

SUNGANGES PRESS KIT

“INDIA'S ENERGY CHOICES BEAUTIFULLY EXPOSED.
POLLUTING PAST OR A VIBRANT FUTURE?”
~ MARK DUBOIS



“A PLAYFUL, OPEN-MINDED FILM
ABOUT A DEADLY SERIOUS SUBJECT”
~ INTERNATIONAL RIVERS

WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY VALLI BINDANA PRODUCED BY MARTHAND BINDANA
COMMENTARY & CRITIC NASEERUDDIN SHAH



WWW.SUNGANGES.COM

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

Duration: 72 minutes

Shooting Format: 1080p 24 Color

CONTACT

Valli Bindana

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ONLINE MEDIA

Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/252561184>

Website: <http://sunganges.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TheFilmSuryaGanga/>

CREDITS

Editor & Director: Valli Bindana

Executive Producer: Marthand Bindana

Camera: Valli Bindana, Marthand Bindana

Featuring: Naseeruddin Shah, Himanshu Thakkar, Parineeta Dandekar, Shripad Dharmadhikari, Tony Seba

SHORT SYNOPSIS

A film on the epic conflict between India's land, energy, water and people, SunGanges is a wild and intense ride of three curious citizens who attempt to unravel the connection between vanishing rivers, massive energy projects and the quiet rise of renewable energy.

SYNOPSIS

When the Ganges riverbed dries up in the Himalayas due to intensified damming, curious 6yr old Anu who has been hearing wonderful mythological stories about the river, asks "if the river is not there, why read stories about it?" Mom Valli decides to get some answers. And so they pack their bags and with brother Marthand set out on an adventure across the vast Indian landscape filming the social and environmental (specifically water) impact of big energy projects - hydro and coal and witness the rise of solar and wind.

A wild and intense ride, SunGanges continuously dives right into the heart of matters taking along dam officials, affected tribals & locals, researchers, geologists, professors, entrepreneurs & doctors

some who prefer to remain anonymous. In the process of filming, the makers meet actor Naseeruddin Shah who adds a dubious yet not entirely unfamiliar dimension to the subject.

TEAM

Valli Bindana
Writer Editor Director

Valli began her career as an advertising copywriter with McCann Erickson and Foote Cone & Belding Ulka. She launched, among other brands, Tropicana, LML Bikes, Radisson, Habanos Cigars in India, conceptualizing, scripting and creating ad campaigns for them. A travel bug within, led her on a detour to the then start-up makemytrip.com which she helped launch as Content Manager. Soon feeling the need to give her writing a more dynamic life Valli stepped back into the realm of film, making her first documentary feature SunGanges.

Marthand Bindana
Camera, Exec Producer

Marthand has led teams to create animation films for education purposes for leading content provider Educomp Ltd. He nurtures an eye for photography in the wild giving a whole new perspective to animals, insects, birds and all things natural. Marthand holds his photography work rather close to himself, so get in touch with him if you need to see some gems. Currently working with an NGO in the Himalayas to train farmers in organic farming. SunGanges is his first documentary feature film.

Naseeruddin Shah
Commentator & Critic

Naseer is one of the finest stage & film actors India has known. He has won numerous awards in his career, including three National Film Awards, three Filmfare Awards and an award at the Venice Film Festival. The Government of India has honoured him with the Padma Shri and then the Padma Bhushan for his contributions to Indian cinema. The list of accolades is long. And since we wonder if any of his own achievements impress him in any serious way, let's leave it at that.

FAQS

What made you pick this subject to make a film?

Concern and curiosity in equal measure. Marthand and I, along with our parents used to spend many precious moments of awe and wonder by the Ganges in Rishikesh. Those were the pre-dam days. The river flowed unhindered and swift. After a gap of a few years we returned and saw vast stretches of the river just wasn't there. Then barring a few local activist groups, people of the plains or the mainstream media didn't seem at all concerned. Here was a river, that millions of people over thousands of years had reverently considered the mother and goddess, had just disappeared. And the country at large seemed unconcerned. That was quite disturbing. And so we thought of traveling a bit and filming all that we saw.

Why do you think this film is important?

Many reasons. SunGanges is about a river that has given birth to an entire civilization but then there are so many rivers all over the country that are meeting the same fate. In the last 15 years things have changed drastically and people, including ourselves, have not been able to keep up with analyzing where we are and where we are headed with regard to our rivers and forests. Locally we notice a change in rainfall pattern. We see a wooded area near our town vanish. We see a local river shrinking. But the big picture is missing. This film attempts to be that big picture as it connects the dots with regard to geography, energy technologies and the economics of it all. A big picture is essential for a better understanding of everything we are dealing with. But then, even as I say this, what we saw and have shown in the film is just the tip of the iceberg.

What sort of a crew did you work with?

Most of the time it was just Marthand and I. Sometimes one of us did it all alone. Hauling the equipment over the mountains and valleys through landslides and rain. Which is of course not a very smart way of filming. Ideally there should be at least a cameraman, an audio person and a director. But we did not have the luxury to hire. On one trip we had Aditya assist Marthand. On another trip a friend offered to film with the drone. Naseer's shoot was done by someone I met online and had no idea who he was till we met the day of the shoot!!

Amazing friends now... all of them. But for the most part, Marthand and I were the ones behind the camera. Particularly challenging during interviews when you have to connect with the person in front of the camera as he/she is talking about a painful experience and we need to maintain eye contact and really feel them to film them and as we did so, the frame would just slide away. Extremely difficult and frustrating to edit later.

What was the biggest challenge you faced while making this documentary?

Given the background of what and who we filmed, we could manage to always have food on our table and a roof over our heads wherever we went so we can't really say making this film was challenging. The people we met who were living within the impact zones of massive energy projects faced way bigger and more incredible challenges. Our experience in comparison was no challenge at all.

But yes we definitely did not make the film in a very sustainable way given that we did not bother to learn how to raise money to make the film. And so the whole effort became almost a totally self-funded one. Which is ironic since in the film we are talking about sustainable living!

How did you fund this film?

80% of the cost is self funded. 20% was a grant from a foundation.

Is it true that you took your 6 yr old daughter to all the shoot locations and meetings?

Yes, we took her to most places. And almost all meetings. In the Himalayas we took her into remote villages. She even went on a 'doli' the metal basket that swings across the river in the absence of a bridge. She absolutely loved train rides. During one particular interview I was filming alone with her by my side. I had her hold the audio mic as it was broken and wouldn't fit on my camera. She was mad at me for some reason and kept yanking at the camera with the mic she held and you can actually see and hear the image and sound distortion of that in the film!!

I did not take her to the coal belt. We were told about the prevalence of the mafia and goons and I did not know what to expect so I did not take her there. Overall it was a great learning experience for her as well. I wish all kids get to travel to difficult places and see what we saw.

What was actor Naseeruddin Shah's reaction to the finished film screener you sent?

It was very important for us that Naseer like the film. Especially since we had not shared the storyline of the film with him at the time of shoot. There was none. We did not even have a script at that time. So what he saw finally was unexpected for him and very new to him.

After watching the screener, this is what Naseer wrote back -

"I just watched the film and am returning the big warm hug and thanking you for including me in it. It's very moving and makes its point strongly. I don't have to tell you it's a very important film and I hope it gets seen. You guys have done a great job! Much love, N"

How will audiences be able to see the movie? How do you plan to release the film?

SunGanges has made its European premiere at Flussfilmfest München 2018. It has won an award at Kolkata Wildlife FilmFest for Best Theme. Further screenings will be announced as and when they materialize. Please [sign up](#) at our website for updates.

We have SunGanges Screening Kits up for purchase at our website <http://sunganges.com/> Organizations that work in areas of water, energy, environment, climate change, renewable energy can use this movie as a powerful visual tool to engage and inspire their audiences into action towards a 100% renewable energy future.

We are very keen on educational distribution as well. We would like schools and colleges and universities to host screenings for students and their communities.

A few times in the year, the film will be open for the general public to purchase and stream online and watch on a device of their choice.

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