

EARTH

A Film by Deepa Mehta

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The story of EARTH is true.

Its effects are still reverberating throughout India and Pakistan today.

Background of the partition

The Division of India in 1947 into two countries: Pakistan and India

On August 15th, 1947, India gained Independence from Britain. Gandhi's 'Quit India' movement and his relentless struggle for 'Home-rule' by all Indian communities had finally become a reality. However, India's Independence would come at a dreadful cost. Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs, India's largest religious majorities, who, under Gandhi's non-violent pieces of India for themselves, a Muslim Pakistan and a largely Hindu-Sikh India. The idea of a separate Muslim state, a Pakistan, gained favour despite opposition from Gandhi. As the Division of India became imminent, the euphoria over Independence turned into despair. Violence erupted between Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs in an atmosphere of unease about the future. What followed was a catastrophe brought about by politicians who failed to grasp the implications of dividing a country along religious lines. The British, before leaving India, determined the new boundaries between Independent India and the would-be Pakistan. Viceroy Mountbatten announced the new borders on the 13th of August, 1947, just two days before India would become Independent. This announcement escalated the brewing violence into a bloodbath. It is estimated that over one million people were killed in sectarian violence as six million Muslims moved towards Pakistan and five million Hindus and Sikhs moved towards India.

The province of Punjab, with its mixed religious populations, saw the worst of the migration and its beautiful city of Lahore, became a focal point for the carnage. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, who had lived together as one entity for centuries, became the bitterest of enemies, causing wounds that, fifty years later, have still not healed, and have today, brought the two countries to the brink of nuclear war.

The story of EARTH

Lenny, is an eight-year-old Parsee girl who is growing up rich in pre-partition Lahore in 1947, enjoying the warm, enveloping life that loving parents and a filial household staff of four brings. Lenny travels daily to the nearby Queens Gardens with her beautiful Ayah (nanny), Shanta, a young Hindu woman with the kind of curves and smile that ensures a constant supply of eager male suitors.

These men are a mixed bunch: Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, and similarly the staff-members serving Lenny and her well-heeled family are a happy collection of the religious groups represented in India.

It is an entirely pleasing world peopled by her beloved Ayah, Imam Din, the genial cook, by Dil Navaz, the Ice Candy Man, a rogue, who is Lenny's hero, by Hasan, the Masseur, who invents oils made from pearl dust and fish eggs, and also by her precocious Cousin Adi.

When the film opens, the British are finally preparing to quit their empire in India and the searing process of splitting British India into Independent India and Pakistan is about to begin.

For Lenny the trouble first appears in her Lahore home when a quarrel erupts between Mr. Singh, a Sikh neighbour and Mr. Rogers, a British Inspector General of Police, who have come to dine with her parents.

Bitter words metamorphose into slogan shouting mobs and arson. Angry Hindus storm through Lahore one day, and angry Muslims the next. Still, it is all far enough away from Lenny's uneasy but untouched home where her mother, Bunty, teaches her to waltz and Ayah's crew of admirers continue to meet in the park as before.

Then the serious killing begins. Hindus and Sikhs attack Muslims; Muslims attack Hindus and Sikhs.

The savagery is thrust into Lenny's idyllic world. Lenny is with Ayah and a group of Ayah's admirers outside the servant's quarters of her home when troubling reports of violence around Gurdaspur in India begin coming over the radio. Whilst the group, gripped with fear, listens to the radio, Ice Candy Man waits for his sisters at the Lahore Railway Station. The train from Gurdaspur finally arrives with all the Muslim men and children killed and four gunny sacks filled with women's breasts. That massacre sets into motion events that turn Lenny's world upside down. From the rooftop of Ice Candy Man's tenement, Ayah and Lenny see Sikhs slaughtering Muslims, Hindus butchering Muslims and Muslims burning Hindus alive.

The once charming Ice Candy Man turns into a near madman, one of the many roaming the streets of Lahore with vengeance and murder on their minds. The Muslim Masseur, the only voice of reason amongst Ayah's admirers, implores the group of friends to "stand by each other". A love affair between him and Ayah blossoms amidst the carnage and Lenny is privy to this fragile relationship between a Muslim and a Hindu.

Lenny's family is spared the slaughter because the neutral Parsees are not part of the politics and the bloodletting. But a Muslim mob arrives one day at their front gate. The family will not be touched, but the mob wants all the Hindu servants and that includes Ayah.

The destruction of innocence by desire and greed wearing the garb of religion and nationalism was the price of this sectarian war.

How the film EARTH came about

The following is in Deepa Mehta's own words:

The title CRACKING INDIA written in fine black print down the spine of a paperback, could very well have been emblazoned in neon. My attraction to it was immediate. This might be attributed to the fact that I'm an Indian, and have the pathological need to buy any book that even remotely hints of 'Indian content'.

The synopsis of CRACKING INDIA described it as a "semi-autobiography of novelist, Bapsi Sidhwa, set during the holocaust that followed Partition in 1947". I was hooked. The tumultuous period surrounding the British division of India into two separate countries, Independent India and a newly created Pakistan, had always held a sort of dark fascination for me.

India, after years of struggle, finally gained its Independence from the British Empire in August of 1947. However, for most Indians, that 'Independence' is synonymous with its 'Division' or 'Partition', as it is known in the sub-continent. The announcement made by Viceroy Mountbatten, declaring the boundaries which would divide India into two, began a sectarian strife that would wreak havoc for the next fifty years.

My father and his family were some of the eleven million people that were uprooted from their homes during Partition. I grew up hearing stories about this particular holocaust, the carnage, the rapes and the mindless acts of violence that people who had lived together in relative harmony for centuries, committed against each other - all in the name of religion and nationalism.

Bapsi's CRACKING INDIA was a highly personal account of the Partition as seen through the eyes of an eight-year-old girl living in Lahore during that crucial time. What made it totally fascinating for me, was that Lenny, the protagonist, belonged to the minority sect of 'Parsees', a religious group that had remained neutral and non-aligned, while the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs single-mindedly massacred each other.

Lenny's was an entirely unique perspective. It came from within an impartial community, but was also the point of view of a child, who learned about love, war, destruction and betrayal within a span of a few months.

I wanted desperately to make CRACKING INDIA into a film, a particular film, EARTH, which would be the second in my trilogy of the elements of Fire, Earth and Water.

Tracing Bapsi was no easy task but persevere we did and soon I was talking to Bapsi on the phone, hoping that the film rights to her book were still available. Two months later, thanks to David Hamilton's unwavering belief in the project, we owned the rights, had development funds, and I was sitting at my kitchen table, writing the screenplay of EARTH.

David and Anne Masson and I had worked together on FIRE and we re-assembled the team to begin the detailed planning of the production.

During this phase Bapsi became a friend and was exceedingly generous with information and old photographs. She would talk with me for hours about what it was like growing up in Lahore during those times. Lenny, after all, was based on Bapsi. In fact, Lenny was Bapsi.

The irony of our situation hasn't escaped Bapsi or myself. Bapsi is from Pakistan and now a US citizen. I'm from India and now living in Canada. If neither of us had moved from our respective homelands, the film just wouldn't have been

possible. Pakistan and India, since the Partition of 1947, are sworn enemies. Not only have they fought three major wars against each other, but also, as I write this, both countries talk blithely about their nuclear capabilities and continue their militant aggression against each other across the still-disputed Kashmir border.

The film had become an obsession for all of us, regardless of our own religious leanings. Not only did it seem imperative to show what the Partition did to innocent people, but somehow, in doing so, we hoped to understand why war is waged and why friends turn enemies, and why battles are invariably fought on women's bodies.

About the production:

Bapsi Sidhwa's novel CRACKING INDIA is written in English, and although I wrote the screenplay in English as well, I decided to make the film in Hindi: titled EARTH. Most of the characters in EARTH are working class people and the thought of them speaking English in 1947 felt ludicrous, though some relevant scenes remain in English. Nasreen Rahman in London who originally introduced me to Bapsi, also did an incredible job of translating the screenplay.

July '97: I finished the script in June after which, David Hamilton, the backbone of the production since its inception, flew to London and New Delhi with me to start putting the production together. We started gathering some of the members of the former FIRE team, added an Indian costume designer and Bombay casting agent. Meanwhile, the tenacious Anne Masson, the third member of our small team began assembling other Production elements.

September '97: As the novel is set in Lahore, Pakistan, we had hoped to film EARTH there, so Aradhana Seth, the Production Designer and I flew to Lahore for a 'recce'. What a beautiful city, with pockets which remain untouched by billboards selling American cars. Unfortunately, after months of going from one Pakistan Government Ministry to the other and receiving polite encouragement but no concrete answers, we gave up and decided to shoot in New Delhi, India. The cities are very similar, especially the older inner city and the British colonial bungalows. Aradhana Seth spent days in the Lahore museum researching pre-partition Lahore and making drawings of Queen Victoria's bronze statue which we would recreate in Delhi. Armed with props and authentic Lahore kites, we left Lahore for Delhi.

October '97: After numerous trips to India and interminable discussions and e-mails we found an Indian partner, Jhamu Sughand, to become an executive producer with David. His company has produced and distributed many popular and critically acclaimed Indian films and this was his first foray into a foreign-based co-production. David would continue to be the hands-on executive producer for the film while Jhamu would handle the Indian financing and distribution. Anne Masson and myself were to be the producers. However we

needed an Indian counterpart and one month later we persuaded Dilip Mehta to come on board in India as creative producer.

January '98: Two months later, after a four week prep and many, many days spent at the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting obtaining permissions, script approvals, archeological location permissions etc, we commenced the shoot. (Not before a Hindu priest had broken a coconut, garlanded the camera, and blessed the cast and crew.)

Giles Nuttgens, the DOP and I had worked together many times. I think he's brilliant. We talk in short hand now. Most of the crew (from Canada, India, UK and France) had worked on FIRE and were already familiar with each other's cinematic styles and personal vulnerabilities.

Does any shoot go smoothly? I don't think so. Ours was no exception. Locations were the bane of our existence; locations that for some reason or other seemed invariably to be yanked out from under us. We all developed a keen sense of precognition and began to build in options and alternatives into our planning so as to avoid losing any time from unwanted surprises. We also started talking surreptitiously about karma, kismet etc. and invariably the options we most preferred came to fruition.

To recreate a period piece in present Delhi was a heroic task. To dress TV antennas itself became a mammoth task, let alone the hundreds of roof-top water tanks. Gardens had to be designed and built and extensive brickwork laid to create the look of 1947 Lahore.

Dolly Ahluwalia added her very significant talents by researching the dress of that period and designing costumes not only for the major characters but also for thousands of extras who represented the religious factions and their unique apparel. Under her guidance a warehouse of tailors worked day and night to create an accurate depiction of these fashions.

Then there was the brilliant Aamir Khan who plays the pivotal role in the film as Ice Candy Man. Aamir is a star - and a big - one in India. His fan-following resulted in us getting security guards that could defend abastion.

Nandita Das was as luminous as ever. We had worked together on FIRE and it was marvellous to see how she adapted to play Ayah, Lenny's beautiful nanny. Maia Sethna played Lenny. It was her first acting experience ever and she was incredible!

Rahul Khanna played the Masseur. It was his first film also and he made a perfect Masseur, strong yet vulnerable. And Rahul had his own fan following! He's a very popular MTV Veejay and teenage girls and their flash cameras would drive Giles mad.

Dylan Gray, our 1st AD, spoke no Hindi but was soon fluent in the important words; 'quiet', 'thank you' and 'Aamir Khan not here!'

We had a huge riot scene complete with explosions, buildings burning and 1500 extras on location. We nearly set off a riot ourselves with 10,000 spectators hoping for a glimpse of their idols, an experience one cannot soon forget. The extras were playing a scene which pitted Muslims against Hindus and Sikhs and the crowd of onlookers were comprised of all three religious groups. Fantasy suddenly turned into reality when the public crowd began jostling each other. A man was stabbed and the police had to hide the crew and cast, along with Yogina, an observer from our German distributor, in a nearby building until they could break up the angry mob.

We were all somewhat shaken but once things quieted down we started shooting again. Fortunately no one was seriously hurt and we finished the scene that night having had a real experience of the very feelings which were the subject matter of the film.

March '98: Back to Canada for editing and post production at deLuxe. Barry Farrell edited the film. His passion for perfection never ceases to astound me. He never compromises and will continue to search for even the tiniest improvement long after other mortals would have died of exhaustion.

The first cut of EARTH was finished by June and then began the endless trips between Toronto and Madras, where A.R. Rahman, the music composer lives, 5000 miles away. He is the most brilliant film composer in India today and is in such demand that he has altered his normal working day to begin at six in the evening and go through the night, so that he can compose undisturbed by producers' calls. A.R. is a very young man of prodigious talent with an immense sensitivity to the film's context and characters.

There was no question as to who would write the lyrics to the songs. Javed Akhtar is India's pre-eminent poet. He's an extremely sensitive man whose understanding of film is phenomenal. He read the script, we talked about the characters and background of each scene and he proceeded to write some of the most beautiful poetry I have ever heard. The internal voices of every character and context are reflected in his verse, but are especially found in the song '1947', a lament on the calamitous personal tragedies which accompanied 'The Division.'

September'98: I am very pleased that EARTH had its World Premiere as a Special Presentation at the Toronto International Film Festival.

Production team

DEEPA MEHTA

Director, Producer and Screenwriter

DEEPA MEHTA was born in India and received a degree in philosophy from the University of New Delhi. She began her cinematic career writing scripts for children's films.

In 1990, Mehta produced and directed her first feature film SAM & ME, the poignant story of an unlikely friendship between two men, both outcasts of sorts, who form a deep and permanent bond despite the fact that neither is welcome in the other's world. SAM & ME won the very first Honorable Mention by the Critics in the prestigious Camera d'Or category at the 1991 Cannes Film Festival.

In 1992, she directed a one hour episode of the YOUNG INDIANA JONES CHRONICLES produced by George Lucas for ABC television. "Benares" was filmed on location in Benares, India.

In 1993, Mehta directed her second feature film CAMILLA, a Canadian/UK co-production starring (the late) Jessica Tandy and Bridget Fonda. Other cast members included Elias Koteas, Maury Chaykin, Graham Greene and Hume Cronyn. It was shot on location in Toronto, Ontario and Savannah, Georgia. CAMILLA had a world-wide release early in 1995.

Mehta directed the final episode of George Lucas' the YOUNG INDIANA JONES CHRONICLES in 1994. "Travels with Father", was shot on location in Prague, the Czech Republic and Greece.

FIRE, Mehta's third feature film, has won 14 international awards to date. Based on an original screenplay, it was written, directed and produced by Mehta.

FIRE opened the Perspectives Canada program at the 1996 Toronto International Film Festival, where it tied with FLY AWAY HOME for the Air Canada Peoples Choice Award. It was one of twenty-nine films selected from over 1400 entries, world-wide, for the prestigious New York Film Festival and at the Vancouver International Film Festival, FIRE won the Federal Express Award for Best Canadian Film as chosen by the audience. At the Chicago International Film Festival, it won two Silver Hugo Awards for Best Direction and Best Actress. In Mannheim FIRE won the Jury Award and in Paris, it was voted Favourite Foreign Film.

Most recently, it won the International Jury Prize for Best Film at the Verona International Film Festival in Italy, October 1997. FIRE has currently been sold to 33 countries world-wide. The theatrical release in North America commenced Autumn 1997, and met with a tremendous response. The film is currently being released theatrically across Europe, Australia and India.

EARTH, based on Bapsi Sidhwa's critically acclaimed novel, CRACKING INDIA, is the second film in Mehta's trilogy of the elements, Fire, Earth and Water.

DAVID HAMILTON

Executive Producer

David Hamilton completed his undergraduate studies at McGill and went on to Harvard for a masters degree. Upon receiving a Harvard Sheldon Fellowship, he

then travelled for one year through the Middle East to India. This began his continuing love of this great sub-continent.

His ventures have taken him to every corner of the globe and span a variety of enterprises, including communications, publishing and entertainment.

Hamilton has been an active member of the Board of Directors of the Ottawa Symphony Orchestra, School of Dance and the Ottawa International Writers Festival. He has been involved in the development financing of a number of films, but first stepped into a hands-on role as Executive Producer of Deepa Mehta's FIRE.

Again with Mehta he assembled and managed the production team as Executive Producer of EARTH.

JHAMU SUGHAND

Executive Producer

A leading film producer and distributor, Jhamu Sughand has been an integral part of the professional evolution of the film business in India. His ability to spot a commercial success among the scores of films released in India is incomparable.

Sughand started his professional career in his home town of Deolali, by joining the family cloth trading business. Always an ardent film buff, however, he moved to Mumbai, to follow his true calling in 1979, where he started GLAMOUR, a printing company specialising in film merchandising.

In 1988, after ten years of careful observation of the mechanics of the film industry, Sughand entered film distribution. Over the next six years, under the aegis of a his company, FRIENDS INDIA, he distributed well over 100 films in the various Indian territories.

His first film as producer, BOMBAY, was controversial since it took an objective view of the riots between Muslims and Hindus in Bombay in the aftermath of the demolition of the Babri Mosque by Hindu nationalists. It was an unexpected box office and critical success. He has since worked with many of the most interesting directors in India.

Having acted as Indian distributor for Deepa Mehta's FIRE, itself controversial in India, Sughand was asked to join the production team of EARTH as an executive producer.

ANNE MASSON

Producer

Armed with a commerce degree from the University of Guelph, Masson began her career in marketing for the oil industry. In 1990, after returning to Canada from a two year term in France, she decided to pursue a career in film production. She began by casting extras. From there, her production experience broadened to include work as an Assistant Director, a Producer's Assistant and a Director's Assistant.

Masson met Deepa Mehta in 1992 and has worked closely with Mehta and her projects since, including the feature film CAMILLA, and two episodes of Lucas' YOUNG INDIANA JONES CHRONICLES.

In 1996, as Line Producer of FIRE, Masson supervised Mehta's film shooting on location in New Delhi, India, and as Vice President of Trial by Fire Films, she managed the operations of the production company.

Producing Mehta's epic EARTH, again in collaboration with Mehta and Executive Producer, David Hamilton, was a natural progression for Masson after FIRE.

DILIP MEHTA

Creative Producer

A founding member of Contact Press Images, Mehta began his career in 1971 as a graphic designer before turning to photography and documentary filmmaking. He has covered diverse subjects such as the Bhopal tragedy and political developments in India, Pakistan the US and Afghanistan.

Mehta's pictorial essays have been published in Time, Newsweek, National Geographic, GEO, Bunte, The New York Times, Paris Match, Figaro, The London Sunday Times and other major publications around the world. He has won two World Press Photo Gold Awards and the Overseas Press Club Award.

Mehta joined the EARTH team as a creative producer on the film.

GILES NUTTGENS

Cinematographer

GILES NUTTGENS left home at the tender age of seventeen to work in the theatre politicale, doing those jobs that no one else wanted to do. Years later, after ducking one-too-many empty whiskey bottles on Scottish football fields as a sports cameraman, Giles commenced his journey through the film system, serving six years as a focus puller on several award winning British television productions.

At the age of twenty-six, he was a cameraman on a full-length documentary which shot in the Amazon jungle for two months. Giles shot his first feature film ELECTRIC MOON, a Film Four project, three years later in India.

Amongst other projects, Giles spent four years shooting around the world for George Lucas' internationally renowned YOUNG INDIANA JONES CHRONICLES. It was on this series that Giles met and first worked with director Deepa Mehta. They shot two episodes together, one on location in Benares, India, the other on location in Greece and the Czech Republic.

Mehta's FIRE was his third collaboration with the director. Fresh from shooting Lucas' STAR WARS PREQUEL Giles went on to EARTH and his fourth collaboration with Deepa Mehta.

ARADHANA SETH

Production Designer

ARADHANA SETH completed her Masters from the Mass Communications Research Centre at the Jamia Millia Islamia University, New Delhi, which was closely associated with a similar program from Toronto's York University.

Her credits include 12 documentary films (made for television broadcast in India, the UK and the US) and a combination of audio-visuals, live news coverage, advertising films, radio features and photographs.

Upon graduation in 1987, Seth commenced her career in film as an Assistant Director on the feature, IN WHICH ANNIE GIVES IT THOSE ONES. It was in 1992, while working on George Lucas' renowned YOUNG INDIANA JONES CHRONICLES shot in Benares, India, that she met director, Deepa Mehta. Aradhana welcomed the opportunity to design FIRE, shot on location in New Delhi, India in early 1996.

After FIRE, Seth was engaged as the Art Director (India) for Gary Sinyor's period film STIFF UPPER LIPS, during its location shooting in India. EARTH, a period epic, represents an exciting challenge for Seth.

BARRY FARRELL

Editor

BARRY FARRELL began his career as a dialogue editor and later became a picture editor, working for clients such as Pepsi Cola, Molson Breweries and the critically acclaimed Leon's Furniture campaigns.

Farrell has received numerous international awards for his work editing commercials and music videos. In 1991 he edited the Russian epic Thunderstorm Over Russia.

In 1994, he edited CAMILLA for Deepa Mehta and in 1996, he was the Supervising Editor for Mehta's award-winning feature, FIRE.

BAPSI SIDHWA

Author of 'Cracking India'¹

BAPSI SIDHWA was born in Karachi, Pakistan.

An active social worker among Asian women, she represented Pakistan at the Asian Women's Congress in 1975. Sidhwa is the author of THE BRIDE, THE CROW EATERS, CRACKING INDIA and AMERICAN BRAT. CRACKING INDIA won the 1991 Liberator Prize in Germany. In 1991, Sidhwa received the Sitara-I-Imtiaz, the highest honour in the arts that Pakistan bestows on a citizen.

Married and with three children, she resides in the United States and travels frequently to Pakistan.

AR RAHMAN

Composer

AR RAHMAN is a living legend in India. He is the most important music composer in a country that produces 1500 musical films each year.

Influenced greatly by his father, a musical genius in his own right, Rahman started his career by composing jingles for advertisement films in Madras, South India.

Mani Ratnam's ROJA, a mega blockbuster, was his first feature film and Rahman has not looked back since. He is very particular about the kind of films he composes for and FIRE was his first international soundtrack. A devout Muslim, Rahman feels that his music is an inspiration from God.

JAVED AKHTAR

Lyricist

JAVED AKHTAR is one of India's preeminent lyricists. His songs have created some of the biggest hit films in Bollywood.

One of his first major films was SILSILA, released in 1983, directed by Yash Chopra, starring Rekha and Amitav Bachan. More recently, his songs have made hits of AUR PYAR HO GAYA, directed by Rahul Rawal, starring Bobby Deol and Aishwariya Rai; VIRASAT, directed by Priya Darshan, starring Anil Kapoor and Tabu and SAPNE, directed by Rajiv Menon, starring Kajol, with music written by AR Rahman. EARTH provides Javed with another opportunity to pair up with AR Rahman, to create beautiful and haunting music for Mehta's epic film.

Cast

AAMIR KHAN

Ice Candy Man

AAMIR KHAN started his career with the blockbuster love story QAYAMAT SE QAYAMAT TAK (1988) which established him as one of the most prominent stars of Indian cinema today.

Khan proved his versatility in his following roles which included a serious, intense lead in a small offbeat film RAAKH (1989), a rebel in DIL (1990), the remake of Frank Capra's IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT, DIL HAI KE MAANTA NAHIN(1991), a conman in the comedy ANDAZ APNA APNA (1994), a husband going through a divorce in AKELE HUM AKELE TUM (1996), and his most celebrated role as a small town taxi driver in RAJA HINDUSTANI (1996).

Khan's popularity has sustained throughout his career, making him a rare star with both mass appeal and overwhelming critical acclaim. He has the singular distinction of having a major hit each year of the ten years of his career. He is recognized for his selectiveness in the projects he chooses and for his professionalism.

The controversial subject of Partition seen through the eyes of a child protagonist in EARTH attracted Khan to the film, who found the script to deal with universal human issues despite its specific setting. Khan's role as Ice Candy Man in EARTH, a departure from his previous roles, appealed to him because of the various complex layers of the character which are shed as the story unfolds.

A perfectionist in his work, Khan believes his role as Ice Candy Man will expose another facet to what is clearly an impressive talent showcased in an immensely successful career.

NANDITA DAS

Ayah

For a young actress, NANDITA DAS has an extensive list of credits. A native of New Delhi, India, she has been involved in street theatre, dance, puppetry, television series and film.

Das has worked with well-known theatre personalities Habib Tanveer, Barry John and Dadi Padumjee. She has also acted in television series for acclaimed directors Amal Allana and AK Bir, and is well-known for her work in Muzaffer Ali's popular television series Husne Jaana.

Das' previous film credits include PARINATI and EK THI GOONJA, both of which were screened at the International Film Festival of India. Das completed her masters in social work and continues to work with women and children in the field of education and theatre.

EARTH unites Das with director Deepa Mehta after their successful collaboration in FIRE.

RAHUL KHANNA

Masseur

Son of Indian matinee idol Vinod Khanna and 1960s model Gitanjali Taleyarkhan, and brother of successful actor Akshay Khanna, RAHUL KHANNA was born into a successful artistic family. By the age of seventeen, Khanna was modelling and performing across India.

While at St. Xavier's College in Bombay, Khanna left India to study acting at the prestigious Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute, and studied film and video at the School of Visual Arts in New York. Khanna was the first VJ for MTV Asia and has been on air since September 1994. His immense popularity across Asia was established by continuously tremendous press and reviews.

Khanna was attracted to the script of EARTH because of his enormous respect for the previous work of director Deepa Mehta. Khanna is making his debut in film with his role as Masseur in EARTH.

MAIA SETHNA

Lenny

Born in 1998, the young Maia Sethna, whose name translated from the Avasta means Gentle One, makes her debut feature appearance in EARTH. She is currently studying at Cathedral School, Bombay where she lives with her father. Her mother, Farida, was a well-known theatre actress and dance choreographer. Maia wishes to dance, learn a musical instrument and, having enjoyed and learned from her experience on EARTH, to continue acting.

KITU GIDWANI

Bunty Sethna

A popular, talented and diverse star in India, KITU GIDWANI's career covers acting in theatre in French, English and Hindi; modelling for six years; extensive dance and classical music training; and playing lead characters in two prominent Indian television series.

Gidwani's film career started with several short films which won prestigious national awards. She went on to a premier role in her first feature RUKHMAVATI KI HAVELI (1992).

Her latest feature DANCE OF THE WIND (1997) won a slew of awards world-wide, including Most Popular Film at the Channel4/Guardian Awards and Best Actress at Nantes in December 1997.

KULBUSHAN KHARBANDA

Imam Din

One of India's most renowned actors, KULBUSHAN KHARBANDA began his career in theatre where he was noticed by India's pre-eminent director, I Shyam Benegal. Benegal offered the young actor the lead role in a film called BHUMIKA which went on to win numerous awards. The rest is history.

Since then, Kharbanda has maintained one of the busiest schedules in the Indian film industry, although his great love remains the theatre. Kharbanda has had roles in many of India's greatest films including AARTH where he played opposite Shabana Azmi. He also played a role in Deepa Mehta's first film SAM & ME (1991) and FIRE (1997). More recently, Kharbanda was seen in MAACHIS, another national award-winning Indian film.

ARIF ZAKARIA

Rustom Sethna

Involved with theatre since his college years, ARIF ZAKARIA also became an accomplished television actor through two immensely popular series set on a college campus.

An established television star in India, Zakaria made his film debut playing a eunuch in the hotly discussed and controversial feature DARMIIYAAN (1996), receiving critical appreciation all over India.

GULSHAN GROVER

Mr. Singh

Born and educated in New Delhi, India, GULSHAN GROVER moved to Bombay where he did his formal training in acting at the Actor's Studio. He soon after joined the institution as an acting teacher and his pupils included many of the leading stars of today.

Grover began his acting career with the feature ROCKY and has since acted in over 200 films. Spanning over a decade, his work includes some of the biggest national hits of all time and his awards list spans the most prestigious of accolades in India. Grover has made a successful transition from Bollywood to Hollywood through his acting in THE SECOND JUNGLE BOOK and MONSOON. Grover is currently acting in 15 films in India as well as a handful of international films.

PAVAN MALHOTRA

Butcher

Following his lead role in the acclaimed feature BAGH BAHADUR (Tigerman) which won him the Best Actor Award from the Benegal Film Journalists Association, PAVAN MALHOTRA recently branched into international productions.

He won further recognition with his ground-breaking portrait of an Asian immigrant in 60s Britain in the BBC 2 film BROTHERS IN TROUBLE (Best Film Award '96, Greek Film Festival). Malhotra is also starring in the forthcoming British production DOGTRIBE directed by Youssef Ali Khan.