

Exploring the Subcontinent

The Anand Patwardhan documentary *War and Peace* (2002) may have won Best Film at the Mumbai International Film Festival, but that didn't stop the Indian Censor Board from banning it. The work frames footage of 1998 pro-nuclear arms celebrations in India and Pakistan with images of the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi. Its point: Global militarism and war have wreaked radical change on the Indian subcontinent.

While parts of *War and Peace* are disheartening, it also spotlights peace activism in India and Pakistan. Seba Sarwar of the cross-cultural arts organization Voices Breaking Boundaries, which is screening the documentary at "Border Crossings: Films from South Asia," believes it will surprise people accustomed to getting their news from the Western media. "There is a very strong peace movement in Pakistan," she says, "which regularly communicates with the equally strong peace movement in India — something you rarely see on CNN."

In fact, all of the true stories in "Border Crossings" show sides of South Asia you're not likely to see on the news. In *Naheed's Story* (2001), a Pakistani classical dancer struggles to keep her art alive in the face of oppression. *She Wants to Talk to You* (2001) shares the views of three adolescent Nepalese girls on marriage and spirituality. And *The Men in the Tree* (2002) recounts the experiences of a group of men indoctrinated with Hindu fundamentalism at a young age.

Following each screening, Voices Breaking Boundaries will host discussions about the documentaries. In light of Houston's large South Asian immigrant population, and the world's recent focus on the region, Voices Breaking Boundaries is expecting the series to generate lots of interest. "When we did this two years ago, there was a huge response from the general public," says Sarwar. "People wanted to know from the source what was going on in this region." — Melissa Nurczynski

The first half of "Crossing Borders" runs Thursday, May 15, through Saturday, May 17, at the Brown Auditorium, Museum of Fine Arts, 1001 Bissonnet. The second half runs Thursday and Friday, May 29 and 30, at Aurora Picture Show, 800 Aurora. For information call 713-228-2052 or visit www.voices-breakingboundaries.org. \$5 to \$6.



Men In the Tree examines Hindu fundamentalism.

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