

Sama

in the forest

Title: Sama in the Forest

Length: 76 mins

Country (location): India

Country (production): USA

Languages: Maithil, English

Subtitles: English, Spanish, Japanese, Chinese (traditional)

Director:

Carlos G. Gómez

Producer:

Coralynn V. Davis

Writer and translator:

M.S. Suman

Website:

<https://samaintheforest.bucknell.edu>

Trailer:

<https://vimeo.com/911144976>

Distribution:

<https://www.der.org/>

Tagline:

The power of women's storytelling in a changing world

Short synopsis:

This community-based production delves into the subversive role women's folktales can play in a patriarchal society. Set in the region of Mithila, in India, *Sama in the Forest* explores the power of stories to shape, challenge, and change our understanding of the world.

Long Synopsis:

In a creative collaboration with local community members in Madhubani, India, this hybrid documentary highlights the tale of Sama, a young princess who wanders into the forest and befriends a young man, only to be slandered by a muckraking confidante of the king, and subsequently cursed and banished by her father, Lord Krishna. The film combines footage of women telling different versions of the tale, the making of elaborate narrative paintings, a dramatization of the story, a yearly festival that celebrates Sama, and in-depth conversations about the morals and meanings of this and other traditional tales. The girls and women at the heart of the film are students and teachers at the Mithila Art Institute, a small school for young aspiring artists. Additional participants — community members of different genders, castes, and generations — help paint a complex picture of the social tensions evident in Mithila today.



Reviews

[Sama in the Forest: A Confluence of the Myth and the Real](#)

Sayar Banerjee, Filmbuff, Nov 2023.

[Film Review: Sama in the Forest](#)

Susan Hadley, Asian Ethnology, Volume 82, Number 2 • 2023

Awards

Best Feature

Society for Visual Anthropology Film and Media Festival, 2023

Festival Screenings

(work-in-progress)

Signs Film and Video Festival

Kerala, India.

February 2023

(release)

Society for Visual Anthropology Film and Media Festival

Toronto, Canada.

November 2023

Academic screenings

(work-in-progress)

Contemporary Arts of Mithila

Radford University International Symposium

Virginia, USA

February 2023

Conference on South Asia

Penn State University

Pennsylvania, USA

October 2023

Director profile

Carlos G. Gómez studied Film and Video at Columbia College in Chicago (1994-2000). In 2008 he created the nonprofit Cineminga International, which – in addition to producing collaborative films – has provided workshops and access to media production tools to indigenous and community-based filmmakers in Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Japan, Nepal and Taiwan.

Credits include:

Goal Dreams (cinematography), Palestine, 2006. BBC, Sundance Channel, Al Jazeera, ARTE, IDFA, Amnesty International ‘Top Ten Films that Matter’.

Jiica Weçe – Roots of Knowledge (co-director), Colombia, 2010. Best Fiction Film with Indigenous Participation, CLACPI.

Who Runs the Atrato River? (director), Colombia, 2022. Best Documentary/Best Environmental Film – River Atrayee Film Festival, India.

Producer profile

Coralynn V. Davis is Professor of Women’s and Gender Studies and Anthropology at Bucknell University. An award-winner teacher, Dr. Davis holds a PhD (1999) in Anthropology at the University of Michigan, where she also earned a Graduate Certificate in Women’s Studies (1994).

She has held Research Associateships at the Five College Women’s Studies Research Center (2005-2006) and at the Harvard Divinity School Women’s Studies in Religion Program (2008-2009). Her ethnographic research with communities in Nepal and India has been supported by three Fulbright Grants (1994-1995; 2003-2004; 2016-2017).

In addition to having published peer-reviewed articles in journals centered in several disciplines, her book *Maithil Women’s Tales: Storytelling on the Nepal-India Border* was published by University of Illinois Press in 2014.

Writer Translator profile

I am a 31-year-old woman who has been enchanted with the magic of folktales since childhood. I live in Delhi and Madhubani is my home.

It is in the vibrant colors of Madhubani paintings and the ancient folktales that I hold my sense of belonging. A Post Graduate in English Literature from the University of Delhi, I love the way stories always find their own formats, their own layers of meanings, and their own places in societies at any point in time. With every folktale heard and every story shared, I feel I take a step closer to becoming the storyteller I aspire to be.