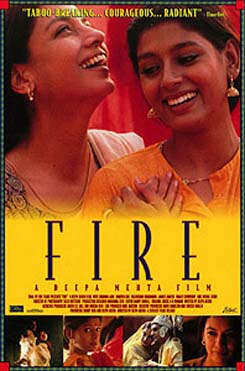
[](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/2/2b/Deepa_Mehta_-_Fire_poster.jpg)

**Fire** is a 1996 film directed and written by [Deepa Mehta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deepa_Mehta), starring [Shabana Azmi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabana_Azmi) and [Nandita Das](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nandita_Das). It is the first of Mehta's "Elements" [trilogy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trilogy). It is followed by [Earth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_(1998_film)) (1998) and [Water](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_(2005_film)) (2005). The movie is loosely based on [Ismat Chugtai](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ismat_Chugtai)'s 1941 story Lihaf (The Quilt) [[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fire_(1996_film)#cite_note-0#cite_note-0), and is the first Indian film to explicitly show homosexual relations. After its 1998 release in India, right-wing Hindu groups staged several violent protests, setting off a flurry of public dialogue around issues such as [homosexuality](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homosexuality) and [freedom of speech](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_of_speech).

**Plot**

The film is set in contemporary [Delhi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delhi), [India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India), in the household of a [joint family](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joint_family) which runs a fast-food and video business in the ground floor of their two-storey home. The protagonists are the two daughters-in-law, both of whom have joined the family by [arranged marriage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arranged_marriage): Sita ([Nandita Das](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nandita_Das)), who is newly wed to the younger son Jatin ([Javed Jaffrey](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Javed_Jaffrey)); and Radha ([Shabana Azmi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabana_Azmi)), who has been married to the elder son Ashok ([Kulbhushan Kharbanda](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kulbhushan_Kharbanda)) for 15 years. Both couples are unhappy. Jatin, who feels he has been pressured into marriage by the family, neglects Sita and continues to see his Chinese girlfriend. Ashok has chosen to become a [tapasvin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tapas_(Sanskrit)) (an [ascetic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ascetic)) after discovering that Radha is infertile, and has been using her to test his resolve in celibacy for 13 years.

The two women turn to each other for solace and become lovers. Tipped off by a servant, Ashok discovers them in bed together. Sita leaves, while Radha, who wishes to explain matters to Ashok, promises to meet her at the [Nizamuddin Dargah](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nizamuddin_Dargah) to start a new life together. In the confrontation that follows, Radha's sari catches fire from the kitchen stove and Ashok abandons her in flames. In the final scene, the two women are reunited.

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| Directed by | [Deepa Mehta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deepa_Mehta)   |  |  | | --- | --- | | Country | [India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India) [Canada](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canada) | | Language | [Hindi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindi) [English](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language) | | Followed by | [Earth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_(1998_film)) ([1998](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1998)) [Water](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Water_(2005_film)) ([2005](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2005)) | |
| Produced by | [Bobby Bedi](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bobby_Bedi&action=edit&redlink=1) [Deepa Mehta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deepa_Mehta) |
| Written by | [Deepa Mehta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deepa_Mehta) |
| Starring | [Nandita Das](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nandita_Das) [Shabana Azmi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shabana_Azmi) |
| Music by | [A R Rahman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_R_Rahman) |
| Cinematography | [Giles Nuttgens](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giles_Nuttgens) |
| Editing by | [Barry Farrell](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Barry_Farrell&action=edit&redlink=1) |
| Distributed by | [Zeitgeist Films](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zeitgeist_Films) |
| Release date(s) | [6 September](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/September_6) [1996](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1996) ([Toronto Film Festival](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toronto_Film_Festival)) |
|  | 108 min. UK 104 min. US |
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