



AKBAR PAINS PRESENTS

# SINDHUSTAN

A FILM BY SAPNA MOTI BHAVNANI

THE STORY OF THE LARGEST MIGRATION OF A CULTURE IN HISTORY TOLD THROUGH INK







## SYNOPSIS

I was 36 when I realised I was a daughter of a refugee. I remember being at concert in Mumbai and watching some Sufi Fakirs from Sindh perform, I was so blown away, I ran home and googled Sindh for the first time. When I found out Sindhi migration was the largest migration of a culture in history and I being a Sindhi had no idea, I knew it was time to start.

### *What is Sindh?*

*In 1947 when India was partitioned, Punjab and Bengal were divided but Sindh was left intact in Pakistan. In the province, it was believed that nothing would change – the Hindus had been a minority for centuries, they were the ones with the wealth and power. However, when the time came, the best they could do was escape with their lives. Hordes of prosperous people became homeless and penniless overnight. A large majority had never left Sindh before. They crossed the new border to settle in unfamiliar lands with unfamiliar food, language and customs, stepping from a zone of sparse rain into monsoon country.*

There are lots of books written on Sindh and loads of information online but I did not want my film to be a history lesson. It took me 2 years to figure out how I want to tell my story. This moment with my grandma came to mind. I had just started getting inked and remember covering myself to meet my grandmother for lunch one day. She looked at me and called me old fashioned. I couldn't believe a 70 year old woman was calling me old fashioned. She told me when we first came on this planet we lived in tribes we didn't have borders and governments and countries. We had extended families and all had their own markings. "When I see you I see you are going back to your roots and that makes me very happy." It was evident that ink was going to be the ink I would write their stories with.

I figured, the best way to tell this story was to become the story.

My documentary includes many stories. Some from India and some from Sindh (which now lies in Pakistan) along with mine illustrating their journey on my skin. I aim at inking my legs using an art form from Sindh (Ajrak) and one from India (Madhubani) to tell the story of a land carried on the shoulders of its people and not rooted in any soil.

My legs, symbolising our journey and my feet, the lack of our roots.

*"no one leaves home unless  
home is the mouth of a shark  
you only run for the border  
when you see the whole city running as well"*

- Warsan Shire





## ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

As a pioneer entrepreneur, Sapna Bhavnani founded the hair salon Mad O Wot 16 years ago in Bombay and changed the way Indian youth looked at themselves.

Through her versatile avatars such as writing an intimate weekly column for a well-known publication and authoring a self-help book for teenage girls "Style O Wot" to launching the avant-garde clothing line "So Fake" and acting in NIRBHAYA – a searing testimonial play which won the Amnesty Freedom of Expression Award, The Fringe First Award and The Angel Herald Award in 2012 for cracking open the cone of silence around sexual and gender-based violence in India, Sapna Moti Bhavnani is a voice to reckon with. She traverses mainstream success with just as much ease as she skirts the underground youth art and culture movement. Ageless, Fearless, and Forever metamorphosing in her endeavours.

Sapna is best known as Producer/Director of her award winning documentary Sindhustan and Producer of the feature Mehsampur. Sindhustan started its festival journey in 2019 and is her first feature length documentary. The film about the largest migration of a culture in history told through tattoos on her body. Sindhustan has won 9 Feature Documentary Awards and travelled to 21 festivals and is now streaming online on Amazon Prime and Movie Saints.

Actor, spoken word artist, hair stylist, writer, director, producer - Sapna embodies it all as a visionary and a change maker. In July 2020 she launched her production company called Wench Films to push feline talent primarily from India to the world. Currently she is in post-production with her feature My Dog IS Sick and writing a book titled Chapter One for Harper Collins.

The rest, like they say is herstory.



## Directors Statement

My ancestors come from a land called Sindh, which was a part of India till 1947. Post which India became independent and split into Pakistan. Sindh remained in Pakistan and the "Hindu" Sindhis were forced either to convert to Islam or leave their homeland. The Sindhis were peace loving people who spent their time singing sufi songs and did not want violence. They left willingly in hordes leaving everything behind. This migration is the largest migration of a culture in history but very few, including Sindhis, are aware of it. In India and worldwide, they had to learn a new language, adapt to new cultures, learn new trades, just to sustain. The lack of a physical "land" has led to the slow death of their culture and language and the new generation has no idea or access to their heritage.

It was important for me to document their journey so that the youth had some information. It took me 2 years to figure out how I wanted to tell this story.

My father was born in shikarpur Sindh in an area called hajampara (barbers street). The fact that I am a barber in my adult life does not surprise me at all.

After partition he travelled with his family by ship from Karachi to Bombay where they lived in refugee camps. My father did not carry the burden of the past with him. He didn't raise me Hindu or Muslim. Indian or Pakistani or Sindhi. He didn't raise me boy or girl. I was free to be whatever I wanted. Free of all burdens. He ran a cabaret joint called blue Nile and I grew up with the sounds of jazz and jigging thighs instead of Sufi singers.

Bombay was my Sindh and Sindhi Curry my culture. History books explained Partition just like a doctor explains 4th stage cancer. Clinical and cold.

When the govt denied me a visa to visit Sindh the land of my ancestors, I became the land. My legs carry the stories of their journey and my feet the lack of our roots.

*no one leaves home  
unless home is the mouth of a shark  
You only run to the border when you see the whole city running as well*

They say revolutions start from home  
Home to me ..  
is where the legs are  
I carry the stories as witness on my legs in a hope that they will never die.





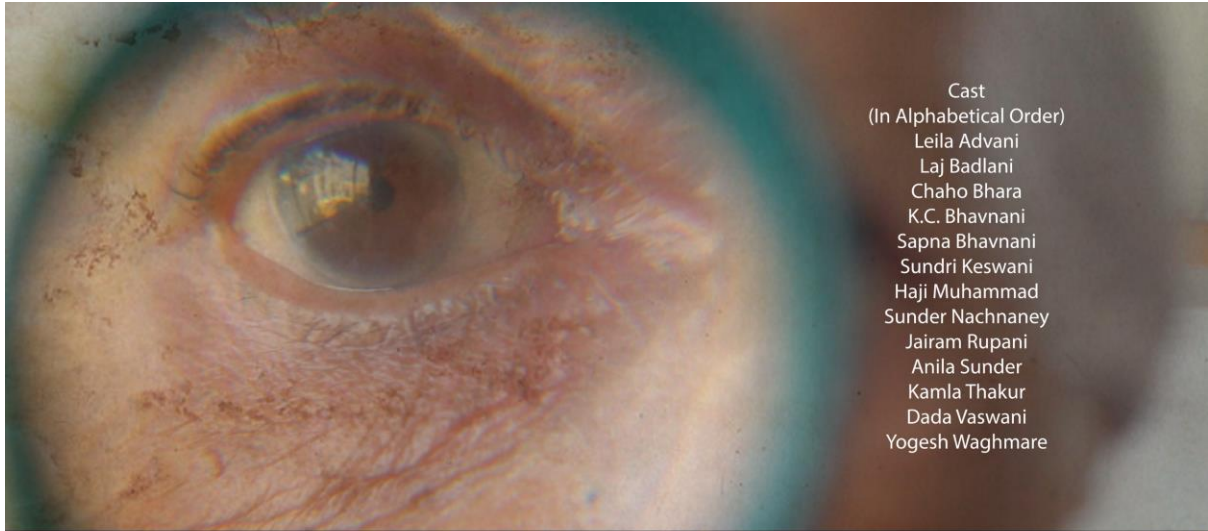
[IMDB](#)

[IMDB REVIEWS](#)

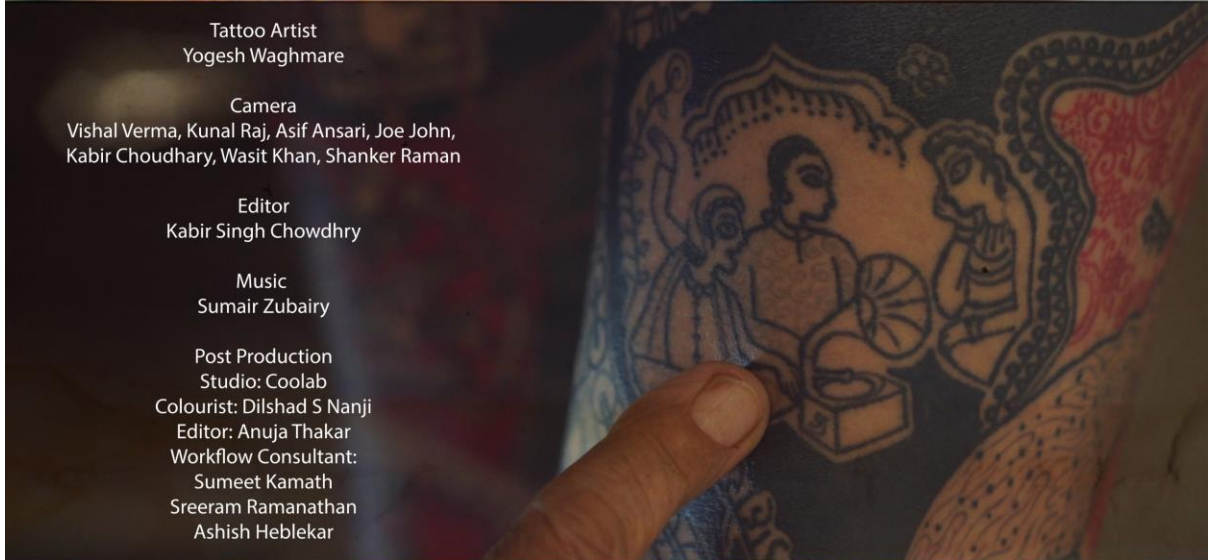
[SINDHUSTAN WEBSITE](#)

**WATCH ONLINE**





Cast  
(In Alphabetical Order)  
Leila Advani  
Laj Badlani  
Chaho Bhara  
K.C. Bhavnani  
Sapna Bhavnani  
Sundri Keswani  
Haji Muhammad  
Sunder Nachaney  
Jairam Rupani  
Anila Sunder  
Kamla Thakur  
Dada Vaswani  
Yogesh Waghmare



Tattoo Artist  
Yogesh Waghmare

Camera  
Vishal Verma, Kunal Raj, Asif Ansari, Joe John,  
Kabir Choudhary, Wasit Khan, Shanker Raman

Editor  
Kabir Singh Chowdhry

Music  
Sumair Zubairy

Post Production  
Studio: Coolab  
Colourist: Dilshad S Nanji  
Editor: Anuja Thakar  
Workflow Consultant:  
Sumeet Kamath  
Sreeram Ramanathan  
Ashish Heblekar



Animation  
Dynamite Design

Executive Producer  
Nazia Darvesh  
Sunil Harchandani  
Kumar Vidhani

Producer  
Sapna Moti Bhavnani

Director  
Sapna Moti Bhavnani



## **A homeless Sindhhi woman**

In Akbar the Great's durbar,  
Anarkali, Queen of Beauty, reigned.  
Yet  
Even she was buried alive.

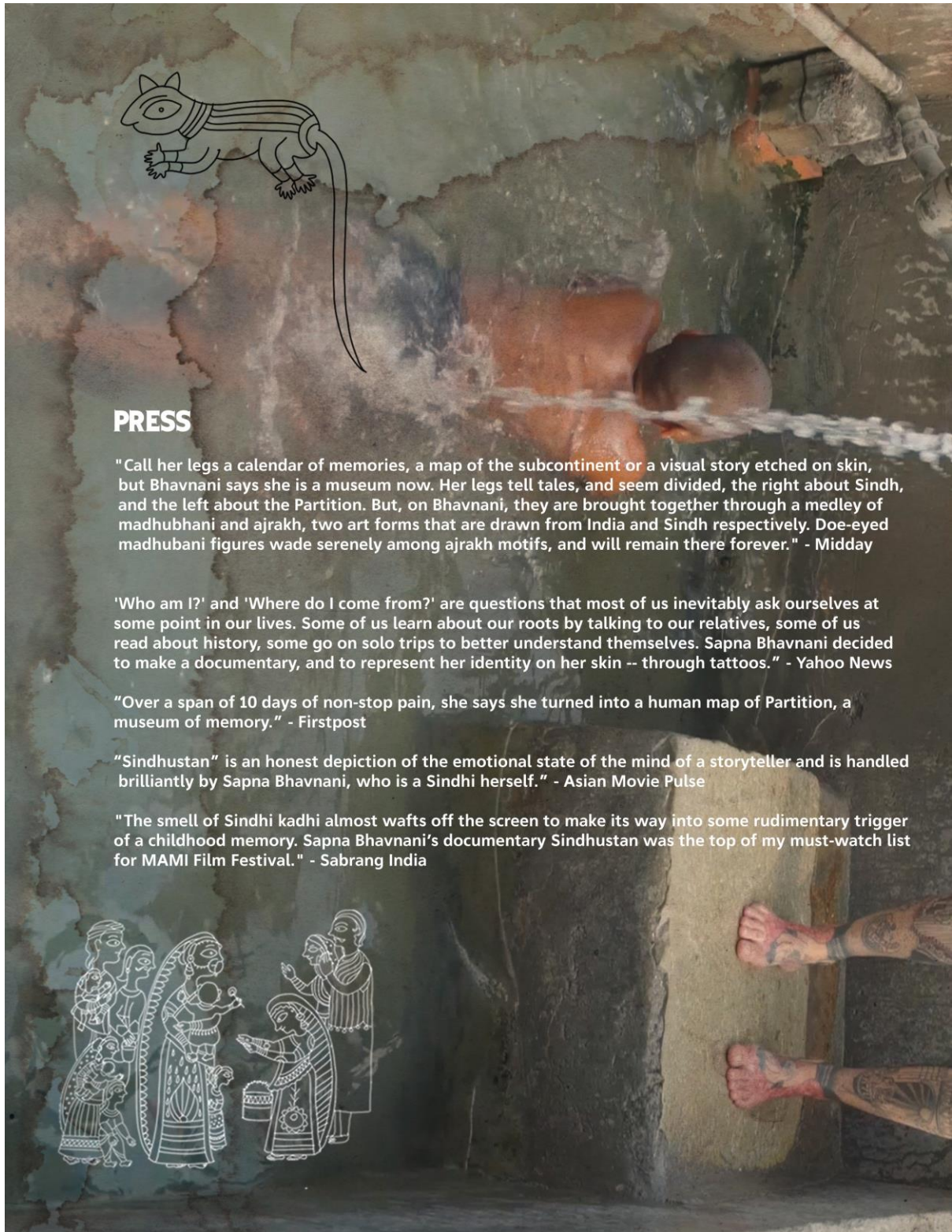
Delhi, India's pride, and I,  
Inheritor of the marvels of Indus architecture.  
Yet  
Even I have been buried alive

homeless in history's graveyard.

*-Popati Hiranandani  
From: Man Sindhin*

A Film By Sapna Moti Bhavnani





## PRESS

"Call her legs a calendar of memories, a map of the subcontinent or a visual story etched on skin, but Bhavnani says she is a museum now. Her legs tell tales, and seem divided, the right about Sindh, and the left about the Partition. But, on Bhavnani, they are brought together through a medley of madhubhani and ajrakh, two art forms that are drawn from India and Sindh respectively. Doe-eyed madhubhani figures wade serenely among ajrakh motifs, and will remain there forever." - Middy

'Who am I?' and 'Where do I come from?' are questions that most of us inevitably ask ourselves at some point in our lives. Some of us learn about our roots by talking to our relatives, some of us read about history, some go on solo trips to better understand themselves. Sapna Bhavnani decided to make a documentary, and to represent her identity on her skin -- through tattoos." - Yahoo News

"Over a span of 10 days of non-stop pain, she says she turned into a human map of Partition, a museum of memory." - Firstpost

"Sindhustan" is an honest depiction of the emotional state of the mind of a storyteller and is handled brilliantly by Sapna Bhavnani, who is a Sindhi herself." - Asian Movie Pulse

"The smell of Sindhi kadhi almost wafts off the screen to make its way into some rudimentary trigger of a childhood memory. Sapna Bhavnani's documentary Sindhustan was the top of my must-watch list for MAMI Film Festival." - Sabrang India



[Up Close With Rajeev Masand](#)

[Written On The Body | Indian Express](#)

[Celebrity Stylist Turns Director | The Hindu](#)

[I Didn't Live In America As an Immigrant, I Lived as an American | American Bazaar Online](#)

[Sindhustan Wins Best Feature Documentary at NYIFF | Mayapuri](#)

[The Sindh Story, Told In Tattoos | Platform Magazine](#)

[Sindh On Her Legs | The Hindu](#)

[Sapna traces roots through Tattoos | Firstpost](#)

[Tracing Memories Through Ink | Film Companion](#)

[I Want Sindhis To Not Be Embarrassed Of Their Language | Conde Nast](#)

[IN FOCUS: SAPNA BHAVNANI | SINDHI PATHBREAKERS, PARTITION SPECIAL SERIES | SINDHI FILM FESTIVAL](#)

[SINDHUSTAN IN THE BEST 20 DOCUMENTARIES IN ASIA](#)

[Movies The Make You Think](#)



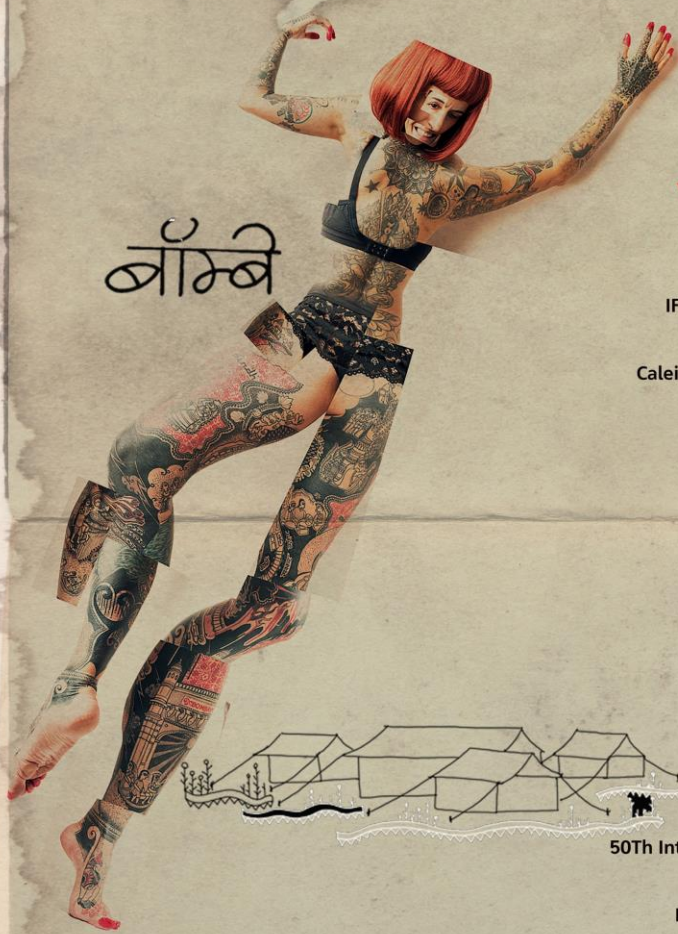
**TEASER | PROMO**



[Sindhustan 2019 Teaser](#)



[OFFICIAL PROMO | SINDHUSTAN | 2019](#)



## FESTIVAL JOURNAL

DocEdge Kolkata March 2019  
**WINNER** Griffith Film School Award

NYIFF PREMIERE May 2019  
**WINNER** Best Feature Documentary

AIFF May 2019  
**EXCELLENCE IN CINEMA AWARD**

OIFFA June 2019  
Official Selection

IFFStuttgart July 2019 European Premiere  
**WINNER** Honourable Mention Documentary

MISAFF August 2019 Canadian Premiere  
**WINNER** Best Feature Documentary

IFFMelbourne August 2019 Australian Premiere  
Official Selection

Caleidoscope Indian Film Festival of Boston Sept 2019  
**WINNER** Best Historical Narrative

CSAFF Sept 2019  
Official Selection

LAHFF Oct 2019  
Official Selection

MAMI Oct 2019 Asia Premiere  
India Story Official Selection

VISAFF Nov 2019  
Official Selection

Chalta Phirta Doc Festival  
Nov 2019 Pakistan Premiere

Asia Peace Film Festival  
Nov 2019 Official Selection

50th International Short & Independent Film Festival Dhaka  
Dec 2019 Bangalesh Premiere

Los Angeles Motion Picture Awards Jan 2020  
**WINNER** Best Theme for a Documentary

MIFF Jan 2020  
**WINNER** Best Documentary National Competition

RETH Feb 2020  
Rajasthan Premiere Official Selection

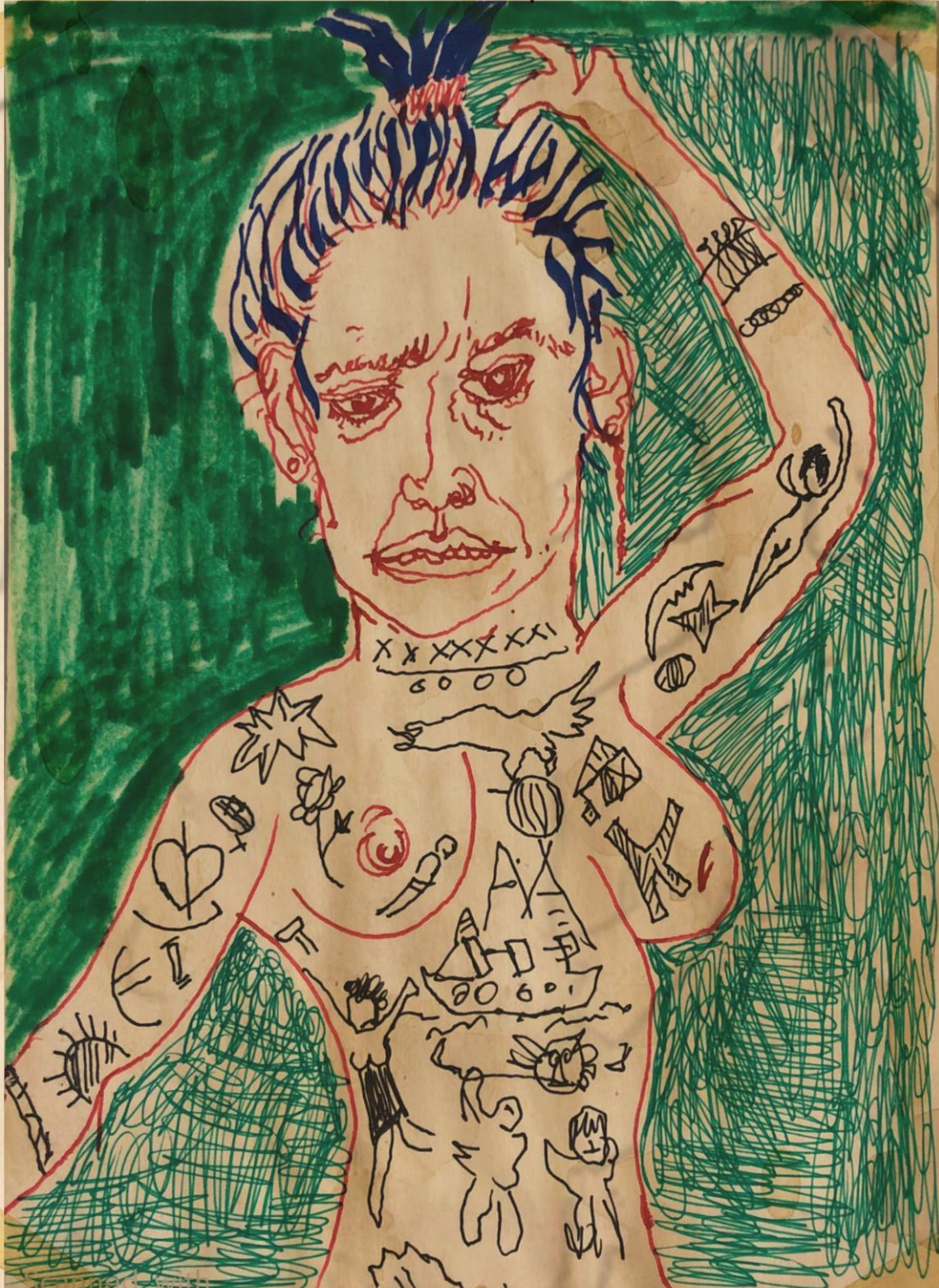
UK ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL March 2020  
UK Premiere Official Selection

INDIE MEME FILM FESTIVAL APRIL 2020  
Texas Premiere Official Selection





"Over her breast Was the heart of Sindh  
She knew if you crossed the bridge  
At her nipple, took a left you would  
Reach Shikarpur."



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