

Fresh South Asian films coming to the Enzian

By Roger Moore
Sentinel Movie Critic
moore@orlandosentinel.com

One weekend every fall, the Enzian Theater becomes "Bollywood West" as this arthouse cinema plays host to the South Asian Film Festival. Four films from or about India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, or South Asians living abroad, cater to the local South Asian community and those wanting to know more about South Asian customs, mores and concerns.

"Beyond Bollywood," the 13th South Asian Film Festival (running Saturday through Monday), has a most diverse selection of films and topics and seems more geared to outreach than preaching to the choir, explaining India's caste system, cultural strictures and place in the world.

Tickets are \$9 per film, \$30 for a pass to all four (enzian.org).

'Outsourced'

★★★★

This pleasantly glib culture-clash comedy from director John Jeffcoat is about the threat that "every job that can be done on the phone or online is going overseas." A Seattle call-service-center executive named Todd (Josh Hamilton) is sent to India, blackmailed to train the people who are to replace him and his staff.

Todd is a skeptic. He is exposed to Indian customs and people, the un-failing good manners and work ethic and doting kindness. He also runs afoul of Indian superstitions and developing-world backwardness.

Yes, a cow wanders into the call center. Yes, there are beggars, played for comic effect. And yes, the American gets diarrhea from the food.

"You know what India stands for, don't you?" an American vet of the country explains. "I'll Never Do It Again."

Language barriers, American arrogance, differing attitudes about food, animals, everything, teach Todd that he's out of his depth trying to get "you people" to

use American slang and American phone brusqueness.

"Mr. Todd, you need to learn about India," lovely Asha (Aysha Dharker) tells him.

And so he does, though not in ways that haven't been tickled over in a dozen earlier films. Sweet, picturesque and romantic. (10:30 a.m. Saturday, 7 p.m. Monday)

'Provoked'

★★★

A laborious British melodrama, this is the true story of an abused Indian woman (lovely but limited Aishwarya Rai) who burned her abusive, cheating husband (Naveen Andrews) to death after one night's drunken beating.

She bears the shame of her beatings in secret and is sent to prison. But others take up her cause and make her a test-case for abused women everywhere.

The prison scenes are silly clichés, and the performances (Miranda Richardson is a fellow inmate) are often stiff, a product of a sometimes-stale script and static editing.

The feel-good elements, the chilling flashbacks to the abuse and the night of the murder, all work. The good intentions of the



EMERGING PICTURES

Mamatha Bhukya plays a poor 15-year-old girl who wants to learn about traditional dance and music in 'Vanaja.'

piece get in the way. (1:15 p.m. Sunday)

'Vanaja'

★★★★

A poor 15-year-old girl (Mamatha Bhukya) takes a job with a wealthy local landlady in order to learn Kuchipudi dance and music.

She flirts with and then is raped by her mistress' strapping son, and her treatment runs her afoul of the family and India's caste system.

The dancing performances and dance lessons make the movie. (10:30 a.m. Sunday)

'Divided We Fall: Americans in the Aftermath'

★★★★★

Valarie Kaur's first-person "A Sikh's View of America on 9/11." A nation that came together after a hideous assault on its freedoms, its symbols and its way of life also re-

vealed a mean, ignorant streak in the days following Sept. 11.

Sikhs, some from India, but many born in this country, were arrested, jeered, chased and assaulted within hours of the attacks.

"We knew it would happen," a couple of the Sikhs told Kaur, who is Sikh herself. Many wearing turbans, they've been the object of discrimination in some quarters for decades.

The anecdotes are chilling, moving and depressing. A Mesa, Ariz., gas-station owner was murdered hours after donating every cent in his pockets to one of the first 9/11 charities. Sikhs identify Jayantilal Patel of Haines City, killed within days of 9/11, as another hate-crime victim.

"They just want to get somebody who is brown," one attack survivor says.

It's a little indulgent, a little overreaching, but *Divided We Fall* is a hopeful civics lesson on what it means to be an American. (11 p.m. Saturday)

reviews