

WIP C The Borderlands



REGION: India

GENRE | FORMAT | LANGUAGE | RUNNING TIME:

Documentary | Digital Format | Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Manipuri, Nepali, Punjabi | 90mins

DIRECTOR:

Samarth MAHAJAN

PRODUCERS:

Sunil DOSHI

Ashay GANGWAR

HAF GOALS:

Funds, Sales agents, Pre-sales

BUDGET: US\$ 105,820

SECURED BUDGET: US\$ 77,000

DIRECTOR'S FILMOGRAPHY

2017 *The Unreserved*

ONE-SENTENCE SYNOPSIS

An intimate exploration of how everyday lives intertwines with borders in the Indian subcontinent.

SYNOPSIS

In 2015, my hometown was attacked by militants. Stressed, sitting far away, I called home. My mother sounded upbeat. Dinanagar, a nondescript border town near Pakistan, debuted on national news, and the sudden attention from so many kin made her feel like a celebrity. While the violent narrative ran on TV, I was listening to my mother's humane story.

The powers that have turned borderland narratives into masculine fistfights, seen from the centre. *The Borderlands* captures everyday life stories in India's border areas, rethinking borders through stories of longing, triumph and tragedy.

Dhuli meets her family for a few hours once a year, divided by the India-Bangladesh border fence.

Kavita, rescued from trafficking at a young age, now catches human traffickers red-handed as they try to cross the Nepal-India border.

Deepa, a Hindu refugee from Pakistan, aspires to be a doctor. Schooled in Arabic script till now, she struggles to learn Devanagari script for her exams.

Each story showcases a unique facet of borderland life, through an intimate inquiry into the life of one character. The spirit of India's relationship with its neighbours seeps into the stories, and India's borderlands become a microcosm of the global borderscape.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The global debate around borders has reached a critical stage. As masses consume state-sponsored news and listen to othering narratives from popular leaders, it is important to bring out perspectives grounded in reality. Amplifying such narratives can create a more vibrant discourse, allowing us to acknowledge the humanity latent in us, and to inhibit the pace at which we are moving into a more fragmented future.

As a borderland citizen, from the junction of traditionally considered arch enemies India and Pakistan, my lived experience affirms that borderland narratives are lost in the noise of centre-led narratives. As a thinking citizen of the world's largest and most diverse democracy, I feel India's borderlands provide an ideal ground to explore what makes us a citizen before being human, and human before being a citizen.

The film explores borders through refugee movement, cross-border kinship, livelihoods, faith and fluid identities. These themes intertwine with the axes of gender, class, nationality and sexuality to present a mosaic of intersectional stories, providing a humane lens to look at borderland narratives. In a world where "Us versus Them" precedes the understanding of "Us and Them", the film accepts the challenge to make us notice similarities over differences.

DIRECTOR

Samarth MAHAJAN

Mahajan, a self-taught non-fiction filmmaker based in Mumbai. Passionate about telling human stories from India that remain invisible to the mainstream, his documentary films have received critical and mass attention. *The Unreserved* (2017), his national award-winning documentary about passengers in third class of Indian Railways, premiered at Film Southasia 2017 and has been presented at more than 50 fora, while receiving a rare limited theatrical release in India. His works *We, The People* (2018), about India's protest street Jantar Mantar Road, and *Kazwa* (2015), about fireflies and sustainable tourism, have been awarded at multiple international film festivals and fora.

PRODUCER

Sunil DOSHI

Doshi has produced over fifteen feature length films in 20 years. He co-produced *Chauthi Koot* (aka *The Fourth Direction*) (2015), selected in Un Certain Regard section at Cannes 2015. He has presented and distributed the most coveted world cinema titles in India, including the Oscar-winning *The Salesman* (2017), Jafar Panahi's *3 Faces* (2018), Nuri Ceylan's *Winter Sleep* (2014), and Studio Ghibli / Miyazaki's catalogue. He co-founded NDTV Lumiere, a world cinema TV channel later acquired by Turner Broadcasting.

Ashay GANGWAR

Gangwar has produced ten documentaries, including *The Unreserved* (2017), and won awards for Best Film and Cinematography across globe.

PRODUCTION COMPANY

All Things Small

All Things Small is a media company dedicated to telling true stories. We find and produce the best, most compelling non-fiction from the Indian subcontinent, in a variety of formats and on every platform imaginable. We are passionate about telling stories that will inform, entertain and galvanize their audiences. We dive deep into popular culture, uncover mysteries, spark new ideas, and spur people and institutions into action. ATS Studio finds, develops and produces compelling non-fiction for consumer platforms, publishers, and brands. From docu-dramas to multi-season shows, podcasts to movies: the studio brings India's most compelling stories to life.