Original language
Urdu, English

Direction
Sabiha Sumar

Photography
M.Claire Pijman
M. Iqbal
Sven Sauer

Mumbai Documentary Film Festival
Munich Documentary Film Festival
Sheffield International Documentary Festival
South Asian Film Festival, NY

Sound
Ludo Keeris
GM Chand

" Lively, exciting and eminently watchable: a rare quality in an era when sometimes mere video recordings pass for great documentaries. Sumar's film takes us on a journey into the life of a 17-year-old girl from an Urdu-speaking Muslim family in Karachi. The film, based on the diary of Anousheh, provides us a rare glimpse of the dreams, aspirations and fears of a young girl growing up in a largely conservative, patriarchal society."

Editing
Calle Overweg

Mixing
Jochen Voerste

Pratik Joshi

Music
Savan Dutta

Federation of Film Societies in India.

Contact
Women Make Movies
www.wmm.com

Director

Sabiha Sumar is the only independent film director in Pakistan. She studied film at Sarah Lawrence College, New York and has since been making films on social, political and environmental issues.

Her films "Who Will Cast the First Stone", "Karachi" and "Where Peacocks Dance" have been aired on Channel Four, UK and "Of Mothers, Mice and Saints" was produced for ZDF, Germany. Her work has been shown at the London and Rotterdam Film Festivals. Most of her films cannot be shown in Pakistan.

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The 18th Elephant-Three Monologues Kerela/India, 2003, 62'

Fri, Mar 26th, 6pm, India Community Ctr

Winner of the Ram Bahadur Trophy for Best Film at Film South Asia '03

Original language
Malyalam

Direction
P Balan

Camera
KG Jayan/Madhu/Rajeev Ravi/
Manilal Padavoor

Editing
Biju S Koonthanam

Sound
Hari Kumar

Script
Radha R/PP Ramachandran

Graphics
Viswanath Parameswaran

Production
Savithri Divakaran/ Anmpu Media
Trust

Contact
P Balan
Anmpu Media Trust
Edathhodam
South Erorr PO, TPRA
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India
Tel: +91-484-2-780501
email: adityabala@satyam.net.in

Film

Men and money. This film is a powerful critique of modern man's mercenary attitude towards nature and his anthropocentric conception of development. The sad plight of the elephant in both its wild and domesticated states exposes clearly how such behavior brings death and wreaks havoc on the lives and habitats of other species. Shot over five years, this is Balan's third film.

Director

Born in rural Kannur, Kerala, P Balan was active in the film society movement in that state. His first documentary, the 1997 Aanpoove, won the Kerala State TV Award and a special jury mention at the Oberhausen International Film Festival. Balan, who also works in radio, is concerned with subjects related to human rights, natural resource management, ecology, traditional knowledge systems, and gender discrimination.

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For a Place Under the Heavens Pakistan, 2003, 53'

Sat, Mar 13th, 3pm, Mission Cultural Ctr

Original language
Urdu, English

Direction
Sabiha Sumar

Editing
Maureen Mazurek
Calle Overweg
Shikha Sen

Music
Manzoor Quwwal
and Sons

Narration
Sabiha Sumar

Photography
Claire Pijman

Production
Philippe Avril
Sachithanandam Sathananthan

Screenplay
Sabiha Sumar

Sound
Ludo Keeris

Contact
Women Make Movies
www.wmm.com

Film

Sabiha Sumar provides a fresh and insightful perspective on Pakistan in this finely crafted personal film. Beginning with the creation of Pakistan in 1947, Sumar traces the relationship of Islam to the state in an effort to understand how women are coping with and surviving the increasing religiosity of civil and political life in their country. Juxtaposing interviews with Pakistani women who have chosen to veil themselves, even in the absence of any state directive to do so, with observations from her feminist colleagues who cling to hope for a more secular system, Sumar dramatically captures the tension between liberal and fundamentalist forces that are shaping life in contemporary Pakistan. Chilling footage of a mother encouraging her toddler to be a martyr when he grows up, home movies from Sumar's childhood and the filmmaker's cogent political analysis are lyrically combined to create a timely and compelling document—pulling together the strands of belief, reinterpretation and reform in Islam.

"A faultless documentary about and for women by Sabiha Sumar, touching and intensely moving."
Metro

Director

Sabiha Sumar is the only independent film director in Pakistan. She studied film at Sarah Lawrence College, New York and has since been making films on social, political and environmental issues. Her films "Who Will Cast the First Stone", "Karachi" and "Where Peacocks Dance" have been aired on Channel Four, UK and "Of Mothers, Mice and Saints" was produced for ZDF, Germany. Her work has been shown at the London and Rotterdam Film Festivals. Most of her films cannot be shown in Pakistan.

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Godhra Tak: The Terror Trail Gujarat/India, 2003, 60'

Sat, Mar 20th, 3pm, Mission Cultural Ctr

Original language
English

Direction
Shubhradeep Chakravorty

Camera
Apal

Editing
Ajith Kumar B

Script
Karuna M

Animation
Chandan Gorana

Production
Shubhradeep Chakravorty

Contact
Shubhradeep Chakravorty
F-92 (B-12)
Katwaria Sarai
New Delhi-110016
India
Tel: +91-11-20530323/26602264
email: shubhradeep@rediffmail.com

Film

Godhra Tak: The Terror Trail investigates the Godhra train burning and subsequent rioting that killed 3,500 Muslims in Gujarat, India. Chakravorty retraces the route of the first batch of karsevaks from Gujarat to Ayodhya and back, and documents the terror they unleashed en route, and the incident at Godhra railway station.

Director

Shubhradeep Chakravorty is a journalist and independent documentary filmmaker based in New Delhi, India. He has worked with the United Newspaper Network, Asian News International, and Doordarshan, all in New Delhi. He currently runs the production house New Stream Media. Godra Tak is the first documentary he has produced and directed under his banner.

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Hunting Down Water

India, 2003, 32"

Sun, Mar 21st, 3pm, Mission Cultural Ctr

Original language
English

Direction
Sanjay Barnela/Vasant Saberwal

Camera
Sanjay Barnela

Editing
Anjali Khosla

Sound
Sanjay Barnela/Vasant Saberwal

Script
Sanjay Barnela/Vasant Saberwal

Production
Moving Images

Contact
Sanjay Barnela
Moving Images
D-3/3425, Vasant Kunj
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India
Tel: +91-11-26124317
Fax: +91-11-26601751
email: moving@vsnl.com

Film

India's present water crisis is of its own making. The patterns of water use are changing, with increased cultivation of water-intensive cash crops. But there are other changes that defy logic, such as the growing number of private swimming pools in cities, rain dances and water amusement parks. As water is diverted from the countryside to meet the unending demands of India's urban population. More and more of the rural poor are now forced to migrate, in search of work, and water.

Directors

Sanjay Barnela and Vasant Saberwal are part of a Delhi-based production team that works on environment and development issues. The group is now working on a series of films on the political economy of water.

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Itihaas Jitneharuka Laagi (History for Winners)

Nepal, 2003, 67'

Sat, Mar 27th, 6pm, India Community Ctr

Original language
Nepali

Direction
Pranay Limbu

Camera
Rudra Gurung/Pranay Limbu

Editing
Rudra B Gurung

Sound
Arjun Karki

Graphics
Santoshi Nepal

Script
Pranay Limbu

Production
Rudra Gurung/Pranay Limbu

Contact
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Film

An award-winning singer makes a desperate but unsuccessful attempt to make a comeback after being in musical hibernation for seven years. Itihaas Jitneharuka Laagi portrays the changes in the Nepali music scene, as represented by Kuber Rai and Dheeraj Rai. The two singers are a study in contrasts, with their diametrically opposing personalities and attitude towards music. The film invokes a Nepali adage "bolne ko pitho bikcha, na bolne ko chaamal pani bikdaina", which suggests that to succeed one has to be a good salesman.

Director

Pranay Limbu has been directing and producing documentaries for the last five years. He works with RBA Films and Research Center in Nepal.

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Made in India

India, 2002, 39'

Fri, Mar 26th, 6pm, India Community Ctr

Original language
English/Hindi/Marathi

Direction
Madhusree Dutta

Camera
Avijit Mukul/Kishore

Editing
Shyamal Karmakar

Sound
Vipin Bhati

Script
Madhusree Dutta

Music
Arjun Sen

Production
Majlis Productions

Contact
Vibha Nijhawan
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Film

A rural artist paints her autobiography, images of Bollywood movie icons are erased after a week-long run of their films, the national flag flutters on 150 kites, installation artists paint pop icons on the rolling shutters of shops, religious icons jostle for attention with plastic flowers on the vendor's cart, after the WTC the sale of toy planes goes up. Symbols of nationalism become a fashionable commodity. Made in India is about contemporary visual cultures in India.

Director

Madhusree Dutta has been making non-fiction films since 1993 on subjects related to gender, identity, and marginalization. Her films have been at national and international film festivals and won awards. Dutta is also executive director of Majlis, a center in India that campaigns for cultural literacy, produces films and multidisciplinary art works, and is compiling a current affairs video archive.

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Muktir Kotha (Words of Freedom) Bangladesh, 1999, 80'

Sun, Mar 14th, 3pm, Mission Cultural Ctr

Film

This historic film tells the true story of musicians travelling through the refugee camps and zones of war during the Liberation War in 1971. The film blends documentary and fictional genres in a musical structure to tell the story of the birth of a nation and the ideals of secularism and tolerance on which it was founded.

The film makers combined footage shot by American film maker Lear Levin in 1971 with international archival material to create this unique film (dir Tareque & Catherine Masud, India 1995, 78 mins, Bengali, with English subtitles) plus Words of Freedom (Muktir Kotha).

Original language
Bangla

Direction
Tareque Masud
Catherine Masud

Camera
Mishuk Munier

Editing
Catherine Masud

Associate Editor
Fauzia Khan

Production
Audiovision

Contact
Audiovision
ctmasud@citechco.net

In some ways a follow-up to and critique of Song of Freedom, the film follows a group of projectionists, who travelled Bangladesh from 1996-8, showing films about the 1971 war. These documentary images rekindled painful memories, prompting audiences to speak of the dreams they'd had for their country, their present frustrations and new expectations. At times the open-air projection spaces would be spontaneously transformed into a concert of liberation songs. Through these interactive shows, the 'teachers' who had come from the city to spread the spirit of the war through their films, came to 'relearn' the wider history of the liberation struggle from their audiences. The struggle did not end in 1971 as the people who risked their lives and sacrificed everything during the war were still living in poverty and despair. The harvest of the war they had fought was reaped by the rich.

Words of Freedom is a film about this continuing liberation struggle, an unwritten history which is not to be found in any textbook. The film

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documents the unheard stories of religious and ethnic minorities, women, and other marginalized people in their own voices. It is a record of the ways in which ordinary people fell victim to genocide, rape and other atrocities and also how they fought back with whatever means they had. It is a testament to the struggle still raging in the countryside, a struggle for a more just and democratic society that was the dream of liberation.

Directors

Catherine Masud is an American filmmaker who lives in Dhaka. She is a co-director of the film and of the television company Audiovision. She and her Bangladeshi husband, Tareque, are committed to making creative documentaries that project a different image of the people and issues of South Asia. Her credits include the following: *Muktir Gaan*, *Voices of Children* and *In the Name of Safety*. Catherine also works as a multi-media consultant where she pursues her special interests in computer-based audio, video and interactive media production.

Tareque Masud has been actively involved in the alternative film society movement since the mid-1970s. He is a founding member of the Short Film Forum, the primary forum for alternative filmmakers in Bangladesh, and in 1988 served as Coordinator of the First International Short Film Festival held in Dhaka. His documentary *Muktir Gaan* was a critical and commercial success, and won the National Award for best documentary, as well as a Special Jury Prize at Film South Asia '97, Kathmandu. His other credits include *The Inner Strength*, *The Conversation* and *Voices of Children*.

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Naata (The Bond)

Bombay/India, 2003, 45'

Sun, Mar 20th, 3pm, Mission Cultural Ctr

Original language
Hindi/English

Direction
KP Jayasankar/A Monteiro

Camera
KP Jayasankar

Editing
KP Jayasankar/A Monteiro

Sound
Hari Kumar M

Script
KP Jayasankar/A Monteiro

Production
KP Jayasankar/A Monteiro

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email: umctiss@vsnl.com

Film

Naata is about Bhau Korde and Waqar Khan, two friends who work on conflict resolution and communal harmony initiatives between the different communities in Dharavi, reputedly, the largest "slum" in Asia. In contextualizing their work, Naata also looks critically at the popular perception in India of Dharavi as a "slum", making it thus, a film about Indian society too. Naata is the second in a series of films on the people and city of Mumbai, and is a sequel to Saacha (The Loom), 2001.

Directors

Anjali Monteiro is Professor and Head, and KP Jayasankar is a Reader (Production) at the Unit for Media and Communications of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. Jointly, they have won ten national and international awards for their films. Their work includes Identity: The Construction of Selfhood, Kahankar:Ahankar, and YCP 1999.

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A Night of Prophecy

India, 2002, 77'

Fri, Mar 12th, 7pm, Mission Cultural Ctr

Fri, Mar 26th, 6:30 pm, India Community Ctr

Original language
Multiple languages

Direction
Amar Kanwar

Camera
Ranjan Palit

Editing
Sameera Jain

Sound
Asheesh Pandya

Production
Amar Kanwar

Contact
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Film

Through poetry emerges the possibility of understanding the past, the severity of conflict and the cycles of change. The film travels in the states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Nagaland, and Kashmir. Through poetry you see where all the territories are heading towards, where you belong, and where to intervene, if you want to. The narratives merge, allowing us to see a more universal language of symbols and meanings. This moment of merger is the simple moment of prophecy.

Director

Amar Kanwar is an independent documentary filmmaker from New Delhi. His recent films have been about ecology, politics, art, and philosophy. He has received seven awards for his work, and is a recipient of the MacArthur Fellowship in India. Kanwar's recent films have been at the Earth Summit 2002 in South Africa and in DOCUMENTA 11 in Germany.

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Resilient Rhythms

India, 2002, 64'

Fri, Mar 12th, 7pm, Mission Cultural Ctr

Original language

Tamil/Telugu/Hindi/Kannada/Bhojpuri

Direction

Gopal Menon

Camera

Madhu N

Editing

Ajith Kumar B

Sound

Krishna Kumar

Script

Gopal Menon

Production

E Deenadayalan

Contact

E Deenadayalan

Other Media Communications

139/9, Domlur Layout

Opp. Trinity Golf Links Apts

Banalore-560071

India

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email: omc@vsnl.net

Film

India's caste system places nearly 160 million people, the dalits, at the outskirts of society. It exploits their services, especially to perform "polluting" tasks, such as cutting the umbilical cord, disposing of night-soil, tending cremation grounds, but at the same time denies them acceptance as human beings. Resilient Rhythms deals with a range of dalit responses to their marginalization, from armed struggle to electoral politics.

Director

Gopal Menon's first film was a documentary on the destruction of tropical evergreen forests in the Nilgiri biosphere. He has worked with the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) and documented the Naga and Kashmiri political movements. Menon has also made films on Dalit issues and the communal riots in Gujarat, and worked with Channel 4 on the issue of the funding of Hindu extremist organizations.

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Sand and Water

Bangladesh, 2002, 109'

Winner of the Third Best Film Award at Film South Asia '03

Sun, Mar 28th, 11am, India Community Ctr

Original language
Bengali

Direction
Shaheen Dill-Riaz

Camera
Shaheen Dill-Riaz

Editing
Dietmar Kraus

Sound
Wolfgang Amrain

Animation
Alex Isert

Production
HFF Potsdam

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Film

The middle section of the Jamuna, one of the three main rivers in Bangladesh, is called "the deadly paradise". This part of northern Bangladesh is the home of the Gabshara Union, a small district comprising a group of tiny islands. Sand and Water shows how the people of these islands live in the most extreme natural conditions and cope with the "moods" of Jamuna, which also provides them with their livelihood and fertile islands. Dill-Riaz describes this fragile world from a personal point of view using poetic images.

Director

Shaheen Dill-Riaz has been a film society activist in Bangladesh since 1988. He studied History of Art, History of Indian Art, and Theatrical Science at Freien Universitat Berlin, and at the Hochschule fur Film und Fernsehen Konrad Wolf in Potsdam. Dill-Riaz completed his Master's degree in 2002 and Sand and Water is his graduation film.

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Shei Rater Kotha Bolte Eshechi (Tale of the Darkest Night)

Bangladesh, 2001, 43'

Winner of the Second Best Film Award at Film South Asia '03

Sun, Mar 14th, 3pm, Mission Cultural Ctr

Original language
Bangla

Direction
Kawsar Chowdhury

Camera
GM Bachchu et. al.

Editing
Masun/Suman

Sound
Ripon

Script
Kawsar Chowdhury

Production
Kawsar Chowdhury

Contact
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Tel: +880-2-9660485
email: kchy@gononet.com

Film

Tale of the Darkest Night tells the story of the killings by the Pakistani army in Dhaka University. Surviving members and witnesses speak, and bring alive the havoc of that night. The documentary also includes the wireless messages the Pakistani army exchanged that night which a Bengali engineer accidentally stumbled upon and recorded while trying to tune in to the BBC for news of the crackdown in his country.

Director

Kawsar Chowdhury studied documentary and other filmmaking at the Development Education and Communication Unit of the Indian Space Research Organization in Ahmedabad, India, and the Dhaka Film Institute Archive. He is an independent filmmaker and has also worked with the BBC (Bangladesh), WTN, and Granada Television on issues like the Bangladesh liberation war of 1971, democratization in Bangladesh, culture, religious beliefs etc.

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Skin Deep

India, 1998, 83'

Fri, Mar 19th, 7pm, Mission Cultural Ctr

Film

Skin Deep is an exploration of body images and self perception among contemporary urban, middle class women in India - feelings of being too dark, too fat, too old that everyone experiences and attempts to come to terms with. In India, as elsewhere, a woman's identity is first and foremost an extension of her physicality, whether by societal dictates or her own complicity. The film traces the dynamics of the eternal search for the ideal femininity and how it permeates the self-image of contemporary women. Shot in the form of a "docu-feature", it recreates interviews with various women into six first-person narratives which comprise the structure of the film. It is a playful, engrossing and articulate film on women's complicated and contradictory relationships with their bodies.

Director

Reena Mohan is a graduate of the Film and Television Institute of India and is the editor of a number of acclaimed non-fiction films. Her first directorial work was Kamlabai, based on the life of the first actress of Indian cinema. This film won the National Award and the Best Film by a Debutante Director Award in MIFF.

Original language
Hindi, English
Marathi, Tamil
Bengali
Subtitled

Direction
Reena Mohan

Camera
Ranjan Palit
K.V. Mohanan

Editing
Arjun Gourisaraiya
Reena Mohan

Sound
P. M. Sateesh

Script
Paromita Vora

Production
Majlis Production

Majlis Manch
admin@
majlisbombay.org

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Swara - A Bridge over Troubled Water

Pakistan, 2003, 40'

Sat, Mar 13th, 3pm, Mission Cultural Ctr

Original language
Pushtu

Direction
Samar Minallah

Camera
Tariq Peerzada

Editing
Tariq Peerzada

Script
Samar Minallah

Animation
Haseeb Ajmal

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Film

Swara examines and comments on the Pakhtun practice of giving minor girls in marriage as reparation for serious crimes such as murder committed by their fathers, brother, or uncles.

Director

Samar Minallah is trained as an anthropologist and has an M Phil from the University of Cambridge, UK. She has worked on two documentaries on Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province. She is a freelance journalist and works with the Aurat Foundation.

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The Unconscious

Maharastra/India, 2003, 19'

Fri, Mar 19th, 7pm, Mission Cultural Ctr

Original language
Hindi

Direction
Manisha Dwivedi

Camera
Malini Dasari

Editing
Meghna Shrivastava

Sound
Arun Ram Varma

Script
Manisha Dwivedi

Production
Film and Television Institute of India

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email: schawftii@hotmail.com

Film

This film is a journey with men who call themselves kothi. They are men for their families and society, but for themselves they are women, and wives of other "macho" men.

They lead a dual life and a few are commercial sex workers. They walk two tightropes, both of fear and disgrace of and for their families and 'husbands'. And yet, they celebrate womanhood in their world of disguises.

Director

Manisha Dwivedi was born in Lucknow in 1969. She has studied Economics and is now at the Film and Television Institute of India studying film direction. The Unconscious was made as a documentary exercise in her second year at the institute.

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Vikas Bندوق Ki Naal Se (Development Flows from the Barrel of the Gun) India, 2003, 54'

Sun, Mar 21st, 3pm, Mission Cultural Ctr

Original language
Hindi

Direction
Biju Toppo
Meghnath

Camera
Biju Toppo

Editing
Raja

Script
Meghnath

Production
AKHRA

Contact
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email: akhra@rediffmail.com

Film

Vikas Bندوق Ki Naal Se gives voice to people affected by development projects- and repressed by the state for speaking out-in Orissa, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat. The film asks why most of these incidents have taken place in areas where indigenous Adivasi people are majorities, and leaves us to ask why, in the age of globalization, the state has turned from protector to predator.

Director

Biju Toppo has made six documentary films on issues concerning indigenous peoples. Meghnath is an activist in the indigenous people's movement against destructive development. He is a founding member of Akhra, an organization that works with indigenous youth.

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Voices of Dissent

Pakistan, 1999, 22'

Sat, Mar 13th, 3pm, Mission Cultural Ctr

Film

Original language
Urdu, English

Direction
NoorKhan S. Bawa

Camera
Zaibun Pasha
Patrick Harrison
Jennifer Rasleigh
Britt Hamilton
NoorKhan S. Bawa

Editing
Tony Asimakopoulos
Doug Von Rosen

Sound
Jennifer Rashleigh

Script
NoorKhan Bawa

Production
NoorKhan Bawa
Farjad Nabi

Contact
NoorKhan Bawa
bawa@total.net

The film takes viewers on a journey through the gates of a Sufi shrine into the world of "temple" dancing. It explores the passion of the dance within a number of contemporary Pakistani contexts and the personalities that pursue it: a classically trained kathak dancer who, as a woman, has been forbidden by the Pakistani government to perform her craft on stage; a male kathak dancer ridiculed for pursuing a traditionally female dance form; a popular film actress who embodies the commercialization of what was once a sacred, devotional act and whose performances place training and skill secondary to glamour; a mullah speaking for the fundamentalist position who views women's dance as a corrupting activity.

Director

NoorKhan S. Bawa is a graduate in International Development Studies from the University of Toronto. He is also a graduate in Radio and Television Arts from Ryerson Polytechnic University. He has worked in "development" in Costa Rica, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

THE HINDU

Date:26/10/2003 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/mag/2003/10/26/stories/2003102600200500.htm>

CINEMA

Sharing South Asian angst

Film South Asia, (FSA) 2003 provided a melting pot of images from that region, tackling diverse issues like loss of livelihood and growth of fundamentalism, writes NUPUR BASU.



A close-up of the plight of Afghan child refugees in "Terror's Children".

THE timing was perfect. Till that week the Maoists were on the offensive. But suddenly they declared a 10-day ceasefire during Dussera. And so a cool blue September sky opened up to welcome delegates to the fourth edition of Film South Asia, (FSA) 2003, a bi-annual documentary festival of South Asian documentaries organised by Himal Association in Kathmandu from September 25-28.

With 43 films short listed from over 200 submissions... it was a rich fare of reality images from a region mired in poverty, illiteracy, hunger, gender imbalances, growing

fundamentalism and ethnic strife, nuclear mongering and the politics of hate.

The background note from the organisers set the tone: "The films being exhibited in FSA describe the tumultuous times we live in. The films selected for screening at FSA reflect the concerns of the times and mood of the people of South Asia. In the hands of masters of non-fiction, the films help look at ourselves."

And the mirror revealed the cracks. Whether it be the plight of our children in the sub-continent in films like "A Kind of Childhood" directed by Tareque and Catherine Masud from Bangladesh which makes us journey with young Iris, a working child on the streets of Dhaka as his childhood is stripped from him or "Terror's Children" directed by a young Pakistani woman, Sharmeen Obaid whose lens goes close-up to the plight of Afghan child refugees in Pakistan or the Sri Lankan film directed by Yasir Khan "Looking for Kannan" which follows a former Tamil Tiger child soldier, society's failure to give these children their childhood is acutely exposed.

Many films looked at the question of loss of livelihood due to migration, displacement due to large dams, mines, and deforestation. Sanjay Kak's 85- minute powerful documentary on the Narmada Andolan "Words on Water" begins with tribals taking the filmmaker on a boat ride through submerged areas where their houses had once stood. In "Buru Sengal" ("The Fire Within") director Shriprakash takes you to the land of Tana Bhagats, a tribal community and examines the effects of 150 years of coal mining on this tribal belt. Biju Toppo and Meghnath's "Vikas Bندوق Ki Naal Se ("Development Flows From The Barrel of the Gun") looks at the plight of people hit by so-called development projects in Orissa, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. Bangladeshi Director Shahheen Dill Riaz's 105-minute film: "Sand and Water" is a lyrical journey of the angst of living along the Jamuna.



Journey with a working child in "A Kind Of Childhood".

One of the most consistent and powerful themes explored in the festival was the

growing fundamentalism in India. The Gujarat riots appear to have clearly been a major catalyst for a large number of documentary films. Leading the pack at FSA was journalist Shubradeep Chakravorty's "Godhra Tak: The Terror Trail", a 60-minute clinical investigation of who possibly set fire to the train in Godhra. The film has some chilling moments as Chakravorty retraces the route of the first batch of *kar sevaks* from Gujarat to Ayodhya and back and carefully reconstructs the terror they unleashed en route leading to the Godhra fire and the riots that followed.

Lalit Vachani's 98-minute film, "The Men in the Tree", holds a mirror to the extreme Hindutva ideology of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Vachani returns eight years after making his first film on the RSS "The Boy in the Branch", to make this very sophisticated and well-argued political documentary on the rise of the RSS and the men behind it. Anand Patwardhan's much talked about "Jung Aur Aman" (War and Peace) takes the lens close to nuclear nationalism and Patwardhan-style peels the layers that drive this kind of politics of hate in the sub-continent. In "Naata" ("The Bond") directors K.P. Jayashankar and Anjali Monteiro provide a moving personalised tale of communal harmony in the Mumbai's biggest slum, Dharavi. In "Tell Them The Tree They Planted Has Now Grown", director Ajay Raina returns to Kashmir to see the house from where his Kashmiri pandit parents had to flee.

The films from Bangladesh showed once again that the freedom struggle of the 1970s still forms a major driving force for the documentary filmmakers. "Shei Rater Kotha Bolte Eshechi (Tale of the Darkest Night) by Kawsar Chowdhury recreates the horror of the massacre by the Pakistani army in Dhaka University. Similarly Indian filmmaker Supriyo Sen portrays the angst of the partition of Bengal in "Aaabar Ashibo Phire" ("Way Back Home") in which the filmmaker journeys with his old parents to their lost homeland in Bangladesh.

There were a host of other themes explored by filmmakers at the festival. A film by Greg Stitt takes a close look at globalisation and its impact in a very deftly made documentary on call centres "Diverted to Delhi".



Kiran Shrestha's "Bhedako Oon Jasto" (In Search of a Song)... Following a tune to the mountains.

A powerful film on the plight of elephants both in the wild and domesticated directed by P. Balan "The 18th Elephant: Three Monologues" picked up the Ram Bahadur trophy for the best film at the festival.

Then there was Rahul Roy's "Majma" (performance on wrestling gyms and male sexuality), Pankaj Rishi Kumar's "Mat" (The Vote), Rakesh Sharma's "Aftershocks: the Rough Guide to Democracy" and Amar Kanwar's "A night of Prophecy" and Gopal Menon's "Resilient Rhythms" on oppression of Dalits in Indian society.

Nepal's tranche of documentary films at FSA were well crafted. Both the opening film "Itihaas Jitneharuka Laagi" ("History of Winners") by Pranay Limbu and Kiran Shrestha's "Bhedako Oon Jasto" (In Search of a Song) which closed the festival showed the Nepali filmmaker's ability to bring simple human stories come to life on celluloid. Humour, a tool that enhances documentary narrative, was there in plenty in several films. "Words and Water" illustrates the commercialisation of water with posters like: "Buy a washing machine or a music system or a television set and take home 500 litres of water FREE !!" In "Terror's Children", a film about the plight of Afghan refugee children in Pakistan, a small Afghan child comes out with his brand of solution for world peace in a war ravaged world: " If all American people would embrace Islam, maybe there would not be any more wars !!"

As always FSA provided the melting pot of images from South Asia for south Asian filmmakers and audiences. . A film by Samar Minallah from Peshawar, "Swara: A Bridge Over Troubled Water" is a hard-hitting comment on the Pakhtun practice of giving minor girls in marriage to an "enemy family" in reparation for serious crimes like murder committed by male members of the little girl's family. The issue is now before the country's Supreme Court and Minallah is hoping that legislation is brought soon to ban the practice of "Swara". Documentary as advocacy and for change, what

can be finer examples than these?

While the climate is still not ripe for documentary filmmakers in Pakistan and Sri Lanka to make films that question the status quo and those in Bangladesh and Nepal do not find the going too easy either, Indian documentary filmmakers too are encountering increasing hostility from the establishment. This summer they faced a litmus test when the government suddenly made it mandatory for documentary filmmakers to get Censor certificates for their films being submitted to the bi-annual Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF). The censorship clause spawned a huge protest in the documentary film community. 170 Indian documentary filmmakers threatened to boycott the festival. Some foreign filmmakers joined issue with them in support.



A hard-hitting comment on the practice of swara in Pakistan's North West Frontier Provinces.

An embarrassed and miffed government finally withdraw the censorship clause and is now pleading with filmmakers to send in their entries.

" The state clearly perceives a threat from documentary filmmakers who are critical of the state... there is a growing paranoia in the establishment about the visual medium" says Lalit Vachani, director of " The Men on the tree".

I came away from the FSA with a haunting lyric from one of the films: " A boy was born in the railway station., now his mother is crying, as he is dead."

Documentary filmmakers from South Asia had once again told the stories of their societies and people with passion.

Travelling festival

AS always, 15 of the best films of the FSA will now be part of a travelling festival across the world. The TFSA can be hosted by any institution anywhere and free of cost. For details contact website: www.himalassociation.org/fsa or e-mail fsa@himalassociation.org. The films chosen from FSA 2003 are given below: The following is the list of films selected as part of the Travelling Film South Asia 2004 being launched in Kathmandu from October 31 to November 2, 2003 before it is taken around the world

"Bheda Ko Oon Jasto" (In Search Of A Song), (55 min), Nepal, 2003, director Kiran Krishna Shrestha

"Buru Sengal" ("The Fire Within"), (57 min), Jharkhand/India, 2002, director Shriprakash

"The 18th Elephant: 3 Monologues", (62 min), Kerala/India, 2003, director P. Balan

"Godhra Tak: The Terror Trail", (60 min), Gujarat/India, 2003, director Shubradeep Chakravorty

"Hunting Down Water", (32 min), India, 2003, director Sanjaya Barnela and Vasant Saberwal

"Itihass Jitneharru Ko Laagi" ("History for Winners"), (55 min), Nepal, 2003, director Pranay Limbu

"Made in India", (39 min), India, 2002, director Madhusree Dutta

"Naata" ("The Bond"), (45 min), Mumbai/India, 2003, director K.P. Jayasankar and A. Monteiro

"A Night of Prophecy", (77 min), India, 2002, director Amar Kanwar

"Resilient Rhythms", (64 min), India, 2002, director Gopal Menon

"Sand and Water", (105 min), Bangladesh, 2002, director Shaheen Dill-Riaz

"Shei Rater Kotha Bolte Eshechi" ("Tale of the Darkest Night"), (43 min), Bangladesh, 2001, director Kawsar Chowdhury

"Swara: A Bridge Over Troubled Water", (40 min), Pakistan, 2003, director Samar Minallah

"The Unconscious" (19 min), Maharastra/India, 2003, director Manisha Dwivedi

"Vikas Bندوق Ki Naal Se" ("Development Flows from The Barrel Of The Gun"), (54

min), India, 2003, director Biju Toppo and Meghnath

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Censorship: Unofficial might

The recent experiences of some independent documentary filmmakers, who chose to look at the events in Gujarat, post-Godhra, illustrate a disturbing reality — the contradictions between the opinions and ideas of the unofficial censors and those of the official ones, says KALPANA SHARMA. Here, she looks at the larger issue of the freedom of expression.

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IF the official censor does not get you, the unofficial one will. And this can happen in a country that guarantees freedom of expression. The recent experiences of over half a dozen independent documentary filmmakers, who chose to look at the events in Gujarat, post-Godhra, vividly illustrate this contradictory reality.

Every single one of these filmmakers has faced an uphill battle — either to obtain a censorship certificate, or to find people willing to take the risk to organise screenings without the official stamp of approval or to persuade a television channel to telecast their films. As a result, very few people have seen the over-half-a-dozen films that have recorded the terrible events in Gujarat of last year. Ironically, more people outside India have probably seen these films than people within the country. And hardly anyone in Gujarat has viewed these documentaries.

These experiences raise a number of important questions about the freedom of information, about documenting contemporary history and about the right of people to know all sides of a story as complex as the Gujarat communal carnage. If official and

commercial media does not investigate such political events, is it not the responsibility of independent journalists and filmmakers to do this job? Yet for doing something that is important for us as a society, these same people are literally made to walk on hot coals. Apart from the perennial problems of finding funds and filming in areas where they often encounter hostile political groups, these filmmakers are confronted with at least three immediate hurdles.

The first is the official censor board. For public showings of any film, a certificate from the Board of Film Certification has to be obtained. If you make films on birds and bees, there is no problem. But talk about war, communalism, sexuality, exploitation, even poverty, and you have to encounter the entire might of the political establishment even though, on paper, the board is supposed to be free of politics.

The filmmaker has the option of not approaching the Censor Board at all and restricting screenings of the film to private shows. But there is always a risk that these screenings will either be disrupted, or that the police will decide that they are public and therefore require a censor certificate. In the absence of a certificate, the police are within their rights to confiscate copies of your film. Or, as happened in Mumbai last year, a private showing of Anand Patwardhan's award-winning documentary "War and Peace" had to be cancelled at the last minute because the regional head of the censor board decided to be pro-active and inform the police that the film had not yet got an all-clear.

Another option now available to filmmakers is television. No longer is Doordarshan the only channel. And for telecasts, the censor board does not come into the picture. Yet private channels do not take risks with political films. Unlike television channels in the West, which often buy the rights to telecast documentaries by independent filmmakers, no Indian TV channel has done this. Thus commercial interests act as the third check to the dissemination of these films.

Of course, the 24-hour private news channels did play a role in informing the country about the carnage in Gujarat. We saw the arson, we heard the cries of the wounded and the survivors of the carnage, we saw their wounds, and we were repelled at the sight of the death and the destruction. We heard the militant and crazed voices of those who justified their actions in the name of religion.

Yet, all these images came and went. They did not remain to remind us, say a year later, that what happened then could happen again, that there has not been a closure on those events, that justice has failed the majority of the victims of the violence and that the ideology that fuelled the killings continues to reign supreme — and unrepentant.

This is precisely what some of these documentary filmmakers have tried to do. They have painstakingly researched the reasons for the Gujarat violence, they have recorded the voices of many of those whom the media overlooked, they have tried to place these events within the larger issues of economics and politics and they have attempted to explain the consequences for the rest of India if no one is held accountable for such a carnage.

Yet, the tragedy is that the majority of these films will never be seen, particularly in Gujarat. The few attempts that have been made to show these films have resulted in disruption and forced the filmmakers to grab their prints and run out of the State.

The latest such event took place on October 20 when journalist-turned-filmmaker Shubhradeep Chakravorty tried to arrange a private viewing of his film, "Godhra Tak — the terror trail" in Ahmedabad. He had to change the venue at the last minute because of threats, and at the end of the screening at the new location he was surrounded by members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) who demanded that he apologise for making the film. Later, the crime branch of the police came asking for the filmmaker and wanted a copy of his film. Chakravorty picked up his prints of the film and fled the city.

This film investigates the Godhra train fire of February 27, 2002, and in which 59 people died. It is in the genre of an investigative journalistic film. Chakravorty covers many angles that the print and electronic media have overlooked. For instance, he managed to locate four passengers who were on the train and who are not *kar sevaks*. They describe the behaviour of the *kar sevaks* on the train. Chakravorty also located people in Rudauli village in Faizabad district, who were roughed up by the *kar sevaks* at the station as they made their way to Ayodhya.

Even more telling is the evidence presented by the former director of the Central Forensic Laboratory, Dr. V.N. Sehgal, who studied the report of the Ahmedabad-based Forensic Laboratory, checked the burnt out carriage and vestibule and said on camera that there was no way that the inflammable liquid could have been poured from the outside.

Chakravorty's is the kind of film some television channels in the West would produce to investigate an incident like Godhra. In India, despite the growth of such 24-hour news channels, nothing of this kind is telecast. The channels do their own investigations but the formats restrict the depth of such stories. None of the channels has a dedicated team that is given the time and the space to follow an issue in detail and come up with a film that sheds new light.



"Godhra Tak" has been preceded by a number of other films. One of the first off the block was "Aakrosh", a 20-minute film by Geeta Chawda and Ramesh Pimple of the People's Media Initiative, Mumbai. The film was submitted to the censor board in February this year. Within a week, the application was rejected on the grounds that "the film depicts violence and reminds the people about Gujarat riots last year. It shows the government and the police in a bad light ..." The film was banned. An appeal to the revising committee did not yield positive results, nor to the Appellate Tribunal. Pimple says that they have been left with no option but to turn to the Bombay High Court where he is filing an appeal. In the meantime, he plans to show the film to as many people as he can through private showings.

Gauhar Raza, Delhi-based activist and scientist with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, is not interested in battling with the censors. He has made two films on Gujarat, "Zulmaton ke daur mein (In Dark Times)", which was on the 1998 elections and "Junoon Ke Badte Kadam (Evil stalks the land)" which was on the recent communal violence in the State. The first one was made for television, for the now defunct TVI Company. It was telecast just once and then abandoned. Both films, he says, are part of his battle against the spread of communalism. He plans to use them in ways that generate discussion, especially among young people. But even this has not been easy. Screenings of his films were stopped in Goa during the elections last year and at the end of the year, a showing in a Mumbai college was stopped when the Shiv Sena raised objections. The police confiscated the tapes on the grounds that Raza did not have a censor certificate, something that is not required for a private showing.

Award-winning Mumbai-based filmmaker Suma Josson's film "Gujarat — A laboratory of Hindu Rashtra" was shot in three days just before the 2002 State assembly elections

when Narendra Modi and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) were returned to power. She concentrated on 14 villages in Anand district that had been affected by the violence. But Josson has had hardly any showings of the film in India. A few showings in other States, particularly Uttar Pradesh, have often elicited a hostile response from audiences which refuse to believe that the scale of violence was as great as shown in the film. She says these audiences questioned the authenticity of the film going so far as to accuse her of shooting the entire film in one room!

Josson has not submitted this film for censorship. Her previous film on the Mumbai riots of 1992-93 — "Bombay's Blood Yatra" — took two years before it was finally cleared without any cuts by the appellate tribunal.

For battling the censors there are few documentary filmmakers who can match Anand Patwardhan's record. This Mumbai-based filmmaker, who has collected dozens of awards in India and around the world for his impressive array of films, has fought to get a censor certificate for every single film that he has made. This has often meant years in court.

Patwardhan feels that a censor certificate is a kind of insurance policy for political filmmakers because it denies the police the right to disrupt showings or confiscate the films. Also, State television is left with no excuse to telecast films like his that have won national awards. Yet, despite his record of struggle with the censor, and the plethora of precedents set by successive court judgments, every time he approaches the censor with a new film, he goes through an almost identical battle. His latest victory is getting a censor certificate for his epic three-hour film "War and Peace". The censor had demanded 22 cuts. Patwardhan succeeded in getting it passed without a single cut. He says, "It is my constitutional right to make films. Why should the censor board behave like a communal body?" He holds that other filmmakers should also submit their films for censorship and fight the system. "If you don't fight it out legally here at home, you are left with no option but to show your film abroad," he says. "This would defeat the very purpose of making the film."

Another filmmaker who is following in Patwardhan's footsteps is Rakesh Sharma. His film on the Gujarat earthquake of January 2001, "Aftershocks" created a stir because it revealed the other agendas at work under the guise of relief and rehabilitation. Sharma managed to get that through the censors, but he is apprehensive about his new three-part film on Gujarat. But Sharma too is prepared to fight it out because ultimately, he believes, the censorship laws must be challenged.

Stalin K., an Ahmedabad-based activist and filmmaker, whose film on Gujarat is "a work in progress", says that the censorship rules only apply to those making films that question dominant politics. Thus, the VHP, he points out, has made many short films on the Gujarat incidents of last year, and on Godhra. These are readily available on CD at any VHP office and are being shown all over the place. There has neither been any disruption of these showings, nor has the police asked whether the showings can be deemed as public showings and therefore demanded a censorship certificate from the VHP. On the

other hand, in Gujarat today even films that have censorship certificates, such as Patwardhan's "War and Peace" have a problem finding a sponsor.

The experiences of these filmmakers raise issues that need to be debated more widely. They illustrate the growing intolerance of dissent, of independent documentation, and of creativity that does not fall within the dominant norms. More than the workings of the official censor board, it is the actions of the unofficial censors that should worry anyone who is concerned about guarding rights such as the right to freedom of expression.

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World Social Forum 2004

Visuals speak louder than words

By Huned Contractor

There are many who love to theorise and indulge in academic debate when it comes to issues concerning social development and related themes. This fact is more than evident at the World Social Forum 2004 (WSF) being held in Mumbai from January 16 to 21. But there is always one group, thankfully so, that would rather let reality do the talking.

Meet the documentary filmmakers who came together to showcase their work at the WSF. "Our task was to select films which would be aligned with the central theme of the forum and show how imperialist globalisation, patriarchy, militarism, communalism, casteism and racism have affected the lives of the common people. Out of the 300 entries received by us, we have chosen 83 films and these, in particular, tend to focus on resistance rather than on exploring alternatives. Some of them do explore, of course, and therefore there is a special section devoted to it called 'Other Worlds Are Breathing', which is inspired by author Arundhati Roy's closing words in her speech to the last social forum in Porto Alegre," says Gargi Sen, an organising committee member of the festival.

And so, as the halls darkened through the day and into the evening, a film that really stirred intelligent debate and shook the conscience was *The Corporation*, directed by Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbot. The film is the result of six years of patient research, not to mention funding difficulties, but, as Achbar puts it: "It had to be done because the Corporation, like the Church and Monarchy in other times and places, has come to play a very dominant role in our lives."

Moving through layers of how multinational companies have come to lay down stringent laws that dictate our lifestyles, the film invites players, pawns and pundits on a graphic and engaging quest to reveal the corporation's inner workings, curious history, controversial impact and possible future. "The Corporation has crushed, belittled or absorbed us all into some new order," says Achbar.

Divided into sections such as The Global Market, A World of Work and Survival, A World At War, The World Abused, Life, Politics and Struggle, The Woman's World, Identities, Culture or Resistance, Other Worlds Are Breathing and Local World or India, the festival helped structure a platform for opinions, arguments and perspectives on how we have allowed ourselves to be ruled by the demon of globalisation and ever-increasing consumerism. Some films left a lasting impression, such as *Diverted To Delhi* by Gregory Stitt, which talks about how young Indians working in call centres are forced to put aside their cultural identity, modify their accents, change their names and take on the personality of whoever pays the bills. Arlene Ami's *Say I Do* chronicles the story of three 'mail order brides' from the Philippines now living in Canada facing poverty and victimisation. Suma Josson's *Gujarat: A Laboratory of Hindu Rashtra* focuses on post-violence Godhra, the fury that engulfed Gujarat in March 2002 when more than 2,000 Muslims lost their lives. And *Naata*, directed by Anjali Monteiro and K P Jayasankar of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, which investigates the work of Bhau Korte and Waqar Khan, two activists and friends who have been involved in conflict resolution through neighbourhood peace committees in Dharavi, Mumbai, reputedly Asia's largest slum.

What was interesting was the wide range of themes and stories, whether it was the

documentation of co-directors P Baburaj and C Saratchandran in *Kaippuneeru* of the two-year-long local struggle against the multinational Coca-Cola Corporation in Plachimada in Kerala's Palakkad district. Or the focus on continuing resistance to discrimination and oppression by dalit communities, as projected through Gopal Menon's *Resilient Rhythms* . Or the tragic underlining of how patriarchal Azerbaijani society forces a pregnant woman to abort her child when an ultrasound reveals it to be a girl, as exposed in Ali-Isa Djabbarov's *Wishing For Seven Sons And One Daughter* .

Similarly, *Making A Killing* by Kelly Anderson and Tami Gold is a powerful expose on how a cigarette manufacturing company uses its power, size and promotional expertise to spread tobacco addiction internationally. And, not to forget, Anand Patwardhan's controversial *War And Peace* that was filmed over three tumultuous years in India , Pakistan , Japan and the United States of America , juxtaposing peace activism in the face of global militarism and war. Triggered by macabre scenes of jubilation that greeted nuclear testing on the Indian sub-continent, the film makes a clear statement of where the world is headed. That explains why the creation of 'another world' becomes the urgent requirement of the moment.

It is heart-warming to see the number of documentary filmmakers willing to probe the issues of globalisation and human rights. And this, as directors Peter Wintonick and Katerina Cizek, state in their film *Seeing Is Believing: Handicams, Human Rights And The News* , is possible because new technologies have transformed human rights work, journalism and international law and justice through what has come to be known as 'video activism'. That's the truth. And not just a theory to be bounced back and forth across the space of a table.

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http://www.infochangeindia.org/infochange_wsf19.jsp?wsf19