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### Daughter of Nepal

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***DAUGHTER OF NEPAL***

**BY**

**SURBHI DEWAN**

**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of**

**Master of Fine Arts**

**Imaging Arts/Film**

**College of Imaging Arts and Sciences**

**School of Film and Animation**

**Rochester Institute of Technology**

**Rochester, New York**

**NOVEMBER 11, 2010**

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Signature/Date

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School of Film and Animation  
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COMMITTEE MEMBER

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## ABSTRACT

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*Non-fiction can never aspire to perfection or be complete.* This is an important lesson that came out of this documentary project. The idea for this project came to me in the summer of 2008 during my first visit to Nepal. Initially the idea seemed ambitious but I knew that it had to be made. Much of the research focused on understanding Nepalese politics, which at the time was going to be my primary subject for the project. The idea gradually changed form over the next few months leading to the proposal attached in Appendix 1. The evolution, as is the case with most creative projects, continued through production and post-production. Therefore, the final cut is neither perfect, nor complete.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Amongst all the support and contributions towards the culmination of this film, I would first and foremost like to thank Professor Cat Ashworth at the School of Film and Animation. She was a great support through all the ups and downs that occurred at each step between the conception and the completion of the thesis project. This project would not be possible without the consent and unconditional support of my friend, Asmita Singh (Manushi) Yami Bhattarai, her parents Dr. Baburam Bhattarai and Hisila Yami, and her aunt Dr. Kayo Yami. I would like to thank Timothy Callahan for presenting the Callahan-Rennalls Production Grant for this project in January 2010. Thank you also to Nancy Ghertner, Patti Ambrogi, and Mara Ahmad for their time and constructive feedback through the final phase in Rochester. And finally, I am eternally grateful to my parents and family in India for their kind support in everything I do.

## THE CHANCE MEETING

The roots of this project lie in a friendship that started in 2004. I met Asmita through common friends in my undergrad school. Asmita was a serious student and spent all her time in school. We became good friends over the next two years. We spent a substantial amount of time together after school, working on our respective extra curricular activities.

Asmita was friendly, yet aloof. There was something amiss about her that we all noticed, yet couldn't put our fingers on. Busy in our own lives, none of us ever bothered to dig deeper. We assumed that all of the peculiarities were a part of her personality. This went on until 2007 when one morning I got a call from a common friend. I was told a secret that I could not really comprehend at the time.

To people who know little or nothing about Nepalese politics, the names Baburam Bhattarai and Hisila Yami will not mean much. I was one such person. When I was told that my friend Asmita (who I had known for three years by then, who had come to my house a few times for lunch, met my family, stayed over one night watching 'The Motorcycle Diaries') was not really Asmita from Sikkim (a north eastern Indian State). She was Manushi, the only daughter of two very important Maoist leaders in Nepal. I was left astounded.

The shock of the deceit, the revelation of her real life story, and the feeling of unintentionally, unknowingly being a part of this intricate plan overwhelmed me. I wondered what it might be like to have to live "underground", away from your family, in constant fear for your parents' life, and to keep it all a secret from those around you. With all of these questions in my mind, I knew that this was a story that needed to be told.

## **A BRIEF HISTORY**

The word 'Nepal' conjures up images of snow clapped peaks, Buddhist monks, and beggars on the streets. The western stereotypes of this small, almost insignificant country have been reiterated uncountable times in documentary films, travel shows, and literary works. To shatter these stereotypes, and show a more realistic image of the country was one of my priorities in this project.

Nepal may not have a stable political system yet, but the rate at which the archaic social and religious practices are being challenged is admirable. The Nepali government has transitioned from a 240 year old monarchy to a democratic republic as recently as 2008. It is important to understand the various internal and external factors and players involved in this ongoing transition.

Interference from the outside, mainly from the United States, India, and China, has always made it difficult for Nepal to think and act independently. Late King Binendra enjoyed great popularity and was loved by the masses. The first democratic elections were held in 1959. Since then many political parties have existed in the country, forming and splitting at an astounding rate. One of these splinter parties, Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), happened to contest the elections in 1991. After being wrongly disqualified despite winning the majority of votes, CPN(Maoist) decided to wage a guerilla war that they had been preparing for in the rural areas. The Nepalese Civil War, also known as 'People's War', that began in a far-Western village of Rolpa soon spread all over the country. There was massive bloodshed as comrades spread their ideas of overthrowing the feudal landlords, the monarchy, and the national government, through a violent revolution in order to create a utopian casteless-classless society. These ideas were not foreign to the rural people of Nepal who have a long history of revolting against injustice.

The decade long violent War finally ended when the Maoists declared a cease-fire in 2007. The revolution had taken far too many lives and not yielded the



utopian society envisioned by the thousands of martyrs. As this realization dawned upon the leadership, they decided to try another route. A large number of political parties including the Maoists compromised on their ideology to form a coalition against the Monarchy. After getting rid of the 'bigger evil', democratic elections were held wherein the Maoists emerged as the unanimous favorites nationwide. They formed a government that lasted a mere nine months. Differences had resurfaced now that there was no common enemy. Another coalition of scattered ideologies took over and continues to head the government today. Maoists have a wide support base in the capital and the countryside. They are planning a comeback while a new Constitution is waiting to be written and United Nation SUVs drive around Kathmandu city waiting for the peace process to end.

Members of the Maoist party leadership, Hisila Yami, and her husband Dr. Baburam Bhattarai, have played a significant role in Nepal's recent history. They both went underground just before the Civil War began. They wrote articles to garner international support. They spread the ideology and mobilized the Nepalese people in the remotest of regions. They came to be popularly known as the first couple of Nepal. In the nine-month Maoist government, Baburam had assumed the role of the Finance Minister of the country, and Hisila, the Minister of Planning & Architecture. They are both members of Parliament in the present government and are working hard to bring back the Maoist party into power.

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*This was intended to serve as an abridged version of the very complicated history of Nepal, and as the immediate context of the life of my protagonist, Manushi Yami Bhattarai aka Asmita Singh.*

## **PRE-PRODUCTION**

The original proposal (Appendix 1) that was presented during the SOFA Proposal Review in May, 2009 included a second character and storyline. The Review committee advised me to narrow down the film to one storyline. After much deliberation, I chose Asmita's story since that was clearly the more urgent one. And now it was time to plan the actual production of the film. There were many logistical issues that had to be looked into. I traveled from Rochester, NY to New Delhi, India in June of 2009.

I had been in regular contact with Asmita through phone and email over the past few months. She was very excited about my visit and sent me articles about recent events to help with my research. I sent her regular updates on my proposal, and asked her for feedback. She was very open to my ideas and very eager to help out.

Research for this project started in the summer of 2008, and consisted of books, blogs, online news (both Nepalese and international), journals, films, academic articles amongst other things.

The decision for choosing my cameraman was not difficult. I had worked with Saptarishi Roy previously in India, and I really appreciated his attitude and skills with the camera. He had expressed his interest in documentary films, and I knew that his experience working for news channels would be a great asset to this production. There was originally going to be a sound person on the crew but unfortunately due to budget constraints we ended up being a two-person crew.

The equipment was rented in India for a period of 25 days. It included a Sony Z-7 HDV camera, two camera batteries, two microphones (one shotgun and one lapel mic), headphones, two XLR cables, one small documentary light kit, Minolta tripod, and one reflector. We carried with us 35 Sony HDV (1080i 60) tapes, along with a Mac Book Pro (with Final Cut Pro 6), and two external hard drives.

Nepal being one of the few countries where Indian nationals don't have travel restrictions, we did not have to worry about a visa for our three-week trip to the country. We were going to fly on Indian Airlines to Kathmandu city. Once we reached, the plan was to live in a hotel close to where Asmita resides, but Asmita insisted that we stay with her. At the time she was living in an independent one-bedroom apartment, which was on the third floor of her Aunt's house. I had apprehensions because I thought Asmita or her Aunt might not be comfortable with my cameraman living in their house. Asmita's continued insistence on the generous offer was hard to resist because sharing her apartment meant greater access to her. The plan then, for my cameraman and I, was to live in Asmita's apartment for the next three weeks.

July is the onset of monsoons in Kathmandu valley. We were going to arrive in Kathmandu right in the middle of heavy rainfall. Our production schedule covered two important national festivals – *Teej*, and the *Indra Jaatra* festival. A lot of exciting events were expected to take place in Tribhuvan University, where Asmita was the newly elected General Secretary of the Students' Union. Asmita had assured me that something is always happening on the streets of Kathmandu. She was absolutely right.

## PRODUCTION

We started shooting day one. We realized soon enough that Asmita had a very hectic life, and that living in her apartment was the best possible arrangement because it gave us a substantial amount of time with her.

The first three days, we shot a lot of B-roll in the city and did short interviews with Asmita in the mornings and evenings. I was constantly planning ahead – considering different structures for the film, and the themes I wanted to address. I kept a journal (Appendix 4) with detailed events of each day, and plans for the next. My cameraman and I reviewed tapes every night. We connected the Sony camera with the laptop, and made brief log notes for each tape.

One big decision that I had to make was whether I was going to be a character in the film or stay behind the camera. It was a very tough call. If I did not have myself inside the frame, it would be hard to include myself as a significant character in the film later on, and if I were to be within the frame, it would be hard to keep me out in case I chose to stay out in the editing stage.

There were many things I considered before making this decision. If the film were just about Asmita, it would lack conflict. She is fighting the State and her political adversaries, but I envisioned the film to be a very personal account. Also, I could not let go of my personal motivation for the film. I was interested in her life because I thought it was in a lot of ways the complete opposite of mine. If we needed a conflicting character to match Asmita, it was going to be me.

The other consideration was that through each of my projects, I try something new. I like to put myself on unfamiliar ground and see where that takes me. All my films are personal but I had, until now, kept my physical self outside the frame. This project was going to be my on screen debut! It was around half way through the edit when I decided to use myself sparsely through the film – only to fill in the gaps, and not compete with Asmita as a character.

Asmita kept very busy throughout our production schedule. The time I would get with her at night was extremely valuable. Since we were sharing a room, we would talk till late at night. We talked about her past, the time I spent with her in New Delhi, our common friends, her new life in Nepal, and her parents amongst other things. These conversations served as pre-interviews. I would ask her to recount the same anecdotes on camera the next day. I experienced an uninhibited curiosity about her life, and found myself asking questions that I wouldn't normally ask a friend. This led to a deeper level of exchange between both of us, and accelerated an intimacy in our relationship that would have taken years to accomplish under normal circumstances.

No matter how detailed the planning for a film, not everything can be in one's control, especially for a documentary production in a foreign country. Even though on most occasions there were unforeseen hiccups, sometimes there were also some pleasant surprises that made things easier. The one that stands out during the production was my cameraman's interactions with Asmita and all my other subjects. I had some apprehensions about how he would fare in a country he has never visited before, working and living amongst women of different ages, all of whom had strong personalities and political views. What surprised me was how quickly he accustomed himself to the environment, and how he developed a very friendly relationship with Asmita. They had a very similar sense of humor, and we all had a great time while filming and otherwise. By the end of the production, he picked up a lot of Nepalese words and could manage basic communication with locals. This came in handy when we traveled in the city by ourselves.

Living and working in the field for an extended period was challenging but I made it a point to find the much needed time for processing information, and contemplating ideas. My cameraman also functioned as a sounding board at the end of every day. This helped me achieve more clarity in thought, and made him have a greater understanding of my vision for the film.

## POST-PRODUCTION

I returned to Rochester, NY in November 2009 and started the process of capturing and logging the footage. It was only in January 2010 when I began editing. I considered getting an Editing Craft track student to edit the film, but decided against it due to the magnitude of the project. I felt that it would be very time consuming for someone new to comprehend the complexities of the subject, the context, and the expanse of the 25-hour long footage. It was a mammoth task even for me, who knew the footage inside out.

A lot of material, primarily personal correspondence and newsreel, needed to be translated from Nepalese to English. I approached some Nepalese students at RIT. Even though they were interested, they did not have time during the quarter and were unavailable during breaks. I approached a friend in India who agreed to do it. Translation took longer than expected and I was a little behind on the schedule. Soon after, I received the Callahan Rennalls Production grant for the film, which meant that I could now cover some of my previous expenses, and pay for additional post-production. I was sure about working with the same animator and the same musician I had worked with on previous occasions. The grant made it possible to pay these talented people adequately, and get professional level color correction.

In January 2010, Professor Cat Ashworth and I initiated a documentary club wherein we invited filmmakers, from within and outside of RIT, who were working on long form documentary projects. We met every other week to watch cuts and give feedback. This helped me immensely in getting early responses in a safe environment, and got me out of the isolating editing suites.

I have worked with Gayane Bagdasaryan, a third year MFA Animation student at RIT, on a project before, and I was eagerly waiting to collaborate with her once again. The idea was to use animation to visually communicate Asmita's relationship with her parents by using a voice over of the letters written by the

parents to Asmita. We came up with a lot of different ideas, and then finally decided on three main animations. Gayane and I were not in the same city for majority of the time, so we had weekly meetings on Skype and set deadlines and exchanged files over the Internet. We chose a very simple hand-drawn, pencil sketch style of animation (Appendix 3) to match the simplicity of the handwritten letters written by Asmita's mother.

During pre-production, I had envisaged a complete sound design for the film, but I had to make realistic decisions based on time and monetary restrictions. I was able to collaborate once again with a talented Indian musician, Shikhar Prasad, who produced original music for the film. Brian Stevenson came on board for color correction at the end of March, 2010. This was a luxury I could afford only after receiving the Callahan Rennals production grant.

The final edit in the third week of May 2010 was just under 40 minutes long. I had received good feedback from the members of the Doc Club, and a few other students who had seen the film. We were all very excited to see how the general audience would react to the film. Finally it was all coming together.

Just before submitting the film for the SOFA screenings in May, some compromises had to be made, and some uncertainties were left unaddressed. Professor Dave Sluberski had helped clean up the audio but there were still some issues that proved to be a greater challenge than anticipated. Bringing the color corrected footage from Color back into Final Cut Pro caused unforeseen syncing problems. As a result, I had to manually sync up a large section of the footage. It was only after the screening that the problem was diagnosed as being caused due to variable frame rates in Final Cut Pro.

The greatest uncertainty in my mind was about the context and background of the subject in the film. It had been a great challenge for me to decide how much information was enough for the audience to feel the impact of the story. In an attempt to not spoon feed too much information, I was taking a big risk. The risk of not being understood at all.

## THE IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

*Non-fiction works must be taken to court, be debated and discussed in depth, and each individual must validate or reject for themselves the truths that have been claimed.*

The film was completed and presented at the Spring 2010 SOFA Screenings. The respondent for the thesis presentation was Professor Malcolm Spaul.

I was highly disappointed by the lack of response from the general audience. It seemed like the audience who watched it for the first time did not feel comfortable responding to the film, possibly due to the large gap in their understanding of Nepal and what they saw on screen. The reactions I received were largely from the faculty who were, to some extent, already familiar with the project.

One of the criticisms was the lack of consistency in my narration. Another was that the magnitude of the story was not conveyed effectively, and that the length could be shortened. The issues with audio were also pointed out. There were a few positive comments about the cinematography and layering of different themes.

In my defense, I would like to state that the 'lack of consistency in my narration' was an attempt to let my subject become bigger than me. As mentioned earlier, the risk I took by not giving too much information obviously failed with this audience. I felt that my respondent, and a majority of the audience who responded were trying hard to fit the film into a documentary genre, whereas I was trying to break out of the same. The general lack of debate, and in depth discussion at the thesis presentation was unfortunate.



## CONTINUATION OF PROJECT

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Despite a lack of positive response at the thesis presentation, I know that the journey for this project has just begun. All I need to do is find the right audience.

In the few weeks after the SOFA screening, I made a shorter version of the film but I was still not ready to send it out to film festivals. In July 2010, the organizers of a South Asian film festival in New York City happened to watch the film and wanted to show it at their festival in September. Due to some logistical problems, the screening could not take place. Soon after, I received an invitation from Anhad, a South-Asian Film PR company, for bringing my film to the large Nepalese population in Queens, NY. With Anhad's help, I am in the process of organizing a screening for early next year in New York. I would hope to follow that up with more of such community-based screenings in other South-Asian demographic areas in the US, and eventually take the film to India and Nepal.

Adhikaar, a non-profit organization in Queens, fights for the rights of Nepalese women who work as domestic help. I am in talks with them about working in collaboration on a piece that will help them promote their organization and also serve as a possible extension of my film. As mentioned in my initial thesis proposal (Appendix 1), there was going to be one more character in the film – a Nepalese woman working as a domestic help in India and Dubai, struggling to make a living away from her family. There are plenty of similar stories to be found right here in Queens, and with Adhikaar's help, I would like to explore this opportunity.

I say that the journey for this film has just begun because the long journey that my subject Asmita is on has also only just begun. There is a strong will to go back in two to three years and capture another glimpse of this journey – when the film as it stands now becomes archival footage, the subject is stronger, the filmmaker wiser, and the politics, conversations, and friendship continues to grow.

## APPENDIX 1

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### ORIGINAL PROPOSAL (submitted May, 2009)

Working Title: *Looking Back and Beyond*

Duration of the film: 60 minutes

Genre: Documentary

### SYNOPSIS

The film is a juxtaposition of the lives of two extraordinary women intertwined with the recent history of their homeland Nepal.

Asmita, a 23-year-old woman has just been elected the President of the Student Union at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, Nepal. She plans to use her newly acquired powers in office to improve the deplorable condition of the education system, and stop the perpetual exodus of the Nepali youth.

Meena, a 45-year-old Nepali woman, has just returned to New Delhi, India from Dubai where she worked as a domestic help for the last two years. Meena and her younger sister Karmo, deprived of education and employment like millions of Nepalis, have worked as domestic help in India since they were barely teenagers.

The film follows Asmita's struggles in student politics, and Meena's journey back into Nepal as she reunites with her family. Asmita's strong belief in, and commitment to communism leading to an egalitarian society forms her utopian idea of 'New Nepal'. On the other hand, Meena's experience of poverty and exploitation in Nepal, and life as a domestic in capitalist countries has made her dream of returning some day to an economically prosperous and peaceful Nepal.

Meena grew up with the image of the King as a benevolent caretaker, the reincarnation of Lord Vishnu, and still holds a sense of nostalgic loyalty towards the monarchy. Asmita is a committed member of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), which was responsible for the end of monarchy in Nepal in 2006.

To better understand the various nuances of the two characters, the film will trace Nepal's past with the help of brief animated lessons about the Monarchy, Nepal's multi-ethnic society, grass root violent uprisings, experiments with democracy, communism, and present day coalition politics.

## **BRIEF HISTORY**

Nepal has experienced numerous political setbacks in its recent past. The Maoist insurgency, and counter operations by the state claimed over 13,000 lives and displaced over 60,000 people. The royal family was massacred in June 2001. The 250-year-old monarchy gave way to a democratically elected Maoist government. Power politics continue even today in an unstable Nepal, between the Maoists, other Left and Centrist political parties, and the national army.

There is a severe lack of skilled labor in Nepal. The rate of unemployment and underemployment approaches half the working-age population. Nepal receives huge amounts of foreign aid from India, Japan, United Kingdom, United States, and the European Union. The remittance value from the 700,000 Nepali citizens working abroad is worth around one billion US dollars per year.

The Nepalese youth has suffered gravely during the past two decades. Extreme poverty, meaningless violence by the state, and the lack of educational opportunities led many to join the Maoist rebel army. Others left home for faraway lands like Doha, Kuwait, Dubai, Malaysia and India to find low-level jobs with low pay and bad working conditions.

## **TREATMENT**

The film starts out in Nepal where a large number of young people march on the streets in protest. Asmita Singh is a committed member of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and the president of the Students' Union at the Tribhuvan University. She introduces us to the history of student activism in Nepal as we see it in action on the streets.

The main themes being addressed in Asmita's section would be:

1. Role of the youth in political activism
  - History of student participation
  - Asmita's personal experience as a student activist
  - Meet at least three other students who are involved in politics
2. The CPN(M) idea of educational reforms
  - Private versus public education debate
  - Rehabilitation of ex-Maoist rebels through education
  - Meet at least three educators who have been affected by CPN(M) policies
3. Problem of emigration
  - Correlation between educational opportunities and emigration of population
  - Emigration and its impact on the nation – positive and negative
  - Asmita's personal conviction regarding this subject and her decision to go back to Nepal after completing her undergraduate degree in India

It is a regular morning at the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu. The television screens outside flash names of countries in the Gulf, the flight numbers, and the time of departure. Hundreds of young men, some with marigold garlands around their necks, clutch on to small duffel bags as they wave goodbye to their family members.

Back at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi, Meena arrives from Dubai. She had always wanted to go abroad for a short while and make lots of money to send back to her father and brother in Nepal. Dubai had not been a good experience for her. She had trouble adjusting with the family, and was forced to eat meat that her religion forbids. She is happy being back in India and excited about visiting her family in Nepal. We travel with Meena for two days to finally reach her village.

The main themes being addressed in Meena's section would be:

1. Childhood in Nepal
  - Description of her family's lifestyle

- Growing up without a mother (mother passed away when she was very young)
- How and why she decided to leave for India
- 2. Life in India
  - Initial problems-culture shock, language barrier, learning domestic work
  - Living away from family
  - Marriage and divorce
  - Supporting herself and her family in Nepal
  - Desire to go abroad
- 3. Plans for the future
  - The political future of Nepal
  - Educating her nephew
  - Settling down in Nepal with her father, brother, and nephew

Possible resolutions:

1. Meena leaves her village and travels to Kathmandu where she meets Asmita. Even though they speak the same language, Asmita and Meena belong to different generations, economic classes, and castes, and they have grown up in very different contexts. Meena and Asmita share their views about the present chaotic situation in Nepali politics, and their concerns about the future.
2. Meena leaves Nepal and resumes her job and daily routine in New Delhi, India. Asmita assumes the role of a student leader as we watch her speak vociferously at a public meeting. No matter what happens in Nepal, Asmita will continue her dedication to her politics, and Meena will continue to provide for her family.

## **PERSONAL STATEMENT**

I completed my undergraduate studies in Political Science at Delhi University in India. It was then that I was introduced to Leftist student politics and larger People's Movements across India.

A friend of mine during those years, Asmita Singh, showed great commitment to her political beliefs and was an inspiration to me. Three years later I found out that she is the daughter of Baburam Bhattarai (Finance Minister of the Republic of Nepal), and Comrade Parvati (All Nepal Women's Association (Revolutionary)). Asmita had been living under an assumed identity in India while her parents were leading the 'People's War' in Nepal.

I visited Nepal in July 2008 and had the opportunity of meeting Prime Minister Puspa Kamal Dahal (recently resigned), Baburam Bhattairai, Comrade Parvati, and many young former soldiers of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) at a Youth Communist League camp. I also visited a PLA camp in a village in the south-west of Kathmandu.

During my trip to Nepal, I realized that something unprecedented was taking place in the politics and society of the country, and that the rest of the world did not understand it. The same political party that had been labeled a terrorist by the international community after 9/11 stood tall as the legitimate democratically elected government of Nepal.

Though I do not actively support communism, I am fascinated by the ideology, and the hope that it carries of a new world. I would like audiences, especially in America, to overcome the taboo against communism instigated by the Cold War, and rationally confront this new version of communism in Nepal.

With Nepal in the news a lot, I wondered what Meena *didi* (elder sister) would think about present day Nepal. Meena *didi* had worked in our house as a domestic help for four years. She came to our house to replace her younger sister, who had worked in our house for a decade and then left for the United States when the opportunity arose.

Both the sisters had a crucial role to play in my growing up years, and I was always curious about their past lives. They often talked about their family and the King, and the bad economic situation that forced them to leave their village.

Meena *didi* is going to leave Dubai in June, where she works presently, and will go back to work in my family house in Delhi. Being able to travel with Meena *didi*

to her home in Nepal and see where she comes from will be a significant journey in the film, and also for me personally.

Specific to the Indian context, I hope the film will help decriminalize the image of the 'desperate Nepali migrant', and provide a human face to the youth upholding communist ideals. At a time of heightened mutual distrust between Nepal and India, I would like my film to serve as a confidence building measure.

## **TIMELINE**

### **SUMMER 2009**

- June –            *Travel to New Delhi*  
                     Shoot Meena's arrival and after (2 days)  
                     Arrange equipment and crew for Nepal  
                     Plan trip to Meena's village in Nepal
- July –            *Travel to Nepal*  
                     Shoot the journey to and back from Meena's village (8 days)  
                     *Travel to New Delhi*  
                     Log and organize
- August –        Interview and b-roll with Meena in New Delhi (2 days)  
                     *Travel to Nepal*  
                     Research with Asmita (10 days)

### **FALL 2009**

- September –   Shoot with Asmita, other related interviews and b-roll (12 days)  
                     Log and organize  
                     Work with footage
- October –        Acquire archival visual materials and news footage for animation

Pick up shots (4 days)

Log and organize

*Travel to New Delhi*

November – Work with footage

Pick up shots (2 days)

Communicate with animators

Continue working with footage

Meet with music composer

#### WINTER 2009/2010

December – *Travel to Rochester, NY*

Continue working with footage, and animators

January – Continue working with footage, and animators

February – Continue working with animators, plan out music

#### SPRING 2010

March – Rough edit with effects/animation/music

April – Final Rough Edit, continue post-work

May – Fine cut with soundtrack, prepare for screenings and submission  
for MFA



## BUDGET

Film Budget

Director- Surbhi Dewan

*Looking Back and Beyond*

Shooting Ratio - 8:1

Production (30 Days)

Format – HD Video

Post Production, including animation (20 weeks)

Account#	Fee	Overall Total (Cumulative)
<b>100 Story</b>		
Story and Script	0.00	0.00
<b>200 Talent</b>	0.00	0.00
Executive Producer	0.00	0.00
Producer	0.00	0.00
Director	0.00	0.00
Narrator	0.00	0.00
Extras	0.00	0.00
<b>300 Production Personnel</b>		
Camera Operator (30 days)	600.00	600.00
Gaffer	0.00	600.00
Grip	0.00	600.00
Makeup/Prosthetics Artist	0.00	600.00
Assistant Director	0.00	600.00
Assistant Camera	0.00	600.00
Special effects	0.00	600.00
Sound Recordist (30 days)	300.00	900.00
<b>400 Travel and Locations</b>		
Cast and Crew Meals	150.00	1050.00

Petty Cash	50.00	1100.00
Travel Expenses	2500.00	3600.00
Miscellaneous Expense	100.00	3700.00

#### **500 Production Equipment**

Camera and Support (30 days)	600.00	4300.00
Lighting	300.00	4600.00
Grip	0.00	4600.00
Sound Package	0.00	4600.00
Special Effects	0.00	4600.00

#### **600 Art Direction**

Props for animation	100.00	4700.00
Set Dressing	0.00	4700.00
Makeup Supplies	0.00	4700.00
Costumes	0.00	4700.00

#### **900 Sound and Music**

Composer	200.00	4900.00
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#### **1000 Titles and Opticals**

Art Work Cards	0.00	4900.00
Artwork	0.00	4900.00
Title Photography	0.00	4900.00

#### **1100 Editing and Finishing**

Editor	0.00	4900.00
Effects	0.00	4900.00
Animation	1000.00	5900.00

External Hard Drive	500.00	6400.00
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**1200 Office**

Duplication (DVDs)	50.00	6450.00
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Office Supplies	10.00	6460.00
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Festival Entries	300.00	6760.00
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**1300 Contingency**

Contingency	15%	7774.00
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## APPENDIX 2

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### SAMPLE FILM STILLS



Maoist rally on the streets of Kathmandu



Asmita Singh (Manushi Yami Bhattarai)



Armed soldiers in the heart of the city



Tribhuvan University, Bhaktapur campus



Asmita's ancestral village in Gorkha district

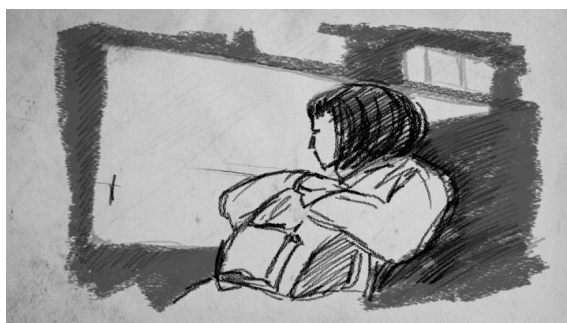
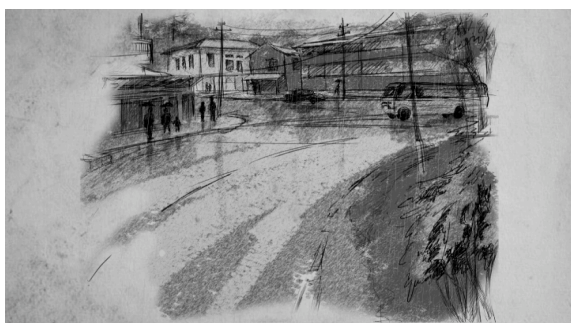


Asmita enjoys her morning tea

## APPENDIX 3

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### SAMPLE ANIMATION STILLS



## APPENDIX 4

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### PRODUCTION JOURNAL EXCERPT

Day 2: August 17, 2009, Monday

We had an early start but by the time the interview was set up we had very little time left before Asmita had to go to the university. I started with some basic questions about her childhood, and growing up years; her parents' influence on her; decision of moving to Nepal and working for the party; LSR days; views on the brain drain, etc. Most of it was very basic information, but I got some good leads. Got Asmita's old photographs and recorded the good ones. Got some 30 minutes of archival still footage. We planned to go to Basantapur and Thamel to shoot some B-roll. It's been raining on and off – more on than off, actually.

We finally got out of the house after 1pm. We went to Basantapur and shot a lot of b-roll. Beauty shots. Glue shots. Along with all this we had to look for a firewire 800 cable. I didn't realize that my new laptop does not have a firewire 400 port. So we need an 800 cable to transfer footage. After much hunting we finally found the store that has it only to find it shut for the day. We will have to go tomorrow to buy it so that we can preview the footage.

We met up with Asmita for dinner at Baneshwar around 7:30pm. All of us were really tired. Asmita also had a long and eventful day. She told us about some violence that happened on campus related to exams in some department. She was disappointed by the lack of unity in the Student Union. She said that there are a couple of men who want to be leaders by misusing their power. She said something might happen tomorrow also. So the plan is to go to the university tomorrow and see Asmita working at the SU office. We're hoping something unpredictable happens.

Day 4: August 19, 2009, Wednesday

Eureka moment happened today. I was just telling Sappy (cameraman) how I take so long to figure out things. It's becoming a pattern now. I start out with a superficial project that stems from something real inside me. I don't see the real thing until much later when I peel off the superficial layers. And then what I have is sort of what I started with. I guess the process of discovering the real thing is essential. I need to go through stages of uncertainty before I can be sure about what I want. I just have to believe in myself.

The idea of making a historical documentary is not my cup of tea. I think there are enough people out there who are willing to do it, and will do a much better job than me. I need to exploit my own voice and experiences. That is what will make my work stand out.

Going back to my Eureka moment, I have to put myself in the film. I have to be the second character, or possibly the protagonist even. The film is incomplete without me. And to be able to put myself in it, I need to have faith in myself!

Day 11: August 26, 2009, Wednesday

I can feel some things changing now that I've been here for 10 days. I bought a mask today because I was wheezing a bit since the morning. I felt more local after that. So many people here wear masks. The other thing is that in my head I'm beginning to call Asmita Manushi. This is a significant change. It is symbolic of my coming to terms with her new life, or more accurately, her true self.

Today we went to the ABC news channel to find out about the archives. We should be able to get stuff, the only problem is that we will have to wait a bit. I have to write them a letter stating my purpose for the archives, and that the project is non-commercial. I still don't know if the project is going to be non-commercial. I mean I am hoping that some day I will find a way to distribute my film. But for now I cannot be sure, so there is no point complicating things.

Things are moving very slowly. Days go by really fast. I really need for things to start moving soon. I'm getting fuzzier about the direction of the film too. Manushi seems to be more and more disinterested in the project, which makes me feel discouraged. She becomes a little weird at night, probably because she is too tired. She questions my film, and does not really respond to my explanations...

Day 17: September 1, 2009, Tuesday

Got up around 5:15am and had to leave at 5:30 for Gorkha – Manushi's ancestral village, and her dad's electoral constituency. It was such a long, long day. It's 11:15pm now and I can't even tell how exhausted I am. I'm beyond exhaustion. Sappy seems to think we walked around 40 kms today – uphill and downhill together. Its hard to believe because I can't go beyond 3-4 kms on the treadmill at home. The walk uphill was killing. The scorching sun was on our heads, and Asmita kept saying its not far when it really was far. I kept stopping, washing my face and taking small sips of water. Somehow I survived and reached her ancestral home to check on the newly tinned roofed!

She met some relatives and a lot of local families. We did a short interview with her, and shot some b-roll of village life. I don't know how it looks but I'm going to trust Sappy on this one because there's NO WAY we're going back there. He was really tired too, and I had to be mean and make him shoot. Hopefully it looks good and is useable. The walk downhill was much easier. On our drive back we stopped at the closest big town to eat. The news soon spread about Manushi being there and lots of people kept coming to greet her while we were hogging on buff momos (beef dumplings), which were really good. They were all excited to meet her and curious to find out what the daughter of their elected representative is like.