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## POV's 'The World Before Her' Follows Two Starkly Divergent Paths for Women in Modern India, Monday, Sept. 16, 2013 on PBS

Ruhi and Prachi Are Both Ambitious Young Women: One Hopes to Win the Miss India Beauty Pageant; The Other Leads a Fundamentalist Hindu Camp for Girls

"Riveting."—Stephen Holden, *The New York Times*

### ***MEDIA ALERT – FACT SHEET***

National Dates: Nisha Pahuja's **The World Before Her** has its national broadcast premiere on **Monday, Sept. 16, 2013** at 10 p.m. (check local listings) during the 26th season of the award-winning PBS documentary series **POV (Point of View)**. The film will stream on POV's website, [www.pbs.org/pov/](http://www.pbs.org/pov/), from **Sept. 17-Oct. 16, 2013**.

American television's longest-running independent documentary series, POV is the recipient of a 2013 MacArthur Foundation Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

The Film: **The World Before Her** is a fascinating portrait of two women and two Indias. It reveals a world of startling contrasts between urban and rural, jeans and saris, consumer culture and poverty, where rapid economic development fuels a sharpening conflict between tradition and modernity—especially when it touches on women and religion. In focusing on two particularly thoughtful young women—one a militant Hindu nationalist, the other a contestant for Miss India—**The World Before Her** provides a timely account of a multi-faceted, often confusing clash over values and the future of the world's largest democracy.

In 2011, 20 young women from across India gathered in a modern Bombay hotel to compete in the Miss India pageant. Among the finalists is **Ruhi Singh**, from Jaipur in northern India. "I think of myself as a very modern young girl and I want freedom," says Ruhi of the potential to win the crown, money and prestige. For women in Ruhi's world, a beauty pageant is a road to liberation.

About 200 miles away in the city of Aurangabad, thousands of girls attend annual camps run by Durga Vahini, the women's wing of the largest Hindu nationalist group in India. Durga Vahini is part of a rising movement that preaches resistance to Islam, Christianity and Western culture. The crew of **The World Before Her** gained first-time access to one of the group's camps, where the young women are taught both Hindu femininity and fighting skills. One of the instructors is the highly committed **Prachi Trivedi**, a girl from a modest economic background who is at a turning point in her life.

**The World Before Her** won the Best Documentary Feature Award at the 2012 Tribeca Film Festival's World Documentary Competition. The film is a production of Storyline Entertainment in association with ZDF, ARTE, Impact Partners, Knowledge and TVO.

Embed a trailer, download press materials and learn more at [www.pbs.org/pressroom](http://www.pbs.org/pressroom).

Online: POV's website for **The World Before Her** – [www.pbs.org/pov/theworldbeforeher/](http://www.pbs.org/pov/theworldbeforeher/) – offers a broad range of exclusive online content to enhance the PBS broadcast. Watch the full film online for free from Sept. 17-Oct. 16, 2013, learn from the filmmaker in a video interview, download a discussion guide and other viewing resources and find out more about The Miss India Pageant, Durga Vahini and political Hinduism.

Outreach: POV works with educators, public television stations and national and community groups across the country to foster dialogue around the issues presented in our films. For a list of upcoming screening events, go to [www.pbs.org/pov/outreach](http://www.pbs.org/pov/outreach). POV and nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow develop discussion guides with background information to help event organizers facilitate conversations. **The World Before Her** discussion guide includes background on the Hindu nationalist movement and the Miss India Pageant, as well as prompts for dialogue and a list of further educational resources. Dr. Rogow has also developed a lesson plan to accompany the film. Event organizers may email POV at [events@pov.org](mailto:events@pov.org) to request a free loaned DVD to screen at their event.

Filmmaker's  
Statement:

"I have been going to India for nearly 15 years and the more time I spend there, the more I realize that what India does best is teach," says director Nisha Pahuja. "It forces one to see that assumptions are never safe and nothing is simple. Sabira Merchant, one of the key pageant voices in the film, says, 'There are two Indias.' I would say there are many Indias, and they are doing battle with each other now, just as they always have been."

"The battle I chose to focus on is the battle between tradition and 'modernity,' fundamentalism and capitalism and how this plays out on the bodies of women. In some ways, what hangs in the balance is not just the future of women in this country but the very future of the country itself."

Filmmaker Bio: [Nisha Pahuja, Writer/Director/Producer](#)

Nisha Pahuja was born in New Delhi, India, and grew up in Toronto. She started off as a researcher for some of Canada's brightest documentary talents, including John Walker and Ali Kazimi. She co-wrote and directed *Diamond Road*, a three part series on the global diamond trade for ZDF/Arte, TVO, Discovery Times and History Television. *Diamond Road* received the 2008 Gemini award for best documentary series. Pahuja's *Bollywood Bound*, about a quartet of Indo-Canadians who travel to India to make it big in Bollywood, screened at numerous film festivals and was widely telecast around the world. It was the closing night film at Hot Docs 2001 and was nominated for a Gemini in 2002.

The multi-award winning **The World Before Her** is her third film. It was selected as the opening night documentary at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2012 and has since been selected by more than 100 festivals worldwide.

Related Stories: "More girls take to art of self-defence," by Smita Mainkar, *The Times of India*, Aug. 3, 2013. <http://bit.ly/13vSFLF>

"Alternative View of Women Raises Hackles in India," by Chandrahas Choudhury, Bloomberg View, Aug. 5, 2013. <http://bloom.bg/1eotA6w>

"Should Hindu Nationalist Narendra Modi Be Allowed a U.S. Visa?" by Shikha Dalmia, *The Daily Beast*, July 31, 2013. <http://thebea.st/18ZGPOd>

"US becomes battleground for Hindu-Muslim political feud," by Chidanand Rajghatta, *The Times of India*, July 24, 2013. <http://bit.ly/1444yUK>

“Indian women crossover to Western wear,” Fashion United, Aug. 7, 2013.

<http://bit.ly/189NbGb>

“After the Delhi Rape, Small Victories for Women in India’s Popular Culture,” by Snigdha Poonam, India Ink, *The New York Times*, July 29, 2013. <http://nyti.ms/13DK0D6>

“What Lies Ahead for India’s Women?” by Ankanksha Mehta, *Diplomatic Courier*, March 16, 2013. <http://bit.ly/16epcV1>

“Beyond rape trial, a bigger question about women's status in India,” by Vaishnavi Chandrashekhar and Shivam Vijm, *The Christian Science Monitor*, Jan. 24, 2013. <http://bit.ly/180PyLn>

Credits:                      Writer/Director:                      Nisha Pahuja  
   Producers:                              Ed Barreveld, Cornelia Principe, Nisha Pahuja  
   Executive Producers:                      Ed Barreveld, Andy Cohen, Nisha Pahuja,  
   Mike Chamberlain  
   Editor:                                      David Kazala  
   Directors of Photography:                      Mrinal Desai, Derek Rogers  
   Original Music:                              Ken Myhr  
   Running Time:                              56:46

**POV Series Credits:**

Executive Producer:                      Simon Kilmurry  
Co-Executive Producer:                      Cynthia López  
VP, Programming and Production:                      Chris White  
Coordinating Producer:                      Andrew Catauro

Awards:                      Best Documentary Feature, World Documentary Competition, 2012 Tribeca Film Festival  
   Best Canadian Feature, 2012 Hot Docs Canadian International Documentary Festival  
   Best Foreign Film, 2012 Traverse City Film Festival  
   Best Documentary Special Mention, 2012 Warsaw International Film Festival  
   Best Canadian Documentary, 2012 Vancouver Film Critics Circle  
   Special Jury Mention, 2012 San Diego Asian Film Festival  
   Special Jury Mention, 2012 Alliance of Women Film Journalists EDA Award

For a full list of awards and screenings, visit [www.worldbeforeher.com/](http://www.worldbeforeher.com/)

Pressroom:                      Visit POV’s pressroom, [www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom](http://www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom), for press releases, downloadable art, filmmaker biographies, transcripts and special features.

POV:                              Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and now in its 26th season on PBS, the award-winning POV is the longest-running showcase on American television to feature the work of today’s best independent documentary filmmakers. POV has brought more than 365 acclaimed documentaries to millions nationwide. POV films have won every major film and broadcasting award, including 32 Emmys, 15 George Foster Peabody Awards, 10 Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University Awards, three Academy Awards® and the Prix Italia. In 2012, POV achieved a new milestone, winning five News & Documentary Emmy® Awards. Since 1988, POV has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today’s most pressing social issues. Visit [www.pbs.org/pov](http://www.pbs.org/pov).

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