



A BLOODY MESS

PRESS KIT

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ProductionTitle: A Bloody Mess
Production Type: Independent
Project Length: Short Film (10:36)
Project Format: 2.35
Screening Format: DCP/High Res QT
Country of Production: Canada
Year: 2019
Languages: English and Hindi
Website: www.flyawayfilms.ca

LOGLINE

Varsha struggles to normalize conversations about menstruation within her conservative South Asian family as she battles against her mother’s firm traditional beliefs.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Varsha is a young South Asian girl who battles against her family’s traditional beliefs surrounding menstruation, which comes with rules prohibiting her from having an open dialogue with her father about periods. Since she was a child, Varsha has been told that while periods are normal, there are certain things she cannot do while menstruating, which manifests in Varsha’s mental suffocation. This film depicts Varsha’s internal struggle as she tries to strike a balance between respecting her family and her own individual autonomy.

THE STORY



A Bloody Mess is a film about a teenage girl, Varsha, who comes from a conservative South Asian family, in which talking about menstruation is considered taboo. From a young age, she was given the impression that menstruation and anything associated with periods was not to be spoken of out loud. She is also told that there are various cultural and religious rituals she cannot be a part of while she is on her period, because of the perceived impurity of menstruation.

From the time she gets her first period, she faces confusion, fear, and restrictions. She is limited in what she can talk about to her own father and brother, because as males they cannot be told about menstruation. She wants to be able to say “I’m on my period Dad” instead of always being referred to as “being sick” or “not feeling well” by her mother. Will Varsha be able to voice her opinions in the conservative family she comes from? Will she be able to break free of all the limitations that she is set with? Will she be able to counter all the myths and stereotypes surrounding the menstrual cycle?



IMPORTANCE OF THE FILM

A Bloody Mess is a call to the South Asian community and society that we must engage in open dialogue with males and females alike when it comes to the reproductive process, and specifically, menstruation. The need to ensure that myths and stereotypes are not attached to menstruation is important as the day-to-day functioning of a family can be inexplicably disturbed when one resorts to the negative connotations that surrounds the coming and going of a period.

A Bloody Mess is our attempt to “normalize” the process of menstruation in order to ensure that shame is no longer attached to a biological function that female bodies have no control over. It is our attempt to push the community to celebrate or at least accept that menstruation is an important part of life, and one

that should not hinder any functioning on any one person’s part.

Young women often find out about their periods when they first get their periods, or from school. Parents often do not have a meaningful conversation with their children about menstruation, the importance of the cycle, and the side effects.

Young Canadian South Asians often feel uncomfortable talking about their periods in a social setting or a familial setting. They are often shut down by other female figures in the family, who find it embarrassing to talk about. Some regard the period as an impurity that the body is cleansing itself of, so much so that restrictions are placed on participation in religious and cultural settings. They cannot enter temples. They cannot indulge in “prasad”.

DIRECTOR'S BIO

Asis Sethi



A positive and energetic television personality, Asis started her career as a Reporter on *Chardi Kalaa*, *OMNI News – South Asian Edition*, *Badhai Ho* and *Bollywood Boulevard* on OMNI Television. She soon became the co-host of *Chardi Kalaa* and the title host of *Tuned In With Asis Sethi* on OMNI Television, both of which boast of significant fan following and critical praise.

Asis has directed, written, and produced many independent projects including a short film titled *The Unforgotten*. Asis has also directed and written *The Colourful Crown*, a documentary film based on the effects of 9/11 on turban wearers in Canada, which was screened at film festivals and aired on OMNI Television nationally. Asis is also the writer and director of the 16-episode documentary series titled *Darshan Dekh Jeeva*, in which she traveled all over India and explored historical Sikh shrines. The documentary is currently airing nationally on OMNI Television. Asis's most recent work includes producing and directing a three episode television show for Scotiabank and OMNI TV titled *Welcome To Canada* which highlighted real life stories told by immigrants of Canada. Asis is also a proud recipient of the Phulkari Award.

Asis has worked with renowned entertainers like Mike Myers (*Austin Powers*, *Shrek*), Nelly Furtado (Singer Songwriter) and Mike Holmes (*Holmes on Homes*, *Corner Gas*). She has also worked with Eva Birthistle (*The Last Kingdom*), Tim Dutton (*Genius*, *The Infiltrator*), David Alpay (*Suits*, *Proven Innocent*), Jessica Alba (*Fantastic Four*, *Sin City*) and Romany Malco (*A Million Little Things*).

Asis's films have a focus towards important community issues that promote a cross-cultural understanding. Most recently, her films have focused on topics relating to social issues that surround women and they delve deep into the cultural complexities of how these issues impact our daily lives. Asis is currently in post production for her upcoming short film titled *Still* and is in the development stage for her upcoming feature film on the topic of reversed gender roles in the South Asian community.

Get more information on www.asissethi.com

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Every month when I get my period, I am never able to freely speak about it whether at the workplace or at a party with extended family and friends. I slowly began to notice that my friends who came from both conservative and liberal families while living outside of India, have always been restricted in what they cannot say or do while on their periods. Most of my female friends to this day are not allowed to enter the kitchen when they're menstruating because they are considered "filthy". There were many incidents happening around me and that made me realize how important it was to bring this story to life.

As such, *A Bloody Mess* sheds light on the need for an open dialogue between males and females, especially when it comes to natural biological processes of the human body. Due to the nature of the way that the topic of menstruation is often treated in South Asian households, young women often grow up without a complete knowledge of menstruation and its effects on the human body. It is important to educate and inform young women about menstruation, while making them feel comfortable to discuss it with their families and friends.

One of the intentional aspects of the film are the longer one take shots of conflict scenes, in order to capture a natural flow and reactions between my actors. For example, the scene before the climax shows three characters in a conflict in a fluid setting which has 12 extras who are constantly moving and so is the camera; this entire uncut shot in the film is one minute and twenty seconds long. The colours for the film I chose were red and blue. When we delve into Varsha's world, we see the colour red in dominance. When we enter Aarti's (mother) world, we see more blues.

During the shooting process, it was interesting how important this conversation became even amongst my co-actors. While some completely understood the barriers South Asian women face, others found that being unable to speak about your period unnatural and bizarre. However, while on set, interestingly, four of our key crew members including myself got our periods on the first day of shooting, and for the first time, we said it out loud and then laughed. It was liberating even for the crew of the film.

I hope that *A Bloody Mess* will start a conversation and will bring a change in the way in which periods are perceived within families.

CAST

VARSHA: Maria-Crystal Melo
AARTI: Annie Koshy
SANJAY: Devanshu Narang
YOUNG VARSHA: Emma Viola Ticsay
VICKY: Aditya Pandya

CREW

WRITERS/PRODUCERS: Armin Sethi & Asis Sethi
DIRECTOR: Asis Sethi
DOP: Daniel Everitt-Lock
1ST ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: Daisy Kaur
PRODUCTION MANAGER: Amreen Ghouse
ART DIRECTOR: Shwayta Sharma
EDITOR: Asis Sethi
SOUND DESIGNER: Steven Ejbick



KEY CAST



Maria-Crystal Melo

Maria-Crystal Melo has been nominated as Best Actress at the Rolda Web Fest and Best Rising Star Jury Award Nominee at the Seoul Web Fest. She has starred in several films including *Wave* directed by Jasmine Mozaffari and Catilin Grabham which premiered at the Vancouver International Film Festival. Her filmography includes the short film *Twisted*, and the feature film *Tape Place*; both which won awards at film festivals around the globe.



Annie Koshy

Annie Koshy is an award winning actress who has starred in many films, television shows and media campaigns which have been showcased internationally. Annie has worked with prominent celebrities such as Nick Chavez and she has been featured as a model on The Shopping Channel for Skinn Cosmetics. Her filmography includes *Andrew's Little Lamb* and *Not just A Love Poem*. She is the recipient of Toronto Waterfront Magazine's Media Arts Award as well as several other honours within Canada.



Devanshu Narang

Devanshu Narang is a New York Film Academy trained filmmaker who's short film is a talented actor and member of media who has been a prominent part of the South Asian arts community. He has acted as Mr. Pandey on *Private Eyes* (Season 3), premiering May 29th, 2019. He is a highly skilled writer and is a part of the Film Writer's Body in Mumbai, India. He has acted in several advertisements as well including a noteworthy NFL ad in 2017. As a New York Film Academy trained filmmaker, he has also directed and acted in a short film that was a finalist in the Chicago Short Film Festival in 2019.

KEY CREW



Armin Sethi, Co-Writer & Producer

Armin Sethi has a passion for stories that delve into everyday issues, and hopes these stories come to life on the big screen. She writes, produces, and has a knack for making a vision come to life. She is also a full-time Crown Prosecutor in Ontario. In the evenings, she wears the hat of the Editor-in-chief of Bollywood Film Fame Canada magazine and interviews many film icons in that capacity.



Daniel Everitt-Lock, DOP

Daniel Everitt-Lock is an accomplished and award winning Cinematographer. Associate member of the CSC, Daniel has worked across the globe, on work ranging from feature films to 360 interactive media. Daniel has worked with Academy Award Winner Sir Ben Kingsley (*Gandhi*, *Schindler's List*), Julian Morris (*New Girl*, *Pretty Little Liars*) and Tamzin Merchant (*The Tudors*, *Super Girl*, *Pride and Prejudice*).



Shwayta Sharma, Art Director

Shwayta Sharma has immense on-set experience working on feature and short films which have received accolades within Canada. She wrote and produced the short film *The Next Stop*, which was nominated for Best Film at the Peter Gerretsen Film Awards. She is strongly drawn to writing and storytelling and has written several stories, poetry and short films over the years.



Amreen Ghouse, PM

Amreen Ghouse has worked on many productions for various brands and advertisements in Canada. Amreen has a flair for storytelling and is an avid writer. She is a graduate of the prestigious Mindscreen Film Institute in India. She has written several powerful short films, poems and advertisements throughout the years which have received recognition within the community in Toronto.



Daisy Kaur, 1st AD

Daisy has 7 years of experience working in film production. She now works as a full-time producer at Think Brown Media Inc. where she has produced various projects from television commercials to short films. She is also a member of WIFT Toronto and her recently directed short film that was screened at various film festivals this year.



Steven Ejbick, Sound Designer

Steven Ejbick is a Canadian Screen Award winning and Gemini Award nominated sound engineer with extensive experience ranging from theatrical releases to broadcast, including corporate and commercial media, TV shows, documentaries, reality-based series, and web releases.



FAQ

What inspired you to make a story about menstruation?

The inception of this project began after I began reflecting upon how my family, my friends and I deal with menstruation. Every month when I get my period, I am never able to freely speak about it whether at the workplace or at a party with extended family and friends. I slowly began to notice that my friends who came from both conservative and liberal families have always been restricted in what they cannot say or do while on their periods. Most of my female friends to this day are not allowed to enter the kitchen when they're menstruating because they are considered "filthy". There were many incidents happening around me and that made me realize how important it was to bring this story to life.

Why do you think it is important to showcase how periods are perceived in South Asian families in particular?

Young women often find out about their periods when they first get their periods, or from school. Parents often do not have a meaningful conversation with their children about menstruation, the importance of the cycle, and the side effects. Young South Asians often feel uncomfortable talking about their periods in a social setting or a familial setting. They are often shut down by other female figures in the family, who find it embarrassing to talk about periods. Some regard the period as an impurity that the body is cleansing itself of, so much so that restrictions are placed on participation in religious and cultural settings. They cannot enter temples. They cannot indulge in "prasad".

Are incidents in the film inspired by true events?

Yes, in fact, many of the incidents depicted in the film were inspired by true events that took place in the lives of my friends. In order to learn more about what females go through in terms of this topic, I held two focus groups during the summer of 2018. In-depth interviews were also conducted with females, all of them varying in ages from 13 to 36 about any specific recollections surrounding events while they were on their period and what their first thoughts were when they got their period, what they could and could not do (if anything) whilst on their period, if they felt comfortable talking about their period in a family setting and how they became informed on the topic.

Through these focus groups and interviews, I found that even within Canadian South Asian families, despite the education surrounding the subject matter in schools, there was a lack of comfort and shame in discussing menstruation.

What do you hope the viewers will take away from this film?

Whether male or female, I hope that the viewer will be encouraged to start a conversation about menstruation. I hope that this can provoke a thoughtful discussion or even plant the seed of understanding in the minds of men that otherwise may be hesitant to discuss periods. I hope they begin to see the women in their lives through a lens of understanding and support. For women, I hope they start to feel a little more confident to be able to bring this topic to the forefront.

What conversation did you have with Devanshu Narang, the actor who played Varsha's father, about his interpretation of the situation in the film?

(Contains Spoilers)

In terms of the final scene where Devanshu came face-to-face with Varsha's bloody pad, I had intentionally decided not to give him directions in terms of how he should feel about the whole situation. I had asked him to just walk into the washroom as an unsuspecting father who now comes face-to-face with this item that symbolizes something that was never spoken openly about but is now dragged out for everyone to see. As such, his reactions were completely natural.

What was the most difficult part of shooting this film?

The most difficult part of shooting this film I think was to have to explain to others why this story needs to be told. Many times, I would tell people that I am making a short film and once I told them the topic of my film, they would ask me why I would go with something like this. Their reactions in itself is why this story needs to be told and why there needs to be an openness towards inter-gender communication as well. This isn't something we need to hide from or suppress.

What do you hope to accomplish through this film?

I hope to be able to start a conversation about a topic that has been hush-hush for such a long time. It is a natural biological process and there is no need to be disgusted or scared of it.

IN THE PRESS

BOLLYWOOD FILM FAME CANADA MAGAZINE

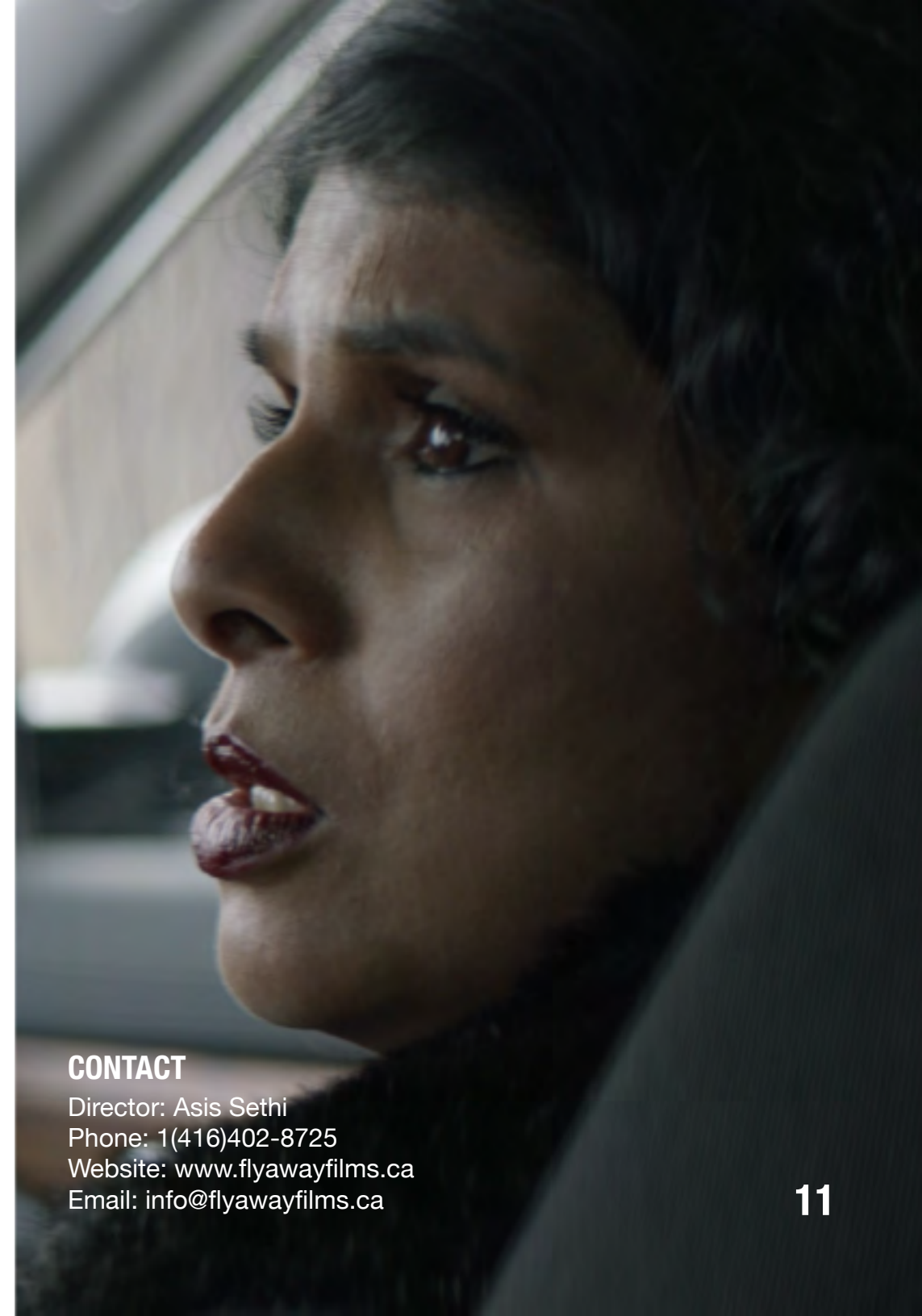
A BLOODY MESS: A SHORT FILM ON AN IMPORTANT TOPIC

https://bollywoodfilmfame.com/news/a-bloody-mess-a-short-film-to-look-out-for!_2434.html





A BLOODY MESS - MOVIE POSTER



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