

NILITA VACHANI

Personal Information

3 Washington Square Village Apt. 17B, New York, NY 10012, U.S.A.

1-212-475-9932; nilita@gmail.com

<http://www.nilitavachani.com>

Permanent Resident of the U.S.

Education

B.A. (with Honors in English), Indraprastha College, University of Delhi, 1981.

M.A. Annenberg School for Communications, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, 1983.

M.F.A., School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 1985.

Writings

2007 *HomeSpun*, forthcoming, New York: Other Press. Also published by Penguin India, 2005.

Praise for *HomeSpun*:

"Intricately plotted, beautifully written... the brilliant debut of a multiply gifted writer." (Suketu Mehta)

"Superb tale-spinning --- a beam of light in contemporary Indian fiction." (Mira Nair)

"HomeSpun is a warm, sweeping novel full of history, laughter and tears, and generations of characters that dance off the page. Nilita Vachani is a storyteller of the first order." (Joe Sacco)

1999 *Barhgaḍ (The Banyan)*, fiction screenplay. Winner of the Fonds-Sud prize, Government of France.

Direction, Production and Editing

1996 *When Mother Comes Home for Christmas...* 16mm documentary, 109 min ZDF, the Greek Film Centre and FilmSixteen. With a grant from the Hubert Bals Fund.

Josephine Perreira, a migrant worker from Sri Lanka and caregiver to a young child in Athens, Greece, comes home to her children for Christmas after eight years.

"The product of extraordinary persistence, empathy and intelligence; ... it opens up the emotional lives of an entire family and reveals, in heartbreakingly direct fashion, the true meaning of the phrase 'global economy'." (Stuart Klawans, *The Nation*)

Best Documentary, Festival dei Popoli, Florence, 1996.

Best Documentary, Festival Internazionale Cinema Delle Donne, Torino, 1997.

Festival screenings include the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Rotterdam Film Festival, Yamagata, London Film Festival, Thessaloniki, Creteil, Toronto, Hawaii, San Francisco, Barcelona, Hong Kong, the Asian American Film Festival, and the L.A. Asian Pacific Film Festival.

1992 *Diamonds in a Vegetable Market*, 16mm documentary, 68 min., ZDF and FilmSixteen, with additional support from the EU and the BBC.

The front stage and backstage of the aisle of an Indian bus where vendors peddle trivial wares and elevated dreams.

"A gem... Absolutely without pretension, but enquiring and curious, Vachani roams the Indian bus terminals, observes the vendors and listens attentively to what they have to say. She is able to touch not only everyday life but the despair behind eloquent facades. The images are fascinating, intricate and beautiful." (Sudkurier, Konstanz)

Best Feature Length Documentary (TV), Asian Film Academy, 1994.

Festival screenings include Berlin, Cinema du Reel, Paris, Augsburg, Brussels, Florence, Taipei, Hawaii, Sydney, Rotterdam and New York.

1990 *Eyes of Stone*, 16mm documentary, 94 min. Doordarshan and FilmSixteen.

A journey into the life and circumstances of a young woman in rural Rajasthan, believed to be possessed by spirits.

"The film is both a compelling documentary and a remarkably comprehensive example of visual anthropology. Particularly in conjunction with appropriate written sources, it would provide highly effective teaching material for a wide variety of anthropological topics including popular Hinduism, medical anthropology, gender and of course, possession ... a sympathetic and revealing but wholly unpatronizing treatment of a classically 'exotic' anthropological subject." (Helen Lambert, *Visual Anthropology*)

"*Eyes of Stone* is perhaps our best film in the cinema verité tradition." (Indian Express)

Prix Alcan du Jury, Best Documentary Film at the Montreal International Festival of Films and Videos by Women, 1990.

Mention Speciale, Prix des Bibliotheques at Cinema du Reel, Paris, 1990.

Uppsala Filmkaja, Best Documentary Film at the Uppsala International Film Festival, Sweden, 1991.

Golden Conch, Bombay International Documentary Film Festival, 1992.

Rajat Kamal, The President's Award, Best Film on Social Issues, India, 1992.

Basil Wright Prize, Royal Anthropological Institute, Manchester, 1992.

Eyes of Stone has been screened in over 30 film festivals worldwide.

Other Film Experience

Assistant Director *Salaam Bombay*, Mira Nair, 1988

Script Supervisor *Mississippi Masala*, Mira Nair, 1991

Editor *Kamala and Raji*, Michael Camerini, 1989

Editor *Stephanie*, Peggy Stern, 1987

Assistant Editor *India Cabaret*, Mira Nair, 1985

Assistant Editor *The Wrong Man*, Julian Krainin, 1986

Academic Experience

2002 Regents' Lecturer at the University of California, San Diego.

1997 Semester-long Theory and Production Documentary Workshop at the Annenberg School for Communication, University of Pennsylvania.

1997 Weeklong Editing Workshop at the California Institute for the Arts.

Invited lectures and presentations at the University of Pennsylvania, University of Massachusetts (Amherst), Mt. Holyoke, Northampton College, Amherst College, Cal Arts, Stanford University, University of California Santa Cruz, San Francisco Institute for the Arts, New York University, Rutgers University, Brown University, Cornell University, Smith College and colleges at the University of Delhi and Jamia Milia.