

A DREAM LOST IN DREAM:
A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP OF AN ALIEN WITH AMERICA

Arvind Singh, B.A., LL.B

Thesis Prepared for the Degree of
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

August 2011

APPROVED:

Ben Levin, Major Professor
Samuel Sauls, Committee Member
Harry Benschhoff, Committee Member
Alicia Re Cruz, Committee Member
James Meernik, Committee Member
C. Melinda Levin, Department Chair

Copyright 2011

by

Arvind Singh

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Written component of my thesis film, *A Dream Lost in Dream* was greatly enhanced by the gracious and invaluable assistance, constructive criticism, comments, advice and moral support of my friends, family, colleagues, and faculty.

My special thanks go to all the members of my committee, along with Jonathan Tomhave, Assistant Professor in departments of Radio, TV, and Film, and Anthropology in U.N.T., Michan Chowritmootoo, Graduate Service Analyst T.W.U., Christine Paswan, Program Coordinator of Spanish media center in U.N.T., Fredrick Dent, my consultant anthropologist, Lisa Gruwell Spicer, filmmaker, Mark Atkins, former history instructor in S.M.U., Aljendro Miranda Piano Technician in U.N.T., and Wayne Dereck, an incredible documentary filmmaker for their invaluable assistance, constructive criticism, comments and advice.

I also want to extend my gratitude to my friends Comfort Yamoah, and Yazmin Vargas and colleagues, Liz Colunga and Marek Dojs for their moral support.

I am most indebted to my children Mehak, and Fateh for allowing me to use “their” time, my husband Brij for his financial and moral support, and my parents Davinder and Jaswant Daman who have been flying from India to take care of children and fully support me in this venture.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
INTRODUCTION OF THE THEME.....	1
PURPOSE OF EXPLORING THE THEME.....	2
PREVIOUSLY PRODUCED MEDIA.....	10
FROM <i>MADE IN INDIA</i> , THE ORIGINAL CONCEPT.....	12
THE BACKSTORY OF THE NARRATIVE.....	15
NARRATIVE OF “A DREAM LOST IN DREAM”.....	17
CHARACTERS.....	19
FORM AND STYLE OF THE DOCUMENTARY.....	20
A Documentary with a Narrative Essence.....	20
Observational.....	21
On Exposing Myself and the Process: Reflexivity.....	22
On Being an Ethnographic Documentary.....	24
CHALLENGES.....	28
Audio.....	28
Lighting.....	28
Scheduling.....	28
Shooting Your Family and Close Friends.....	29
“Self”.....	29
Observational and Cinema Verite Documentary.....	30
INTENDED AUDIENCE.....	32
BASIS OF FEASIBILITY.....	33
KEY PERSONNEL.....	34
BUDGET.....	35
APPENDIX A: PROSPECTOUS FOR MADE IN INDIA.....	36
APPENDIX B: BUDGET.....	51
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	54

INTRODUCTION OF THE THEME

America is a country of immigrants. People from all over the world come to America with very high expectations of fulfilling their economic, professional, educational, social, and/or political aspirations. However, they are confronted with the stark and imminent reality of economic challenges at the doorstep of this dreamland called The America. Understanding the gravity of their situation, they tuck their dreams into a safe place deep within their hearts, and hope to come back to them later after winning the race of survival. Little do they realize that they are entering a race that has no end, or a chance for one to catch one's breath. Sometimes these dormant dreams resurface unexpectedly, and a tug of war between passion and survival begins.

PURPOSE OF EXPLORING THE THEME

On the onset of the age of globalization, T.S. Eliot (1948), a well-known poet and critic, was able to foresee a rapidly shrinking world dragging distinct cultures of the world close to each other. He was very aware of the implications of this closeness of extremely opposite 'ways of life' and propagated an ideal recipe for a colorful salad bar. He stated:

Neither a classless society, nor a society of strict and impenetrable social barriers is good; each class should have constant additions and defections; the classes, while remaining distinct, should be able to mix freely; and they should have a community of culture with each other which will give them something in common, more fundamental than the community which each class has with its counterpart in another society... Finally, a people is judged by history according to its contribution to the culture of other peoples flourishing at the same time and according to its contribution to the cultures which arise afterwards.
(Eliot, 1948)

In today's globalized world, Elliot's ambitious recipe of a harmonious, free, and diverse world has become even more significant than the time period it was authored. As desired by him and other likeminded intellectuals of the time, people from all parts of the world with diverse backgrounds are surely mixing with each other on a common platform. However, this platform is superfluous and is primarily built to cater to the economic dependence of diverse populations on each other. Resultantly, this amalgamation is neither an act of free will, nor an imminent factor in the development of a free and harmonious world as desired. Nevertheless, this close proximity of world populations has provided a good opportunity to initiate a dialog to bring better understanding. In my opinion, visual media, and more so ethnographic visual media can become one of the solid pillars required to build the bridge to fill this gap.

Being an East Indian immigrant, I decided to produce a documentary on the subject of South Asian immigrants in America. After finding the focus of my documentary, I delved further into the literature review. I found out that although notions of the Diaspora can have negative connotations, it has had a very significant role in the development of human civilization. Since time immemorial, human species have been moving from one place to another in search of security for life, and means of livelihood. This inherent sense of insecurity and the subsequent search for security has emerged into building nations, and creation of geopolitical divisions between various human populations of the world. However, when people within these stringent political boundaries, fail to secure a livelihood, dignity, life or aspirations for themselves, they make an effort to move to places that can offer a secure and fresh start to them. Sometimes, this movement takes people outside of the borders of their own nations.

Unfortunately, this process of movement that seems so natural for the development of humankind is no longer a simple process. In today's world, the word *Diaspora* often translates into a complicated, complex and sometimes painful emotional transition. This trauma is further compounded, especially in cases where the host country has no sociocultural similarities or ties with the Diaspora.

Suarez-Orazco (2000) argues that this immigration phenomena causes profound social, economic, and cultural transformations while generating anxieties and at times even Xenophobia. The following statement of a thirty-one year old female immigrant is representative of the pathetic emotional state of some of the immigrants coming from entirely distinct cultures. Mia, while seeking medical advice in her broken English lamented:

Since I experienced a severe culture shock and deep depression I cannot get rid of many feeling and thoughts of myself and others. I think that people speaks about me constantly

and totally unbelievable things. And always negative. I'm stuck with these thoughts and hallucinations auditory mostly. I have very difficult to accept that where I live now is different from my birth country and I just feel angry and get irritated with the country and people here. Feel guilt because of what people told me that I have to do here. Scared to be myself (as I was in my country in acting among people) because of these "you have to act like this here". Can not relax and always anxious be me, acts like people here but really unhappy. Missing birth country, I can't settle down even if I want to. Constant comparing with my birth country. Very frustrated with differences in the country...I have never felt so bad in my life as when the deep depression came. The terrible shame I felt and still feel because of what others can think if they knew. The worst was the hallucinations and irrational thoughts, anger, frustration very big, anxiety constant, tension (entire body), hopelessness, deep sadness (when thinking of problems), suspicious, easily irritated.

(Mia, 2006)

The trauma and anxiety faced by immigrants is not just unique to them alone. It is equally complex and daunting for the host population; as differences in the outlooks and life styles of immigrants creates for many of them a sense of fearfulness. Immigrants are fearful of losing the 'known' cultural elements of their life and like many of the members of their host country they fear the 'unknown' elements of their host society. Often members of the host society, especially in times of economic hardship, feel as if they have been invaded on many levels and react in a very insensitive manner. Sam Francis (2002), an enraged American author's petrified reaction is a classic example of 'said', and/or 'unsaid' fears against the presence of other cultures in American society. He has stated:

Immigrants are not assimilating to America; America is assimilating to the immigrants. Not only with respect to language but also with dress and other cultural customs, immigrants are retaining what they brought with them, not adopting what Americans do. This week the Washington Post carried a beaming story about Muslim women in the United States preferring to wear their traditional headscarves. It's gotten to the point where I felt this is my culture and my heritage. Lisa Hashem, college graduate with a degree in engineering, told the Post. That's terrific. Why doesn't she go back home where she can enjoy her culture and her heritage all the time? This week also the Washington Times reported on the growing presence in American theatres of Indian films, one of the most popular is something called "Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham". Due to the increasing number of Indian immigrants in the United States there's nothing wrong with the films except their themes, plots, music, language, and stars aren't ours. If Lisa Hashem can have her culture and her heritage and Indian immigrants theirs, why can't we have ours?" (Francis, 2002)

Needless to say that the fears are mutual; people from diverse backgrounds are supposed to accept each other because of economic dependence. Once the economic needs are met, people retract themselves back into their own socio-cultural bunkers with a hope of saving themselves from any kind of cultural invasion from one another. This insecurity forces them to clutch even tighter to their respective culture, social setup, spiritual/religious beliefs, identities and sometimes all of these together. In other words, the higher the intensity of fear of loss of identity, the tighter a group's cultural shell. However this fear, is not the end of the process, it is just an essential phase in the process of the emergence of new identities.

Indians, especially, educated and middle-class Indians have been uninterruptedly migrating to America on a very large scale to escape the unemployment, or for better paying jobs. Kalita (2003), a South Asian Journalist covering education for the Washington Post, has stated:

The new, larger wave doubled the Indian population to 815,000 in the 1990 census, most fitting in with the traditional immigrant profile of shopkeepers, restaurant owners, newsstand vendors, and cabdrivers. Nonetheless, the strengths that Indian migrants brought with them were their education and knowledge of English.

English being one of the official languages used in India, these immigrants possess an acceptable knowledge of English, and do not find it difficult to assimilate on an economic level. However, for these traditional Asian immigrants, the path to assimilate in the mainstream culture of America becomes quite rough. Lee (2009) has described their assimilation process as ethnic resilient or segmented assimilation. Lee stated:

The process of undergoing either behavioral or structural/socioeconomic assimilation can occur in a linear or "straight-line" manner in which the passage of time and the succession of generations lead to increasing economic, cultural, political, and residential integration into American society. Or it can happen in a non-linear, circular, or "bumpy" manner in which Asian Americans revive or retain old cultural traditions, norms, and behaviors and choose to remain somewhat isolated from mainstream American society (the "ethnic resilience" model) or alternatively, to combine elements of both traditional Asian (although they may modify old traditions and values to fit their contemporary circumstances) and mainstream American culture (sometimes referred to as segmented assimilation). (Lee 2009)

To illustrate, let's discuss the causes that contribute towards the anxieties of East Indian males and delays their immersion in American society. The gravity of loss and resultant anxieties of East Indian males in Western societies cannot be understood without having an insight into the nature of their loss due to immigration. Gender discrimination and caste system are essential features of Indian ethos. Male members of Indian society have been bestowed with a very special and distinct status to maintain balance in society. Nobody dares to upset this delicate balance. Narula (2003) paraphrasing Dr. Ramakrishnan asserted:

There is no denying that our society is patriarchal and propagating the family line by producing a son is the sacred duty of every male, especially in Hindu culture, which is a subset of Indian culture. So everybody gets married, no matter what his or her sexual orientation may be. As long as they marry and perform their duties of having a family, and taking care of their children, society often turns a blind eye to whatever else they may do, especially if they are men.

Brij, the protagonist of the documentary, in a pre-interview stated:

I literally cried when the manager of a convenience store I worked for asked me to mop the floor and clean the restroom. I never cleaned "back home" (India). It's not my job...it's a woman's job, or job of our housemaid! (Brij, 2009)

One of the supporting characters of this documentary in his pre-interview confided:

I never thought of women as intellectual beings, so I always had issues accepting them as my supervisors'. That is why I started my own business and left my job as a chemist to escape the female supervisor.... after meeting you and some other women, I feel I was wrong. (Tony, 2009)

Several studies on raising children in Indian families have shown that one of the ways to instill gender differences is a rigid division of types of work allotted to boys and girls. So, type of occupation is not just a mean of economical survival, it is also a very important part of the male identity, an identity that gives them the higher status in society in comparison to women. Verma et al. claimed “Masculinity is an overwhelming construct in the minds of men providing a framework to determine their self-concept and cultural rules relating to their actions” (Verma et al. 2006). When these Indian men with a pre-programmed and rigid standard of masculinity migrate to American society, their culture specific image of male-ness gets shattered into pieces.

Extreme and deep-rooted social and cultural differences between Indian and American culture, coupled with the high level of expectation to assimilate by the host society, and immigrants themselves, makes both sides anxious. This anxiety enforces a modern version of cultural segregation, creating an environment of silent hostility against each other. That is the reason Brij, protagonist of this documentary, wants to stand guard against any western influence on his children, and expresses his opinions through acts like palmistry.

It is sad to notice that although different circumstances bring different people on a common platform called “The United States of America”, this platform is unable to provide a common understanding of life. However this lack of awareness about each other is not an intentional or desired act. In today’s globalized world, amalgamation of world populations is happening so quickly that they are not getting a chance to understand each other’s roots, origins, and backgrounds. In this kind of fast paced environment, it is imperative to create an honest dialog between these insecure, frightened and compartmentalized sections by using mediums that fit their schedule.

I believe that observational documentaries, produced with an ethnographic understanding, have a great potential to trigger a sense of ease between diverse populations. One way to do this is to humanize the experiences of individuals by telling their personal stories through visual media and allowing both sides to peep into each other's candid lives. These visual stories allow the exposure of alien stories and lifestyles in the most unpolluted and candid way. Undoubtedly, they are voyeuristic and may pose some ethical questions, yet they can be very efficient tools of building bridges. So media makers, both fiction and non-fiction must perform as cultural brokers facilitating the exchange between diverse cultures of the world. From a South Asian perspective, Rashmi Sharma (1995) rightly observed the unique personal experiences of South Asians immigrants as personal stories that have the potential to make history. She stated:

For immigrants, the transition to becoming a U.S. citizen is made up of poignant, individual crises of identity in varying degrees. Each struggle to become American is the personal life of an individual—therefore this personalized historical perspective on history as "his-story" and "her-story" that are the lives of some of the "newer" Americans. (Rustomji-Kerns, 1995)

These personal histories are invaluable treasures for providing an insight of the joys and sorrows experienced by this population as a result of their immigration to America. All of these accounts have potential to provide common threads to which both sides can hold on to.

PREVIOUSLY PRODUCED MEDIA

Although some noticeable fiction films have been produced on the subject of the adaptation process of East Indians in Western society, there haven't been many documentaries on the same issue. *American Chai* (2001), *Bend it like Beckham* (2002), *Monsoon Wedding* (2001), and *Green Card Fever* (2003) are some of the successful films falling under this emerging genre of Indian Cinema. These films, though quite successful at portraying the effect of immigration on East Indian immigrants in Western Society, hardly touch the process that causes the portrayed effect in these films.

I am particularly fascinated by the simplicity of Mira Nair's narrative documentary *Namesake* (2006). Originally a documentarian, Nair's film is a simple portrayal of a well-educated Indian immigrant couple that migrates to America. Their children are born and raised in America and the conflict is built on the silent and passive tension that constantly runs through the two generations raised in two totally different environments. There is no active conflict except some passive but powerful moments that bring out the conflict of cultures and upbringing in these two distinct cultures. This documentary is shot in observational documentary style. The older generation struggles to hold onto their Indian identities and dreams of going back to India. Whereas the younger generation keeps trying to sever all ties and break free of their Indian identity and to assimilate in American society. In the end both the generations can't escape from their roots. The older one moves back to India and the younger one comes back to its roots by accepting the Indian identity while living in America. I am also influenced by the documentary *Chronicle of Summer* (1960). In this film Rouch made an attempt to present a voyeuristic and intimate insight into the contemporary issues of American society triggered by migration. In this film, the filmmaker turned the camera on his own people through a given window of time. After

going through the experience of producing a very personal film myself, I can firmly state that, it may seem fairly simple to observe your own people, community and family, however it is harder than one can imagine. It is a 'bare it all' kind of experience without being judgmental about the characters you know very well.

FROM “MADE IN INDIA”, THE ORIGINAL CONCEPT
TO “A DREAM LOST IN DREAM: A JOURNEY

Transformation of proposed title *Made in India* to *A Dream Lost in Dream* wasn't merely a change of title. It was a journey that not only deserves special attention in the text of this document, but is also a subject matter of an independent documentary project in itself. Spread over almost two and a half years, this film drifted towards issues that were not even perceivable at the time of the proposal. Resultantly, it has evolved into a considerably different film from how it was envisioned and proposed to the thesis committee as *Made in India* (see Appendix ‘A’ for original proposal).

Since I had been involved with very heavy socio-political themes in the past in India and America, I wanted to experiment with a fun documentary with a lighter tone. Also, since my arrival in America, I had not produced a single documentary on the issues faced by South Asian population and was feeling little bit guilty about it. I decided to make a documentary on the issue of transition of Indian males into American society. I observed that my husband and his two friends, Sanjay and Tony, all first generation immigrants, could make a perfect story. All three were from different regions and religions of India and represented unique diversity of their country. They would never have met each other if they hadn't come to America. I wanted to concentrate on their relationship with each other; a relationship that was fun and had over time surpassed the level of mere friendship. Their clique was a perfect example of support and venting-out mechanism of anxieties and fears of East Indian males in America. I set out to develop a documentary about this interesting clique of three East Indian immigrants with my husband, Brij as a protagonist with his restaurant being the primary location. After about two months of shoot, they finally started getting accustomed to my camera's presence,

allowing me the access into their 'male' world culturally closed to females. I was at a perfect stage and condition to shoot a great observational documentary as planned. However, something strange and unexpected changed the whole course of action.

The pre-proposal meeting did not include Dr. Re Cruz due to some unavoidable circumstances. However, I was given permission to start shooting before formal proposal, owing to its observational nature and danger of missing some important events in Brij's life. During the formal proposal meeting, Dr. Re Cruz brought my attention to the absence of a female angle in my proposed documentary. She did not think that male attitudes, changes, and ideas regarding the accommodation to the American culture and society could be understood without portrayal of women. She was absolutely correct, however I knew that none of the women would let me film on such an intimate level. I myself didn't want to be in the film. Suddenly, I realized that Mehak, my daughter who had just come of age and was facing emotional issues due to a cultural split could perfectly represent the female angle in the film. That's how Mehak became one of the major catalysts in Brij's story.

Another interesting incident that changed the course of my film occurred after almost two month of continuous shooting. In a get together at our home, Tony mocked at Brij about his past as a pilot. Brij addressed himself as 'captain' and Tony spontaneously reacted by saying, "Rascal, still uses captain with his name...mother f*****" Tony's remark got swept aside by laughter at that time, however, it seemed as if it left a mark in Brij's psyche.

Brij started going to a flying school close to his restaurant. His visits to the flying school brought Manas, a trainee pilot from India into his life. He started drifting away from his friends, work, and family to spend as much time as possible with Manas. The clique of Brij, Sanjay and Tony was broken to be replaced by Manas and other trainees from the flying school.

My camera followed Brij, my protagonist and my dream of making a “fun” film got shattered. The film turned into a story of sad, but inspiring story of a person struggling between survival, family and his passion and the documentary’s title changed to A Dream Lost in Dream from its original title, Made in India.

THE BACKSTORY OF THE NARRATIVE

A Dream Lost in Dream is the story of my husband Brijpal Singh a.k.a. Brij a.k.a. Capt. B.P. Singh. He was a flying instructor/commercial pilot for a flying school, owned and operated by the State of Haryana in India. In the year 1999, he came to America with an ambition to get a higher pilot rating for better job prospects in India. However, life had some other plans for him and he ended up staying in America, never to return to his homeland. The need to survive buried his dreams of flying, and he seemed to have accepted the loss. No one knew his background as a pilot in India, and he didn't want to discuss it with anyone either. He only wanted to be known as a restaurant owner who knew nothing except cooking and running his business. Whenever I tried to bring it up at home, he either diverted the whole conversation in another direction or got very upset, at me or with himself. Finally we reached an unsaid pact of never to bring it up again.

There was a time, when he would tell our children his stories of flying after getting intoxicated. However, over time the children began to show no interest in his adventures, and these stories also died. My son confided in me that he did not believe that dad/Brij was ever a pilot. Eventually the stories and talking about flying disappeared completely and he seemed to be quite happy and content to be a restaurant owner. The only people who knew about his professional background were his family members and some very close friends.

He came to be known as a very personable individual and a generous business owner who went out of the way to help others, especially students from the University of North Texas who frequented his restaurant. No one could ever guess that under the smiling mask of "Brij" the restaurant owner" there lived "Captain B.P. Singh", who loved flying more than his own life and

was being smothered under the tight fitted mask. Finally “Captain B.P. Singh” broke free of his cover with an unimaginable passion to fly against all the odds in his present life.

NARRATIVE OF “*A DREAM LOST IN DREAM*”

A Dream Lost in Dream is an observational documentary attempting to tell the story of a South Asian immigrant in America operating in his natural work and home environment, allowing the audiences to have a clear view of his exposed life.

Although a story of personal struggle, this documentary attempts to project the cultural, financial, professional and emotional dilemma that many first generation South Asians face. Set in Denton, Texas, I observed the resurfacing of my husband’s dream to fly, and get his commercial pilot’s license in America. This dream under the constant economic pressure and family obligations seemed to have lost all meaning for Brij. After confronting the pulsating pain of losing his dream, Brij enters a phase of conflict between his 'real' and 'masked' self. On one side his struggle with today’s unhealthy economy coupled with his anxious efforts to guard his family against an alien culture and on the other side the unquenchable desire for flying. Stagnant, he survived by denying his dream until his passion would no longer allow him to deny it anymore. It is at this point that Brij is presented with the chance to achieve his dream. Manas, a pilot trainee from Brij’s hometown in India, and has come very close to him. They developed a mutual relationship of helping each other. Manas started taking Brij as a passenger on his cross-country flights, where he realized that Brij’s skills as a pilot are still sharp. Encouraged by his own performance and Manas, Brij decides to finally work on getting his American commercial pilot license.

Brij brings Manas to his home for a couple of days so that he could help him prepare for his written exams. These two days of Manas’s stay at home bring him even closer to Brij. During his stay at Brij’s house, Manas comes to know that not only did Brij have a Commercial Pilot

License in India, but he was a flying instructor too. However, he cannot understand why Brij did not convert his license to fly in America and instead chose to run a restaurant as a chef.

Manas's length of stay gets extended well beyond the original plan of a few days. For Manas, Brij's home is a perfect answer to his homesickness, and for Brij, Manas is the perfect audience for his flying stories. With twelve years of experience as a pilot instructor Brij starts helping Manas with his flying issues. On the other hand Manas helps him in theory lessons that Brij require to pass his Commercial Pilot License exams.

Finally Manas passes his flight test with Brij's help, and goes back to India. Shortly after Brij passes all the exams required to convert his Indian pilot's license to an American one life once again comes in the way of his passion. His daughter Mehak who had started to have bouts of depression every now and then, goes into deep depression. For more than two years her depression saps all the time and energy of the whole family. It is at this point that both the children decide to go back to India to live with their grandparents. They both feel that in America they are being pushed too hard to be what "they are not." Irony is they don't even fully know what or who they actually are. So they are at the right place to learn it. Brij finds himself back at square one as his exams expired during the two years he was dealing with his unexpected family crisis. He is studying for the exams one more time refusing to accept the "loss" of his dream.

CHARACTERS

Main Characters

Protagonist: Brij, my husband, and owner of the restaurant

Anchor, and Brij's wife: Arvind Daman Singh

Main Supporting: Manas, flying student in the US Flying Academy, Denton Texas

Other Supporting Characters

Mehak, daughter

Fateh, son

Tony, Brij's friend

Sanjay, Brij's friend

Arpana from Nepal, restaurant employee

Kulsum from Pakistan, restaurant employee

Comfort, A family friend, U.N.T. Cafeteria employee, originally from Ghana

Vigil, Manas's friend, Flying trainee, and an employee of Indian Airlines, India

Aditya, Flying trainee from India, Customer of Indian restaurant

FORM AND STYLE OF THE DOCUMENTARY

Shot in High Definition format, with aspect ratio of 16:9, the documentary is of 55 minutes duration. Divided in a loose three-act structure, this is an observational, reflexive, and an ethnographic documentary, with an experimental narrative tone. Each of the element of style and form of this documentary, are discussed briefly as under:

A Documentary with a Narrative Essence

I want to pay specific attention to the narrative element of the film. To structure the documentary as a narrative while retaining its potential to dispense important information to audiences wasn't an accident. This film is not only for the elite festival audiences, but it is also for ordinary masses, who assemble around the television sets for recreation. In fact the primary audience of this documentary is the common man of the third world and the West. It is not to say that my target audience is not receptive to informative media, what I want to convey is that as per my personal experience, they are more receptive to information through a medium they are more comfortable with.

I also have to admit that my own relationship with stage and screen as an actress and writer makes me a little biased in favor of narrative structure. In my own personal opinion and experience, I have observed that narrative forms are more welcoming and open to the involvement of the audiences in the end product. Some uncomfortable themes are easily digestible, if offered in a narrative and fiction like reality. During my days of being a social activist in India, I noticed that, in case of common masses, street plays were a more effective form of conveying the information than lectures or seminars. We effectively used real stories from the

news media to convey our issues through street theater, rather than organizing big bullying rallies. It was less offensive and more effective tool of awareness.

The documentary is organized into a three-act structure of short observational sequences. Each of the sequence stands alone in itself conveying an independent meaning. However when put together they build upon each other to tell a story of a family migrated from India to United States of America.

Observational

My fascination with observational documentary started when I took Professor Ben Levin's course on Cinema Verite. Till then, I had mostly experienced expository and journalistic documentary in India. After he screened Maysle brothers' *Salesman* (1968), and *Grey Gardens* (1975) another Maysles' venture co-directed by Ellen Hovde, I knew I would make every attempt to produce observational movies in the future. Later on, while studying Anthropological Film, also taught by Professor Levin, I had a chance to watch Jean Rouch's (1960) *Chronicle of a Summer*. This film showed me the "interventionist" approach of making observational cinema.

I started experimenting with observational documentary with my first year film, *Jordan, Jordie and Me* (2007), followed by a full-length film on the subject of peace movements in America, *The War* (2008). So by the time I reached the stage of producing my thesis film, I had become very confident in my skill of following the action with minimal interaction. From the moment I planned to produce this documentary, the process began to unfold as an adventure. I was amazed at the volume of information that could be derived with patience, alertness and skill to move the camera in the direction of happening action. Everything could become part of my documentary if captured successfully. So there was a constant urgency to keep shooting.

People I was filming were part of my life. They had layers that they had never exposed to me as mother or wife. These layers were being peeled one by one so subtly that none of us involved even seemed to be conscious of this process. As per the classification given by Barbash (1997), there are different schools of observational filmmaking. Primarily these can be divided in two categories, noninterventionist and self-effacing, and actively interventionist (Barbash 1997). Drew Associates waited until the crisis happened and were noninterventionists, whereas, Rouch and Morin tried to use their camera as a catalyst to induce crisis actively intervening in the action. I deliberately took the middle route, as this documentary demanded both.

Although observational cinema has its own challenges and shortcomings, I prefer it on a matter of principle feeling that it benefits and fulfills the needs of my projects. This style of production gives space to both, my characters, and my audiences. Barbash (1997) is of the view that, as with fiction films, observational documentaries let the spectators put the pieces together for themselves: they proceed by implication rather than demonstration, and so demand more active viewing experience (Barbash 1997). *A Dream Lost in Dream* is not a story served on a platter with only one possible interpretation. It's an experience that requires complete participation of the audience to find a full array of interpretations.

On Exposing Myself and the Process: Reflexivity

In the early stages of developing the concept, I knew that this documentary had to be reflexive. Reflexive not in the sense of having my presence in the documentary by virtue of being part of the story, but consciously revealing myself and the process in the sense defined by Jay Ruby. Ruby (2000) is of the view that to be reflexive is to structure a product in such a way that the audience assumes that the characteristics of the producer's life, the process of construction, and the product are coherent beings (Ruby, 2000).

A Dream Lost in Dream, was not only Brij's story, it was mine too. I wanted my audiences to know my relationship with the characters, not as merely a filmmaker intervening with the camera, but also in a supporting character of a wife, and a mother. It was important that my story be told through my husband and children's reaction to my presence as someone operating in total contradiction to my role as wife and a mother, someone who wasn't expected to reveal the private life of the family. I wanted to reveal myself and my relationship with the process and the 'people' without being visibly present on the screen. Having unhidden microphones in scenes, interaction of characters with the documentarian, their annoyance of camera presence and inclusion of editing process as part of the story were some of the conscious steps taken in this direction.

Since the subject matter of the film was very personal to me, it was vulnerable to the dangers of being autobiographical which certainly was not my intention. Ruby's clear definitions for autobiographical and reflexive work served as a beacon giving me directions in structuring the documentary. While differentiating between the reflexive and autobiographical communicative work, he has stated:

The author clearly has had to be self-conscious in the process of making the autobiography.... but to be reflexive is not only to be self conscious but to be sufficiently self conscious to know what aspects of self must be revealed to an audience to enable them to understand the process employed as well as the resultant product, and to know how much revelation is purposive, intentional, and when it becomes narcissistic or accidentally revealing (Ruby, 2000).

As described by Ruby (2000) there are two rival schools of thoughts of reflexivity. The rejecting side views it as narcissistic, overly personal, subjective, ugly, untidy, confusing and unscientific.

On the other side of the line, the idea of reflexivity is accepted as an essential element for any kind of communicative product. It destroys the illusion and causes the audiences to break their suspension of disbelief (Ruby, 2000). I am essentially a follower of the school of thought that accepts reflexivity as natural and inherent ingredient in any literary or visual communication. In my opinion, it is more important to be honest with the audience about every element that goes into film than being objective to prove your product as scientific. Reflexivity empowers the audiences to make decisions on the interpretation of the film. I do not want to take away the invaluable collaboration of my audiences from the media produced by me.

On Being an Ethnographic Documentary

Before we go any further on this subject, it is important to understand the very nature of an ethnographic film. It is difficult to define or understand the phrase ‘ethnographic understanding’ without having some kind of definition for anthropology. Definition given by American Anthropology Association’s website is a good start to understand the function of anthropology. The definition has been described as:

Though easy to define, anthropology is difficult to describe. Its subject matter is both exotic (e.g. Star lore of Australian aborigines), and commonplace (anatomy of foot). And its focus is both sweeping (the evolution of language) and microscopic (the use-wear of obsidian tools). Anthropologist may study ancient Mayan hieroglyphics, the music of African Pygmies, and the corporate culture of a U.S. Car manufacturer... But always, the common goal links these vastly different projects: to advance knowledge of who we are, how we come to be that way-and where we may go in the future (American Anthropological Association, 2009).

It is ironic that despite repeated criticism of anthropological films by various anthropologists, it is almost impossible even for the most esteemed organization of anthropology community to define anthropology without the aid of “visual” examples. This definition in itself is self-evidentiary of the fact that the gaps left in the written ethnographic or anthropological research can be filled with some kind of visual data.

Without a clear understanding of definition or scope of ethnography, it would be difficult to understand the function of ethnographic film in anthropological research. Pink (2007) stated that:

Rather than a method for collection of data, ethnography is a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on ethnographers’ own experiences. It does not claim to produce an objective and truthful account of reality, but should aim to offer versions of ethnographer’s experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which knowledge was produced. This may entail reflexive, collaborative or participatory methods (Pink, 2007).

These traits of ethnographic research described by Pink have striking similarities with observational cinema. One might argue that though shot observationally, the observational filmmaker edits out the footage that does not fit the narrative of the final product, but so does an anthropologist while writing the narrative of the ethnographic research.

Franz Boas, one of the founding figures of anthropology, understood the value of the collaboration between film and anthropology, after watching Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North*, Boas wrote a letter to the producer of the film. Ruby (2000), while referring to this letter said:

In a letter dated March 23 1933, to Will Hays, the head of the motion Pictures Producers and Distributors, Boas suggested that it might be possible for the anthropologist and

filmmakers to make films collaboratively that would be both scientifically useful and popular at the box office (Ruby 2000).

Although, the usefulness of the ethnographic film still hung on the notion of being scientific, yet it was a good start to at least get an acknowledgement of it being worthwhile in anthropological research.

The usefulness of ethnographic film in anthropological research cannot be denied, however it is important to understand what it is that makes a visual communicative product ethnographically useful. It may seem that there is a formula against which the ethnographicness of a visual media can be measured, however the fact is that years of experience and research has not been able to determine a definite definition of ethnographic film. The most important thing that has sprouted from past visual ethnographic experiences is that due to the subjectiveness of individual understanding there cannot be a concrete formula to determine the ethnographic worth of a film. As Pink has stated:

It is impossible to measure the ethnographicness of any image in terms of its form, content or potential as an observational document, visual record or piece of data. Instead, the ethnographicness of any image or representation is contingent on how it is situated, interpreted and used to invoke meanings and knowledge that are of ethnographic interest (Pink, 2007).

Films like Rouch's *Chronicle of a Summer*, Marshalls' *Hunters*, and Gardner's controversial film, *Nuer*, fit into the parameters laid down by Pink. *Nuer*, was accused of being ethnographically shallow, however Heider suggests that its ethnographic usefulness could not be denied. He has stated:

Even if *The Nuer* is ethnographically shallow, it has real use in teaching anthropology. It can give students general holistic feeling for the people, their cattle, and their environment, helping them build a cognitive landscape into which they can place Evan-Pritchard's written descriptions of Nuer social organization and ritual (Heider, 2006).

A Dream Lost in Dream has great potential of not only invoking meaning and knowledge that are of ethnographical interest; it can also find its usefulness in academia. At one level, the film represents physical aspect of living and working environment of East Indian immigrants in America. On the other hand, it digs deeper than mere physical elements and penetrates into the psyche of its characters making it a perfect complement to any anthropological research involving East Indian immigrants in Western world.

CHALLENGES

I challenged myself to remain true to the principles of Cinema Verite. Hence I refrained myself from directing the characters to move, act, or speak to the advantage of camera. This decision caused me some very serious difficulties that I tried to overcome using various techniques. Some of these difficulties are discussed as under:

Audio

It is an observational documentary shot in natural environment. For example, a restaurant kitchen with ice machine, ventilation system, and coolers etc. Shotgun was used to minimize the background noise. The shotgun had to be mounted on the camera to avoid dependence on another crewmember whenever possible. This allowed me to shoot whenever the opportunity arose without having to wait on others.

Lighting

Day light balanced, flicker free lamps both inside and outside replaced fluorescent lighting in the kitchen.

Scheduling

The documentary was scheduled to be finished with the principle photography by the end of March 2009. However due to its observational nature and other challenges, the film production was dragged into the middle of December 2010. As the sequences were able to stand-alone by themselves, the editing process began without finishing the entire shoot, in 2010.

Shooting Your Family and Close Friends

Access is a big issue in making a documentary. A great level of unhindered access and cooperation is desired from the characters for a documentary production to be a successful venture. As far as access was concerned, working with family and friends was an asset. However, in case of *A Dream Lost in Dream*, it became a very overwhelming venture for the family as a whole. At times my family felt really smothered by my presence. Mehak and Fateh clearly voiced their opinion by yelling in the camera and asking me to stop pointing the camera at them. In order to give them some space from my presence as a documentarian, I brought other cinematographers on board. However, due to language barrier it didn't work very well. I tried backing off a little and stopped shooting intermittently. All this added to the unpredictability, extending my production phase.

Crisis of the characters, specially my husband's, became my own crisis. It made me feel uncomfortable whenever I had to shoot him in some kind of crisis or difficult situation. It was difficult to be just a shooter without intervening or reacting to their issues. Characters started addressing me, demanding interaction from my side that led me to become an important and 'invisible' character behind the camera. To make myself visible in the film without overshadowing other characters' story, I allowed myself to be the anchor of the film connecting the lost threads of the story, and introducing the characters, including myself.

“Self”

Everything being shot was my own private life as a “person”. It was hard to go through this ‘bare it all’ kind of process. This posed some serious challenges as a director and editor of this documentary. However, I have tried to resolve these issues without affecting the story, or the

purpose of this documentary. In other words it was very strenuous to keep a balance between my role as a mother, wife, and a friend with my role as the director of this documentary.

Observational and Cinema Verite Documentary

Since I had vowed to stand true to cinema verite tradition, I faced many challenges during the whole process of its making. The first issue was the ‘unsaid’ pressure of my presence as a wife, mother, friend, a host, and filmmaker on the participants. They knew me, and the issue I was trying to raise through this documentary. So, one may think if my presence allowed the characters be themselves to tell their story? The answer is both, yes and no. ‘Yes’ because my very presence, as mother, wife, and a close friend, made it difficult for me, and the characters of the film to become comfortable enough to ignore my presence, and ‘no’ because I made a conscious effort to avoid polluting the natural flow of action as much as possible. Throughout the production, they continuously acknowledged my presence with respect to my relationship with them as a person not a filmmaker. They directly interacted with one another, dragging me into the story as a character for one reason or another. For example, Brij, out of the frustration of not being able to secure the bank loan, directly addressed me as an unemployed wife and life partner. He lamented, “Vindu, sometimes I wish that you had a job worth three-four thousand, I would have taken the loan from the property owner itself.”

Things became even more challenging when the characters started fusing my identity as a person intimately known to them, with my identity as a documentarian, a complete outsider. They seemed to be manipulated by “Vindu”, a mom, wife, and a friend, into giving too much access to “Arvind”, the documentarian. I have intentionally included some footage to expose the annoyance of my characters, and their reaction to my presence and access in their lives as a filmmaker. In the party scene shot at Brij’s home, Sanjay, Brij’s friend, reacts mildly to this

intrusion. He says, “Oh! Sister in-law, you are recording me!! Whereas Mehak, my daughter does so in a ruder manner by yelling, “Stop, you drive us insane with that thing (camera).”

The presence of the camera for longer periods of time in characters’ life poses another difficulty. They become extremely aware of the power and function of the camera, and know how to manipulate it in their favour. For example, Brij stubbornly refused to move on to any other topic of conversation without Manas answering his question about his skill as a pilot instructor. He demanded, “Rate me as an instructor...” I heard it in my head as, “Rate me as an instructor, while this camera is running. I want the whole world to know that I was and am a good instructor”.

So without doubt, the whole process of production and post-production was an unavoidable tug of war, in which the characters of the documentary were on one side and me, on ‘both’. In the end, I came as producer, director, shooter, editor and also one of the main characters of the film anchoring the whole process.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

Children above 12 years of age to adults of any age worldwide

Educational institutions

Indian channels worldwide

BASIS OF FEASIBILITY

Being the wife of the protagonist, and my relationship to the local Indian community, I expected unhindered access to the characters. However, I cannot claim it was as easy as expected. Due to a less formal relationship with me characters were able to express their hostility towards camera, and refused to be shot at times.

Due to my experience as a social activist, human rights attorney and a documentarian in India, I expected myself to be fully versed with the socio-cultural psyche of my community. I believe, I overestimated myself. I felt that I had overlooked some post immigration behavioral patterns that were exposed to me during the shoot. However my solid background in social activism did come handy.

I am a resident of the city of Denton and most of the characters in the documentary lived and/or worked in the Denton area. As the principal photography took place in this area it was very convenient for me to interact and work with the characters of the documentary.

The main characters understood the intense process of making an observational documentary. After few useless shoots, they were finally eager to collaborate on this production without paying much attention to my presence around them. I also had unconditional guidance and support from the Radio, TV, and Film Department, University of North Texas, Denton.

KEY PERSONNEL

Producer, Director and Editor: Arvind 'Daman' Singh

Cinematographer: Arvind Singh

Additional Camera: J. Fredrick Dent, Marek Dojs

Audio: Arvind Daman Singh, Libia Lazcano

Consultant, Ethnographer: J. Fredrick Dent

Production Advisor: Prof. Ben Levin, Masters of Fine Arts Coordinator, U.N.T.

Dr. Samuel Sauls, Associate Professor, Department of Radio, TV, and Film

Dr. Harry Benshoff, Associate Professor, Department of Radio, TV, and Film

Dr. Alicia Re Cruz, Professor, Department of Anthropology

BUDGET

Please see Appendix B for the budget document.

APPENDIX A
PROSPECTUS FOR *MADE IN INDIA*

PROSPECTUS FOR *MADE IN INDIA*

Arvind Singh, M.F.A. Student 3rd year

Thesis Proposal, Master of Fine Arts, March 2009

Thesis Committee:

1. Prof. Ben Levin, Committee Chair, Major Professor and Coordinator Masters of Fine Arts program in the Department of Radio, Television and Film (RTVF)
2. Dr. Samuel Sauls, Advisor/Director Graduate studies, RTVF
3. Dr. Harry Benschhoff, Professor, RTVF
4. Dr. Alicia Re Cruz, Chairperson, Department of Anthropology

Aspect Ratio: 16:9

Shooting format: High definition

Length: 45 minutes

Language: Primarily Hindi and English with English subtitles

THEME

The film, *Made in India* is an observational and ethnographic portrayal of behavioral pattern of Indian male immigrants in America that stems out of the struggle between their rigid and conservative upbringing in India and pressure to match the high expectation to ‘assimilate’ in the host society.

DESCRIPTION

Made in India is focused on the cultural, financial, professional and emotional dilemma of first generation of Indian male immigrants in America. It also portrays the significance of a unique support and ventilation system that these immigrants build within their own community

to counter their sense of insecurity and fears. The film is focused on 'males' because due to their divine and higher status in Indian society, their assimilation process in a western country is much more emotionally draining than their female counterparts.

Set in a university town in North Texas, the filmmaker will observe the pressures of economic and cultural assimilation process of her husband as a person, father, friend, businessperson and a frustrated professional after immigration. Each role played by him will portray the conflict between his 'real' and 'masked' self that has emerged out of the unsaid but powerful pressure to fit in a social and cultural environment totally 'alien' to him and his belief system. Made in India is a window through which the audience will be able to have some glimpse of a candid struggle, thinking pattern and behavior of members of Indian community in America.

PURPOSE

Neither a classless society, nor a society of strict and impenetrable social barriers is good; each class should have constant additions and defections; the classes, while remaining distinct, should be able to mix freely; and they should have a community of culture with each other which will give them something in common, more fundamental than the community which each class has with its counterpart in another society...Finally, a people is judged by history according to its contribution to the culture of other peoples flourishing at the same time and according to its contribution to the cultures which arise afterwards. (Elliot, 1948)

America is generally referred as a big melting pot of diverse populations migrating from all over the globe. However after taking a closer look, this country seems more like a colorful collage rather than a melting pot. Day after day, people from all over the world come to this country to make it their home and realize their own version of American Dream. However after

putting their first foot on this dreamland they realize that they are different from the majority of the people already settled here. In the same way these immigrants seem quite alien to the host society. This socio-cultural 'alien-ness' towards each other creates a sense of insecurity and unease that gives birth to a modern version of superimposed cultural segregation. Ironically, people from all these diverse groups seem to assimilate quite well on economic level as economy remains the foremost cause of migrating and settling down in this country. Once the economic needs are met, people retract themselves back into their own socio-cultural bunkers with a hope to save themselves from any kind of cultural invasion. As stated by William Branigin, Washington Post Staff Writer,

In fact, the very concept of assimilation is being called into question as never before.

Some sociologists argue that the melting pot often means little more than "Anglo conformity" and that assimilation is not always a positive experience – for either society or the immigrants themselves. And with today's emphasis on diversity and ethnicity, it has become easier than ever for immigrants to avoid the melting pot entirely. Even the metaphor itself is changing, having fallen out of fashion completely with many immigration advocacy and ethnic groups. They prefer such terms as the "salad bowl" and the "mosaic," metaphors that convey more of a sense of separateness in describing this nation of immigrants. (Branigin, 1998)

In today's high-speed world, amalgamation of world population happens so quickly that people are not afforded any chance to understand each other's roots. It is important to understand that people are not raised with an understanding of moving to an alien land or to live with populations alien to them. They are raised to operate within the parameters of society of their origin. Different circumstances bring different people on a common platform but not with

common understanding of life. Expectation of assimilation coupled with the high pressure to meet this expectation makes people insecure, forcing them to clutch even tighter to their own culture, social setup, spiritual and religious beliefs, identities and sometimes all of these together.

Migrants are fearful of losing the known elements of their life because unknown scares them. In the same manner host society feels invaded at many levels. An enraged author of an article published on a website called Vdare.com states:

Immigrants are not assimilating to America; America is assimilating to the immigrants. Not only with respect to language but also with dress and other cultural customs, immigrants are retaining what they brought with them, not adopting what Americans do. This week the Washington Post carried a beaming story about Muslim women in the United States preferring to wear their traditional headscarves. "It's gotten to the point where I felt this is my culture and my heritage," Lisa Hashem, a college graduate with a degree in engineering, told the Post. That's terrific. Why doesn't she go back home where she can enjoy her culture and her heritage all the time? This week also the Washington Times reported on the growing presence in American theatres of Indian films—one of the most popular is something called "Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham"—due to "the increasing number of Indian immigrants in the United States." There's nothing wrong with the films—except their themes, plots, music, language, and stars aren't ours. If Lisa Hashem can have her culture and her heritage and Indian immigrants theirs, why can't we have ours? (Francis, 2002)

To generalize, higher the intensity of fear of unknown elements of a culture, tighter the cultural shell. The best way to overcome this insecurity is to know the 'unknown' so that there is a sense of comfort in the diversity rather than pressure on either side.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

The process of undergoing either behavioral or structural/socioeconomic assimilation can occur in a linear or "straight-line" manner in which the passage of time and the succession of generations lead to increasing economic, cultural, political, and residential integration into American society. Or it can happen in a non-linear, circular, or "bumpy" manner in which Asian Americans revive or retain old cultural traditions, norms, and behaviors and choose to remain somewhat isolated from mainstream American society (the "ethnic resilience" model) or alternatively, to combine elements of both traditional Asian (although they may modify old traditions and values to fit their contemporary circumstances) and mainstream American culture (sometimes referred to as "segmented assimilation"). (Le, C.N., Internet resource). This film is mainly focused on the segmented and ethnic resilience models of assimilation of primarily Indian males. My decision to focus on only male population stems out of mainly one reason: their religio-cultural background.

Religio-cultural Background

Although India is one of the most developing country in South Asian region, yet it has not been able to free itself from the deep rooted effect of their dominant religion, Hinduism. It is also important to understand that India does not mean the twenty percent of the diverse, urbanized and metropolitan India that most of the Western world is acquainted to. 'Indian Society' in actuality refers to the illiterate and poverty stricken majority population living in rural India or urban slums. In absence of State funded education system, this major section of society does not have access to any formal school system even on elementary level. As a result of this extreme lack of education and inability to read and write, majority of Indian society heavily depends upon Brahmin Pujaries (Hindu clergy) for guidance and knowledge required to shape its

way of life. This blind psyche becomes rigid and sometimes vicious towards any new thought or practice that is not professed or supported by this major religious discourse.

Hinduism affects every aspect of life in Indian society. Gender discrimination and caste system are part and partial of Hindu philosophy and are considered essential. Male members of Indian society have been bestowed with a very special and distinct status to maintain balance in society. Nobody dares to upset this 'safe' balance despite the legal recourse available against this unfortunate imbalance. The status of women depends on the males of the family, whereas males are granted and guaranteed the right to superiority of status by birth. Dr. Ramakrishnan, University of Texas, Austin states: There is no denying that our society is patriarchal and propagating the family line by producing a son is the sacred duty of every male, especially in Hindu culture, which is a subset of Indian culture. So everybody gets married, no matter what their sexual orientation may be. As long as they marry and perform their duties of having a family, and taking care of their children, society often turns a blind eye to whatever else they may do, especially if they are men (Narula, 2002).

Several studies on raising children in Indian families have shown that one of the ways to instill gender specific expectations is a rigid division of types of work allotted to boys and girls. Generally speaking boys are supposed to be raised as breadwinners of the family, whereas girls are raised to be mothers and wives. So all the housework falls under 'womanly work' and that outside the home as 'manly work' (Verma et al., 2006).

According to the statement of one of the characters of this film,

I literally cried when the manager of convenience store I worked for asked me to mop the floor and clean the restroom. I never cleaned back home. It was always my wife,

sister, mother or the maidservant who cleaned. Not me or my dad! It was not our job...I did not become a pilot to do womanly or low caste chores!

Another character has stated:

I never thought of women as intellectual beings, so I always had issues accepting them as my supervisors'. That is why I started my own business and left my job as a chemist... Verma et al. have stated:

Masculinity is an overwhelming construct in the minds of men providing a framework to determine their self-concept and cultural rules relating to their actions (Verma, Narula, 2006). When these Indian men with a pre-programmed and rigid standard of 'masculinity' migrate to American society, their culture specific image of 'maleness' gets shattered in pieces. Their conservative psyche makes the struggle and assimilation of an Indian male harder than his female counterpart who rather seems to have a sigh of relief from the constant social pressure on her in India. This deep rooted but neatly camouflaged psyche adds additional pressure on other family members dependent on them, especially children who have to struggle even harder to maintain a balance between the two worlds. Considering their status and control on their families, the intimate observation of Indian men will allow the audience to understand the behavior of Indian community in general.

PREVIOUSLY PRODUCED FILMS

Owing to the super human status of Indian males, and dependence of women and children on them, Indian society becomes a breeding ground for victimization of women and children in various shapes and forms with an expectation to suffer in silence in the name of cultural values. So undoubtedly, many filmmakers tend to make films focusing on the actual act of abuse but very seldom try to go to the roots of this issue, which is the general mentality of

Indian community. Also there are not many documentary films on the issue of assimilation of South Asian community in Western society. However a number of narrative films have been produced to make the point. American Chai, Bend it like Beckham, Monsoon wedding, and Green Card are some of the successful films to fall under this newly emerging genre of Indian Cinema. Even in these films 'effect' is portrayed more than the 'cause.' All of these films have been successful in portraying the effect of this issue, but very few of them were able to shed light on mechanism of this 'expected' and 'accepted' victimization.

This documentary will attempt to shed some light on this issue through observing the conversations and behavior of Indian men who are supposed to be guardians of Indian culture. I am particularly fascinated by the simplicity of Mira Nair's (originally a documentarian) narrative film Namesake. The film is a simple portrayal of a well- educated Indian immigrant couple that migrates to America. Their children are born and raised in America and the conflict is built on the silent and passive tension that constantly runs through the two generations raised in two totally different environments. There is no active conflict except some passive but powerful moments that bring out the conflict of cultures and different styles of upbringing. The film is shot in observational documentary style. The older generation keeps struggling to hold onto their Indian identities and dreaming of going back to India, whereas younger generation keeps trying to sever all ties to break free from their Indian identity in order to assimilate in American society. In the end, both the generations can't escape from their roots. The older one moves back to India and the younger comes back to its roots by accepting the Indian identity while living in America.

I am influenced by the Jean Rouch's ethnographic film *Chronicles of Summer*. In this film the filmmaker is trying to conceive his relationship with his own people in France. In his own words: " I was discovering my own people" (Rouch and Fled, P- 136). In the proposed film

Made in India, the filmmaker intends to turn her camera to observe her own people in America. In fact after migrating from India this is her first film about her own community. This film will not only allow the audience to take an intimate look at the behavior, aspirations, hopes and despairs of section of Indians in America but will also allow the filmmaker to bridge the distance she has created with her own people. Diaspora triggers people into survival mode and they get disconnected from themselves to feed the expectation of assimilation. The filmmaker is no exception to this rule and after being disconnected for so long from herself and her people, she intends to explore her own roots while analyzing the effect of nourishment of these roots in an alien environment.

It seems fairly simple to observe your own people, community and family, however, it is harder than one can imagine. It is a 'bare it all' kind of experience for a filmmaker without being judgmental about the characters that are or assumed to be filmmaker's mirror image in one way or another. However, importance of these kind of films cannot be emphasized enough. These films not only serve as a mirror for the filmmaker's own people but also provide a voyeuristic window to another culture or community enabling them to understand the situation and opening them to reasoning.

CHARACTERS

Main Characters

- Brij: An Indian restaurant owner from North India and a former pilot instructor
- Tony: A Laundromat owner from South India and a former chemist
- Sanjay: Owner of dry-cleaning shops, originally from west India

Supporting Characters

- Arvind: Brij's wife, anchor, and filmmaker

- Mark: Chinese restaurant owner from China
- Manas: Flying student in US Flying Academy, Denton Texas
- Mark: A white Texan
- Raj: Post Doctoral student in Biology Dept. U.N.T.
- Bhabi: Raj's wife
- Amar: A U.N.T. Alumni from India
- Vinita: A Post Doctoral student in Biology Dept. and Amar's wife
- Falguni: Sanjay's wife
- Mehak and Fateh: Brij's children
- Arpana: from Nepal, restaurant employee
- Kulsum: from Pakistan, restaurant employee
- Customers of Rasoi, Indian restaurant

FORM

Style of Production

- Partly 'observational,' and 'reflexive.'
- The filmmaker will serve as an anchor to move the story forward with her voiceover.
- The film will be made with an ethnographic understanding to some extent.
- Interviews may be conducted if required to move the story forward.
- Archival material may be used to bring the contrast in two distinct societies.
- Religious and traditional music will be used.

STRUCTURE

The film will be highly conversational as conversations are the crux to understand the adjustment issues of different characters of the film. However a conscious attempt will be made to bring in as many visual elements as possible.

NARRATION

The filmmaker will be a character of the film as Brij's wife through her voice behind the camera, observing and understanding the changes in his life after coming to America. However she will bring in her voice only to fill the gaps whenever required or when characters start interacting with her. Other than that she will let the characters tell their own stories.

SHORT TREATMENT

The documentary will start with the images of morning routine of Brij's restaurant that will end with the visuals of fluttering and torn plastic bags covering the hoses of shut down gas pumps outside the restaurant building that used to be a gas station. Brij's voiceover states that he needs a loan for his ailing business. His business suffers due to its proximity and dependence on the University of North Texas. During summer the university closes down for several months leaving this town pretty much deserted. After the titles Brij is seen sitting outside the restaurant with his friend who is on phone with his wife making an excuse that he will be late for dinner because the filmmaker (addressed as Vindu), is filming him with her big camera.

Thereafter the film will traverse between Brij's struggle to secure a loan to buy the business property that has been foreclosed by the financial institution of his former landowner, his insecurities about his children growing in Western culture and his relationship with his clique of friends. Almost in the middle of the documentary, Brij's past as a commercial pilot will start

surfacing through his interaction with his restaurant customers who are trainee pilots from India at a nearby flying school. Thereafter his inner conflict will be heightened due to the conflict between his struggle to survive as a business owner and his passion to get back to flying and convert his Indian Commercial Pilot License to American License.

Although Brij's individual struggle will be the thread of the film, the entire film will expose the audience to Indian's socio-cultural value system, political understanding, religious beliefs and their relationship to the western world through Brij's interaction and relation with other characters, celebration of their festivals, their work environment etc. The ending of the film will depend on the outcome of Brij's efforts to convert his commercial pilot license and secure a loan for his restaurant business. If he succeeds with his loan and/or his license conversion the film will have a definite resolution. However in case of his failure to achieve his goals, the audience will at least gain an understanding of psyche of Indian immigrants based on their own socio-religion background and their constant struggle to be part of the economy and culture of American society.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

- Children above 12 years of age to adults of any age worldwide
- Educational institutions
- Indian channels worldwide.

FEASIBILITY

- Filmmaker is a first generation Indian herself and also wife of the main character. Her relationship to Indian community and the main character gives her unusual access required to produce this documentary.

- Apart from being a social activist in India the filmmaker has also made films about socio-political issues of her community.
- Main characters live in Denton area and as the principal photography is going to take place in this area it is very convenient for the local production team too.
- Main characters understand the process and are eager to collaborate on this production
- Filmmaker has support from Radio, TV, and Film Department, University of North Texas, Denton

EXPECTED CHALLENGES

Audio

It is an observational film to be filmed in a natural environment of a restaurant kitchen with ice machine, ventilation system and coolers. I will use boom and wireless microphone, so that the background noise is minimized and at the same time the sound bites of characters are not missed.

Lighting

Day light balanced, flicker free lamps will replace fluorescent lighting in the kitchen.

Closeness to Characters

It may be an asset but I am aware that it can become a hurdle too. Crisis of the characters, specially my husband can become my own crisis. Characters can start addressing me demanding interaction from my side that may lead me to be an important and 'invisible' character behind the camera. Owing to the closeness of relationship they may feel too smothered by my presence. I have planned to introduce my relationship to the main characters in the beginning of the film so that the audience doesn't keep guessing about me. In order to give them some space from my presence, I have planned to bring other cinematographers on board too. Also I may have to back

off a little and stop shooting on some occasions. This unpredictability may cause prolonging the duration of production phase.

KEY PERSONNEL

- Producer, Director & Editor: Arvind 'Daman' Singh
- Cinematographer & Editor: Arvind Singh, J. Fredrick Dent, Marek Dojs
- Audio: Arvind Daman Singh, Libia Lazcano
- Consultant, Ethnographer: J. Fredrick Dent
- Production Advisor: Prof. Ben Levin, Masters of Fine Arts Coordinator, University of North Texas, Denton

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

The film is scheduled to finish the principle photography by the end of March 2009. The first rough cut will be shown in the third week of April 2009 followed by another rough cut in the first week of May. The film will be ready to screen in the mid of June 2009.

APPENDIX B
BUDGET

PRODUCTION BUDGET

A Dream Lost in "Dreams"

Submitted by: Arvind Singh

EXPENSE TYPE	RATES	TIME/AMOUNT REQUIRED	TOTAL	MATCHING CASH \$	IN KIND \$	FUNDS REQUESTED \$
1.SCRIPT	SEE 003	FLAT FEE	PACKAGED WITH DIRECTOR	0	0	NA
001 Researcher	SEE 003	FLAT FEE	PACKAGED WITH DIRECTOR	0	0	NA
001 (A) NARRATION WRITER	See 003	FLAT FEE	PACKAGED WITH DIRECTOR	0	0	NA
001(B)LYRICS WRITER	500	FLAT FEE	500	0	500	0
001(C)TRANSLATOR	500	FLAT FEE	500	0	500	0
001(D)ADVISOR INDIAN CULTURE	2000	FLAT FEE	2000	0	2000	0
011(E) CONSULTANT ETHNOGRAPHER	2000	FLAT FEE	2000	0	2000	0
2. PRODUCTION UNIT						
002 PRODUCER	SEE 003	18 MONTHS	PACKAGED WITH DIRECTOR	0	0	NA
002(A) PRODUCTION ADVISOR	2000	FLAT FEE	2000	0	2000	0
3. DIRECTION						
003 DIRECTOR	15000	FLAT FEE	15000	0	13000	2000
003(A) ASST. DIRECTOR	25000	FLAT FEE	2000	0	2000	0
4. PRODUCTION STAFF						
004 PRODUCTION ASST	2500	FLAT FEE	2000	0	0	2000
5. CAMERA						
005 CINEMATOGRAPHER	5000	FLAT FEE	5000	0	5000	0
005(A) ASST. CINEMATOGRAPHER	1000	2	2000	0	2000	0
005(B) EXPENDABLES	43	2	86	0	0	86
005(C)CAMERA PACKAGE	13500	FLAT FEE	13500	0	13500	0
005(D)LIGHTING EQUIPMENT	9300	FLAT FEE	9300	0	9300	0
6. SOUND						
006 BOOM OPERATOR	SEE 006(A)	FLAT FEE	PACKAGED WITH SOUND RECORDIST	NA	NA	NA
006(A) SOUND RECORDIST	2500	FLAT FEE	2500	0	2500	0
006(B) AUDIO EQUIPMENT	1500	FLAT FEE	1500	0	1500	1500
7. TRAVELING						
007 RENTAL VEHICLE	325/WK	4	13000	1300	0	0
007(A) DRIVER	500	FLAT FEE	500	0	500	0
007(B) GAS	1500	FLAT AVERAGE	1500	0	0	1500
8. LOCATION EXPENSE						
008 FOOD	225	TOTAL AVERAGE	225	0	0	225
008(A) FIRST AID	35/BOX	2	70	0	0	75
008(B) WATER & DRINKS	600	FLAT AVERAGE	600	0	0	600
9. RAW MATERIAL						
009 FLASH CARDS	624	BUNDLED	624	0	0	624
009(A) HARD DRIVES 1 TB	229	2	458	0	458	0
10. BOARDING AND LODGING	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
11. INSURANCE						
0011 EQUIPMENT	1019	2 YEARS	1019	1019	0	0
0011(A)HEALTH & TRAVEL	NA					
12. MISC. EXPENSES						
0012 CATRIDGES	34	6	390	0	0	390
0012(A) OFFICE SUPPLIES	588	FLAT	588	588	0	0
TOTAL			78860	2907	56758	9000

POST PRODUCTION BUDGET						
13. EDITING						
0013 EDITOR	3000	2 YEARS	3000	0	3000	0
0013(A)CLOSED CAPTIONING	400	FLAT FEE	400	0	0	400
14. SOUND						
0014 VOICE RECORDING	NA					
0014(A) MUSIC RECORDING	1500	FLAT FEE	1500	0	0	1500
15. TRANSCRIPTIONS						
15	350	FLAT FEE	350	350	0	0
TOTAL			5250	350	3000	1900
TOTAL FUNDS REQUESTED						
PRODUCTION						9000
POST PRODUCTION						1900
TOTAL						10900

LIST OF REFERENCES

- American Anthropology Association. Retrieved on August 23, 2009 from
<http://www.aaanet.org/about/WhatisAnthropology.cfm>
- Barbash, I., Taylor, L. (1997). *Cross cultural filmmaking: A handbook for making ethnographic films videos*. Berkley: University of California Press.
- Bacon, J. (1996) *Community, Family, and Assimilation among Asian Indian Immigrants*. Life Lines. New York: Oxford University Press. Questia. 31 July 2009
<http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=51938032>.
- Branigin, W. (1998, May 25) Immigrants Shunning Idea of Assimilation. *Washington Post*, p A1; retrieved on February 15, 2009 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/national/longterm/meltingpot/melt0525a.htm>
- Chadha, G. (2002). Bend it like Beckham [Motion picture] UK: Kintop Pictures.
- Craig, J. (2001). "A fist is stronger than five fingers": Caste and dominance in rural North India. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, Vol. 26, No. 2 (2001), p. 217-236.
- Devi, U. (2002). Globalization, information technology and Asian Indian women in US. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 37 (43), 4421-4428.
- Eliot, T.S. (1962). *Notes towards Definition of Cultures*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Francis, S. (2002) Sam Francis Archives May 2002, retrieved on February 15, 2009
http://www.vdare.com/francis/no_assimilation.htm
- Heider, K.G. (2006). *Ethnographic Film*. University of Texas Press.
- Hoxie, F. (2001). *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

- Jain, A., and Belsky, J. (1997). Fathering and acculturation: Immigrant Indian families with young children. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 59(4).
- Kalita, S. M. (2003). *Suburban Sahibs: Three Immigrant Families and Their Passage from India to America*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.
- Le, C.N. (2009) "Assimilation & Ethnic Identity" Asian Nation: The landscape of Asian America. Retrieved on August 4, 2009, <http://www.asian-nation.org/assimilation.shtml>
- Lewin, Ellen. (2006) *Feminist Anthropology: A Reader*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Maysles A., Maysles D., Zwerin, C (1968). *Salesman* [Documentary] USA: Maysles Films Inc.
- Maysles, A., Hovde E. (1975). *Grey Gardens* [Documentary] USA: Maysles Films Inc.
- Mehta, A. (2001). *American Chai* [Motion picture] USA: Dream Merchants Fusion Pictures.
- Mehta, R. and Belk, R.W. (1991). Artifacts, identity, and transition: Favorite possessions of Indians and Indian immigrants to the United States. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17(4).
- Mia (2006). Auditory Hallucinations, Homeopathy and Health Forum, <http://abchomeopathy.com/forum2.php/82772/>, retrieved on June 13, 2009.
- Moore, M. (2003). What's in a Word? Etymological Slurs. *A Review of General Semantics* 59(2), 150.
- Mukhopadhyay, A. (1994). Girl child in three Indian states. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 29 (23), p.1379-1382.
- Nair, M. (2001). *Monsoon Wedding* [Motion picture] USA: Mirabai Films Inc.
- Nair, M. (2006). *Namesake* [Motion picture] USA: Fox Searchlight Pictures.
- Narula, K.C. (2002). *Indian Gay Steps Out*. *Little India.*, retrieved on June 11, 2011 from <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:ME24dHc8XrIJ:www.littleindia.co>

m/june2002/Indian%2520Gays%2520Step%2520Out.htm+there+is+no+denying+Chibber+a
nd+narula&cd=4&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&client=firefox-a&source=www.google.com

Pauw, H. Anthropology? That's Interesting.

www.ram_wan.net/documents/05_e_journal/journal.../9_pauw.pdf

Patel, N., Power T. and Bhavnagri. (1996). Socialization values and practices of Indian immigrant parents: Correlates of modernity and acculturation. *Child Development*, 67(2), 302-313.

Pink, S. (2007). *Doing Visual Anthropology*. London: Sage Publications.

Rajasekharuni, B. (2003). Green Card Fever [Motion picture] USA: Net Effect Media

Rony, F.T. (1996). *The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographical Spectacle*. London: Duke Press.

Rouch, J., Morin, E. (1960). Edgar Morin [Documentary] France: Argos Films

Ruby, J. (2000). *Picturing Culture*. Chicago IL, University of Chicago Press.

Rustomji-Kerns, R. (Ed.). (1995). *Living in America: Poetry and Fiction by South Asian American Writers*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. Retrieved July 31, 2009, from Questia database: <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=100847176>

Salam, R. (2007). Beyond assimilation: Autonomy and gender in the second generation South Asian experience. Presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Boston, MA.

Suarez-Orozo, Marcelo M. (2000). *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Assimilation But Were Free To Ask*. The Free Library. Retrieved October 18, 2010 from <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?=cache:sU6O4C8P8gcJ:www.thefreelibrary.>

com/Everything+You+Ever+Wanted+to+Know+About+Assimilation+But+Were+Afraid...-
a066965461

Verma, R. K, Pulerwitz, J, Mahendra, V, Khandekar, S, Barker, G, Fulpagare, P., Singh, SK
(2006). Challenging and changing gender attitudes among young men in Mumbai, India.
Reproductive Health Matters, 14(28), p. 135-143, doi: 10.1016/S0968-808 (06) 28261-2)