

Two Indian Aussies navigate the remarkable world of online dating, astrologers, matchmakers and their traditional parents in a race to be married by 30.

indian WEDDING race



Producer SALLY INGLETON Director SEAN COUSINS
Produced with the Assistance of FILM VICTORIA, Produced in Association with SBS TELEVISION
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www.360degreefilms.com.au

PRESS KIT

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INDIAN WEDDING RACE

ONE SENTENCE SYNOPSIS

Two Indian Aussies navigate the remarkable world of online dating, astrologers, matchmakers and their traditional parents in a race to be married by 30.

ONE PARAGRAPH SYNOPSIS

29-year-olds **Dalvinder** and **Tarun** are each looking for love. Both must balance the wishes of their traditional Indian parents with their own desire for a love-marriage but if they don't get married by 30 they fear they will be seen as damaged goods and bring shame to their families. So each embarks on a frantic journey that takes them through the popular online dating world, to astrologers, matchmakers and even down the path of arranged marriage. **INDIAN WEDDING RACE** offers unique access to the world of Australia's Indian community as it explores with pathos and humour the pressures young people face as they race to make it to the temple on time.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Melbourne has by far the largest community of young Indians in Australia. In a decade more than one hundred thousand have arrived to study, find work and, hopefully, start a new life. But not all are new arrivals. Twenty-nine-year-old **Dalvinder** grew up in Australia with traditional Sikh parents. She's now under pressure to get married before she turns 30. *"In the Indian community, when you reach your late 20s, everyone's like 'Oh, when are you getting married? When's your daughter getting married? When's your sister getting married' ... it's like chicken going off."*

In order to please her dad she opens an account with the world's largest matrimonial website, Shaadi.com. After a month of dating suitors that fail to impress, she takes matters into her own hands and looks for a partner on Tinder, the much-maligned phone app with a reputation for fostering one-night-stands. There she meets 29-year-old tradie **Shamsher** – who is not the sort of man she was looking for at all. In fact he's a traditional Sikh and rather like her own father.

Tarun is also 29 and grew up in a middle class Hindu family in India. He's been in Melbourne for a decade and has a good job in finance. But something's missing. He's lonely, and his parents back home are urging him to marry, or he will bring shame on the family. *"I have to get married. If I do not get married by 30, I will be considered as damaged goods."*

So Tarun embarks on a rollercoaster journey of speed dating, online searches, and even a trip to India in the hope of finding his perfect match. But as his 30th birthday looms, he realises he can't do it alone – he must turn to his dad for help.

For Dalvinder and Tarun, the search for love is fraught with difficulty as they try to balance the expectations and beliefs of their Indian-born parents, who are increasingly at odds with the values of Australia and with their own hopes and dreams. Surprisingly, arranged marriage remains the preference for many young Indians who are now returning to the tried-and-true methods of the past, despite living in a culture obsessed with romantic love. But add the stress of class and caste barriers – and the inevitable fluttering heart – and it's clear the path to 'love and marriage' is not without twists and turns.

INDIAN WEDDING RACE follows the trials and tribulations of these two young Indian Australians in their search for love. There's sure to be broken hearts and high-drama as each navigates their own path to their dream 'big, fat Indian wedding'.

PARTICIPANTS

Dalvinder, 29 years old

Dressed in her best sari at the temple, Dalvinder looks as if she has only just arrived from the Punjab. In fact, she grew up in the middle class suburb of Balwyn with her Sikh parents. Like many children of immigrants, she juggles being identified both as an Aussie but also as an Indian. She's dated Aussie blokes and always imagined she'd marry one. But her dad has other ideas. He is urging her to follow tradition and marry a Sikh. Now 29 years old, Dalvinder knows that if she is not married by 30, people will think something is wrong with her. So with the help of her dad she embarks on a modern day journey to find a husband.



Tarun, 29 years old

Unlike Dalvinder, Tarun left his family in India and came to Australia alone. He's been living in the outer suburbs of Melbourne for ten years and has a good job at the Commonwealth Bank. But something is missing. He's lonely and feels his life would be complete if he was married. He is succumbing to family pressure and also believes he must be married by 30; otherwise he will be 'damaged goods'. He craves independence, but also his father's approval. He wants to marry for love, but if that fails he's willing to accept an arranged marriage. But who will accept him? A wealthy heiress from India? A woman from a speed dating night? A match from an online date site? Finding 'the one' is not so easy for Tarun. Soon after filming was completed Tarun's Dad found his son a wife. Tarun and Manisha will marry in India, April 2016.



Shamsher, 29 years old

Shamsher has lived in Australia for 8 years. His parents are traditional Sikhs and also live in the Punjab. Shamsher works as a tradesman and like many Indian Aussies lives in the new suburbs of Melbourne's West. Also 29, he knows it's time to get married and settle down. He tries the dating apps to see if he can find the girl of his dreams.



PRODUCTION STORY

One of life's great questions for many young people is 'how am I going to find love and someone to spend my life with?' For young Indians living in Australia this search is even more complicated as they must not only please themselves, but also their parents.

Producer **Sally Ingleton** has been intrigued by how young Indians living in Australia walk the line between a love-marriage and an arranged marriage. Are they bound by tradition as their parents were, or has life in Australia changed their options? Like many of us, Ingleton has travelled in taxis and talked with a wide range of Indian-born drivers who share stories of being pressured by parents who are busy trying to line them up with a suitable partner from India. Some are so grateful to their parents they are willing to leave the whole business of finding a partner up to them. One security guard even confessed he would not see his bride until they were engaged. So in modern day Australia why do parents still hold so much sway? Was arranged marriage still common? Or were young Indians now so assimilated that they were finding love their own way?

When SBS initiated a call for one-off ideas for a new strand 'Untold Australia' Ingleton thought this idea that had been bubbling away was worth exploring. *"Could we follow the stories of two or three young Indian Aussies searching for love and balancing the pressures of parents, traditional culture and their own needs?"*

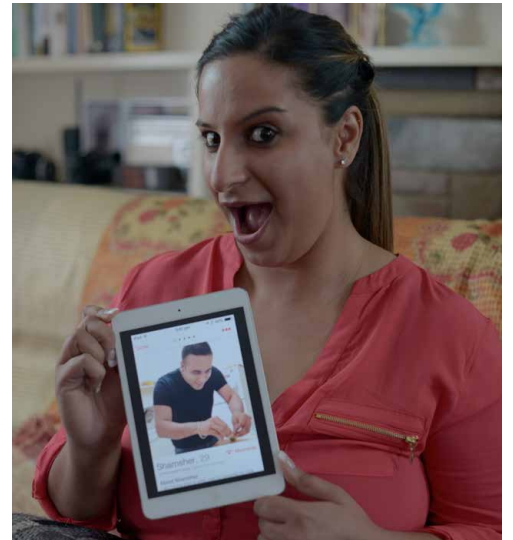
Ingleton began working with writer/director **Sean Cousins** to research the subject.

Cousins explained the exhaustive casting process he and Ingleton undertook to find potential participants. At the last census there were 295,362 Indian-born people living in Australia. Many lived in Melbourne so Sean didn't expect much problem finding eager participants. However he was surprised to find that, despite a wide search in social and community media and visiting 'Little India' in Dandenong it was difficult finding people willing to be filmed.

In the end the main subjects were found through word of mouth.

When Cousins first met Dalvinder and her family in their suburban Melbourne home, he knew straight away that she was right for the film. She was 29 and determined to marry by 30, but she was no shrinking violet. Dalvinder's personality lit up the screen and her parents had a sense of fun that would bring the story alive.

Other characters took longer to find. Cousins filmed a number of people whose circumstances changed during the production period and for a variety of reasons they pulled out of the film. It became apparent that the Indian community is quite private and the keeping up of appearances and community standards is important. Some young women were keen to be involved but then their parents intervened, "don't expose your flaws". Others were not that keen on having a film crew along on their first dates.



However Dalvinder and her family committed to the project and with the help of some development funding from Screen Australia casting continued and SBS commissioned the documentary. Ingleton notes that one of the hardest things in making documentaries is that obdoc stories continue to evolve while you're waiting for funding and *"your biggest fear is that you'll miss key events."*

The team followed Dalvinder's dating adventures and in the meantime found their other main character. Unlike Dalvinder, Tarun, didn't grow up in Australia but arrived as a young man to study and work. By following both these subjects for 12-18 months the filmmakers were able to capture unique access to the lives of young Indian-Australians. Both Dalvinder and Tarun have a strong sense of responsibility to their Sikh and Hindu communities and a willingness to share their story.

Once the two participants were confirmed it was just a matter of following their stories to see what happened. The fact that both wanted to be married by 30 gave the story an urgency and a time frame. But it also put the characters under considerable pressure, which filming only added to. Cousins worked hard to get to know the main characters and support them on this emotional, and at times extremely stressful, journey.

As well as filming in Melbourne, Cousins twice took a minimal crew to India. First to capture Dalvinder's story in Ludhiana, Punjab, and second to film Tarun's story in Shillong, a beautiful remote hill station town in Northeast India. Filming in India had its challenges, including a film-obsessed population who wander into shot to ask what you're doing, but Cousins loved the hands-on work, taking on not only the role of director but also that of sound recordist. His work was made easier by having long-term collaborators DOP Peter Zakharov on the first shoot and Rocco Fasano on the second. Both are very experienced and their instinct for story facilitated working quickly, and for long hours.

India might have been hard work, but Cousins says that for both Dalvinder and Tarun it was a time of confrontation and massive change. For Dalvinder in particular, this was an intense time of self-discovery as she was faced with the realisation that while she often felt like an outsider in Australia, she was even more of an outsider in India. Tarun, too, was under pressure of a different kind as he struggled to please his family and consider a life-changing offer from his father. We see Tarun make big decisions but it's not until the end of the film that viewers will know which way he decides to go.

Cousins admits that his job as director on a film like this is to build trust and confidence with his characters so he can create *'an intimate portrait of their lives and their families'*. This required extensive and ongoing conversations about family sensitivities, religious issues and what was culturally appropriate to film within the Sikh and Hindu communities.

Ingleton's hope for the film is that it provides *"an understanding of young Indians living in Australia"* including issues such as the complexity of pressure from parents, cultural identity and in some cases the surprising discovery that they want to marry another Indian. Ingleton was amazed at how quick the tech savvy Indians were to explore social media and their confidence in dating people they met on sites such as Tinder.

For Cousins, the greatest satisfaction came from witnessing the passion and emotion of an Indian wedding, with its mixture of joy, elation, grief and sorrow. The film crew were there to capture the poignance of the moment as one journey ends and another begins – along with all the energy and colour on show.

The film explores the tension between traditional and modern approaches to finding love, with both characters determined at the start to find a partner their own way. Dalvinder fights her Sikh father's determination that she marries a turbaned, bearded, Sikh, while Tarun uses modern dating services to attempt to find a bride on his own. Each faces challenges to their own assumptions about who they will marry and how they will find their partner. Horoscopes and matchmakers are consulted. Social media is explored, and when all seems lost parents are asked for help. And all the time the clock is ticking.

So will tradition and arranged marriage, or social-media dating sites provide Dalvinder and Tarun with their husband and wife?

Tune in to **INDIAN WEDDING RACE** to find out.

QUOTES FROM THE FILM

Dalvinder says:

In the Indian community, when you reach your late 20s, everyone's sort of like 'Oh, when are you getting married? When's your daughter getting married? When's your sister getting married?' you know, ... it's like chicken going off.

Most Indian kids will tell you this, parents just can't contain themselves. Like they just want to play cupid. I just don't want to get caught up in something. Like I want to be really, really sure.

I grew up in Australia and people will ask me 'where are you from' and I'll say 'I'm from Australia' and they'll be like, 'No, like, your background, like where are you from?' So I'm like, 'I'm Indian', and then I come to India and everybody asks me the exact same thing like, 'where are you from?' And I think that's the most hurtful for me is that I kind of don't belong there, but then I don't belong here.

Tarun Says:

I have to get married. If I do not get married by 30, I will be considered as damaged goods.

About what he is looking for in a partner.

She has to be honest. She has to be beautiful. She has to be progressive and she has to love me back!

I work in a bank, I make an average salary here. You want to live like a millionaire Pooja, stay in India, trust me. I would never be able to give you a millionaire's lifestyle in Australia. We have to work.

Dalvinder's Father says:

If Dalvinder walks in through the door with somebody other than a Sikh as her prospective partner, I'll be very, very upset. She may claim, we are very flexible and y'know modern parents and all that, but deep down, she knows.

PUBLICITY ANGLES

1. Interview Producer Sally Ingleton and Director Sean Cousins.
2. Interview Tarun Bajaj about his journey to find a wife and where he's at now.
3. Interview Dalvinder Gil and her father.
4. Story about Indo Times a local newspaper for the Indian community which has matrimonial ads.
5. Story about the popularity of online dating sites for young Indian Australians.
6. Story on Indian weddings in Australia. Who organises them, where are they held? Traditional vs modern rituals.
7. Profile piece on Melbourne's young Indian community and their choices when it comes to finding love and marriage.
8. Story on Radio Haanji- Punjabi radio station in Melbourne.
9. Soon after filming was completed Tarun's Dad found his son a wife. Tarun and Manisha will marry in India, April 2016.

WEB LINKS

www.shaadi.com - Indian dating website.

www.indotimes.com.au - First Punjabi newspaper in Australia. Has matrimonial ads.

www.haanji.com.au - Radio Haanji. Hindi-Punjabi community Radio Station Melbourne 1674AM.

REFERENCE STORIES

1. Inside India's Big-Fat-38-Billion Wedding Market

<http://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/global-currents/inside-indias-big-fat-38-billion-wedding-market-part-1-rohit-bal-sabyasachi-mukherjee-alex-kuruvilla-vijay-singh-india-bridal-fashion-week>

2. What Does It Take to Plan An Indian Wedding?

<http://apracticalwedding.com/2015/03/indian-wedding-600-guests-big-wedding/>

3. Love (and money) conquer caste

<http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21663246-more-and-more-young-indians-are-choosing-their-own-spouses-love-and-money-conquer-caste>



Producer Sally Ingleton and Director Sean Cousins filming at Holi Festival

PRODUCTION TEAM

Producer - Sally Ingleton

SALLY is one of Australia's most successful documentary producers. In recent years her name has been synonymous with wildlife and science programs such as THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN FLY (ABC, 2014) Nominee Eureka Prize for Science Journalism, ACID OCEAN (2013 1x50 -WGBH-Nova, ZDF, Arte France, SVT, SBS) which looks at ocean acidification; DEVIL ISLAND (2013 6x30 - ABC1, ITV, FRANCE TV) about the establishment of a wild insurance population for Tasmanian Devils and the award winning ABC series PENGUIN ISLAND which achieved great ratings success on BBC1 and won a Gold Panda in China 2011. However Sally also has an impressive track record making character based social documentaries. Titles like AUSTRALIA'S GREAT FLOOD (National Geographic TV, winner ASTRA award Best Documentary); 2 MUMS AND A DAD (SBS, Winner ATOM Award and Dendy Award Best Documentary Sydney Film Festival), WELCOME 2 MY DEAF WORLD (SBS and AFI Award Best Documentary), JOHN GOLLINGS: EYE FOR ARCHITECTURE (SBS/AVRO which has sold to 20 countries) and MAO'S NEW SUIT (SBS, Channel 4, Discovery, nominee Best Documentary Dendy Award) all reveal warmth, humour and insight in the telling of personal stories.

Other recent credits include: POSSUM WARS (ABC1, Arte France, SVT) and KANGAROO MOB (ABC1, WNET Nature, RTBF, SVT) which look at the mischievous wildlife invading Australian cities; adventure science nature SEED HUNTER (ABC/Arte France/SVT/RTE) which picked up a Gold Panda at the Sichuan TV Festival (Grand Prize Nature) and awards in Japan at both the Earth Vision and Japanese Wildlife Film Festivals 2009; Best Conservation and Environment South Africa WILD TALK 2009; plus Nominee Rockie Award Banff TV Festival 2009.

Director - Sean Cousins

SEAN COUSINS has worked in factual TV and documentary production for 20 years in a wide variety of roles. He has been a series producer, post producer, director, writer and development producer for production companies such as Matchbox Pictures, Renegade, December Media, Lonely Planet TV, Circe Films, Cornerbox and WTFN. During that time he has produced high quality and award winning content for broadcasters such as the ABC, SBS, National Geographic, Animal Planet, Fox 8, Network Ten and others. Sean's recent credits include series producing the ASTRA award winning TONY ROBINSON TIME WALKS and TONY ROBINSON DOWN UNDER for the History Channel.

Narrator - Leah Vandenberg

Leah Vandenberg is an Australian actress, who is best known for her role as Anne Cassidy in the comedy series STUPID STUPID MAN. She has appeared in many Australian television series and movies including CATCHING MILAT, EAST OF EVERYTHING and MDA. She has been a regular presenter on the ABC children's series PLAY SCHOOL for 10 years. Vandenberg was born in New Zealand to a Sri Lankan father, who had grown up in Fiji, and a white mother. She graduated from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.



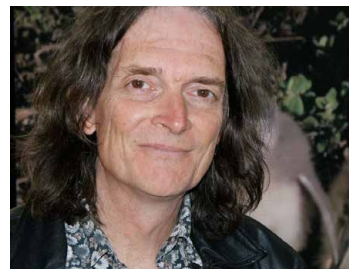
Director of Photography - Peter Zakharov

PETER ZAKHAROV began working as a news cameraman at Channel Seven Melbourne in 1976. Since becoming a freelance cinematographer in 1983, Peter has been involved in innumerable productions, both documentary and narrative. In 1987 Peter shared a Gold Award for Cinematography from the Australian Cinematographer's Society for his work on the feature film IN TOO DEEP directed by John Tatoulis. In 2012 he was nominated for best cinematography in a documentary at the AACTA awards for DR SARMAST'S MUSIC SCHOOL, a feature documentary set in Kabul, Afghanistan. Other productions include the documentary series SIX DEGREES OF SEPARATION for Lonely Planet Television, and TONY ROBINSON'S TOUR OF DUTY for The History Channel, Australia.



Editor - Tony Stevens

TONY STEVENS is one of Australia's most sought-after editors with more than 30 years experience cutting music clips, short films, TV drama, documentary and features. His documentary credits include THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN FLY, REMEMBERING THE MAN, DEVIL ISLAND, THEN THE WIND CHANGED, DR SARMAST'S MUSIC SCHOOL, KANGAROO MOB, PENGUIN ISLAND, SEED HUNTER, EYE FOR ARCHITECTURE, HUNT ANGELS, TIBET: MURDER IN THE SNOW and many more.



Composer - Dale Cornelius

DALE CORNELIUS has been described as highly inventive, a truly unique artist, and having an ability to evoke an immediate emotional connection with an audience through music. Cornelius' musical diversity and distinct scores have made him one of Australia's premiere film and television composers. Dale has received nominations and awards for his work in television and feature film here and overseas. Amongst which; winning the AACTA for Best Sound/Music in a Documentary in 2013 for Dr. SARMAST'S MUSIC SCHOOL and Best Television Theme Award at the Australian Screen Music Awards 2013 for THE DR BLAKE MYSTERIES.



He has composed music for TV series, telemovies & documentaries screened on the BBC, ABC, SBS; Networks 7, 9 & 10; Discovery, History, and National Geographic channels (amongst many others), composed feature film scores such as; BLINKY BILL The Movie, BACKTRACK, and MARY&MAX, and has been commissioned twice as the composer for Australia's pavilion at two World Expo's.