



a film by Sandhya Suri

i for india

In 1965 Yash Pal Suri left India for the U.K. The first thing he does on his arrival in England is to buy 2 Super 8 cameras, 2 projectors and 2 reel to reel recorders. One set of equipment he sends to his family in India, the other he keeps for himself. For forty years he uses it to share his new life abroad with those back home - images of snow, miniskirted ladies dancing bare-legged, the first trip to an English supermarket – his taped thoughts and observations providing a unique chronicle of the eccentricities of his new English hosts. Back in India, his relatives in turn, respond with their own ‘cine-letters’ telling tales of weddings, festivals and village life.

A bitter-sweet time capsule of alienation, discovery, racism and belonging, “I for India” is a chronicle of immigration in sixties Britain and beyond, seen through the eyes of one Asian family and their movie camera.

“Intimate and rewarding, lyrical, poetic... Offers the viewer that rarest of gifts, a sense of inclusion within a deeply loving family.”

Variety

England/Italy/Germany, 2005, 70 Minutes, color & b/w Documentary

World Documentary Competition Sundance

www.iforindiathemovie.com

director's statement

Like so many families, lacing up our ancient projector and replaying our favourite Super 8 home movies was something we used to do with routine nostalgia. Only years later, as an adult, when I came across a box of audio reels, did I realize that the films were part of a much bigger story. Over weeks I sat down and listened to over 100 reels of audio letters, which my father had recorded and exchanged with his family back home in India - the most intimate thoughts and observations of our lives in England over a period of forty years. At the same time as he was recording Super 8 films of birthday parties, new houses and our successful lives abroad, the audio tapes were telling a more complex story. The familiar home movies took on a whole new meaning for me.

I inherited my father's passion for documenting and I knew that he had given me the greatest gift I could have wished for as a documentary-maker - real, long-term development. For me the challenge was a big one. Could I structure such a huge amount of personal archive, in the space of a 70 minute film, and give it an emotional coherence that would truly represent the lives of my family over 4 decades? As a second-generation immigrant could I convey the complex, bitter-sweet yearning for home which had simultaneously plagued and comforted my father for so many years? And most importantly, did I have the skills to recreate the true richness and complexity of my parents' experience of immigration and set it within a wider historical context? I wanted to make a sincere, personal film, which was creative and ambitious in its form, and which would touch those who watched it.



As much as the audio letters and Super 8 films are moving, they are also incredibly funny. Along with the questions of displacement and belonging, I wanted to share with my audience the fun. How did a young Indian doctor, arriving in England in the mid-sixties view his strange new hosts? What did he find funny about them, what did he admire in them and what did he despise?

Listening to my father's audio letters, to the mike clicking on and off, us as children playing in the background, his breath as he struggles to find the right words, or the barely concealed anger or puzzlement in his voice, you can really picture him sitting in front of his tape recorder, documenting his life. In this film, I've tried to give shape to the reality, which he documented so passionately. "I for India" started with some Super 8 movies and a box of audio reels but grew into much more than I could have expected.

about the director

After graduating with a first class honours degree in Mathematics and German, Sandhya received a scholarship to study documentary at The National Film and Television School. Her graduation film "Safar" was shown at a number of international film festivals, receiving the Jury's special mention at Cinema du Reel and the award for Best Short Film at the British Film Institute's Imagine Asia festival. Currently based in London, she has lived in Germany, India and Japan and worked on documentary projects in Africa, South America and Polynesia. "I for India" is her first feature length documentary.



credits

COMMISSIONING EDITOR ARTE **Doris Hepp** COMMISSIONING EDITOR YLE **Leena Pasanen** ONLINE EDITORS **Andreas Froehlich, Oliver Kenneke**
at ACT, Cologne SOUND DESIGN **Karl Atteln and Markus Loebel** at Soundvision, Cologne SOUND MIXING **Alexander Weuffen**
SOUND RECORDIST **Christine Felce** ASSOCIATE PRODUCERS **Thomas Kufus & Kai Kuenneman** STORY DEVELOPMENT **Nicolas Chauderge**
CAMERA **Sandhya Suri & Lars Lenski** SUPER 8 **Yash Pal Suri** EDITING **Cinzia Baldessari & Brian Tagg** PRODUCER **Carlo Cresto-Dina**
DIRECTOR/SCRIPT **Sandhya Suri** PRODUCTION COMPANIES **Fandango, zero west**
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