

Signs of South Asia

During my childhood, signs of South Asian culture in Seattle were rare. Just fifteen years ago, my family traveled to Vancouver to dine and San Francisco for fashion. But, a recent explosion of all things South Asian has taken over Seattle. From the multitude of restaurants, markets, and even clothing stores, my childhood city has become a new New Delhi.

Even films have come to Seattle! September 16th marks the opening night of Seattle's 1st *Independent South Asian Film Festival*. Produced by the organization *Tasveer*, and sponsored in large part by the *Cobalt Group*, *Northwest Asian American Theater*, and other program sponsors, the festival will run until September 20th. During this time, screenings from independent filmmakers will highlight topics concerning South Asia. The event is a chance to learn about subjects, such as the Sri Lankan civil war and the debates over Kashmir, through film. Forums will accompany many of the screenings in order to promote discussion and learning. When asked about the goal of the festival, director Farah Nousheen cited the event's slogan. "One South Asia, uncensored, uncut," she stated. The festival hopes to encourage unity among the many cultures that make up this region of the world. It is a chance to go beyond national borders, become one diverse community, and learn about the issues facing the cultures making up this community.

But why now, and why Seattle? Nousheen pointed to the organization *Tasveer* in order to answer this question. The nonprofit group, started in March 2002, promotes South Asian independent films throughout the Pacific Northwest. These films focus on issues that are pertinent to countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, as well as many others. "The organization has created an audience base in Seattle over the past few years," explained Nousheen. This base and a growing South Asian community create an important foundation for the festival in Seattle. The opening gala, which is this Thursday night, will feature filmmakers, music, and dance. This will be followed by movies throughout the five-day gathering such as *Awakened Dream* (Khwaab). This film, out of San Francisco, focuses on the life of an Indian immigrant who comes to America to work as a computer engineer but decides to attend film school instead. Films such as this one and events including a forum for women filmmakers will run through Sept. 20th.

Through its promotion of independent film and unity, the festival promises to be an important event. Above all, Seattle's 1st *Independent South Asian Film Festival* is a sign of the growing future of South Asian culture in Seattle and the Pacific Northwest.

-For more information about the event, schedules, and venues visit the ISAFF website at <http://isaff.tasveer.org/>

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