



STORIES & INSIGHTS

Meet Nethra Gururaj

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We're excited to introduce you to the always interesting and insightful Nethra Gururaj. We hope you'll enjoy our conversation with Nethra below.



Nethra, looking forward to hearing all of your stories today. Can you talk to us about a project that's meant a lot to you?

"I want to create work that invents a space rather than fills up a space that was already there", said Nikita Gill in her book *The Girl and The Goddess*.

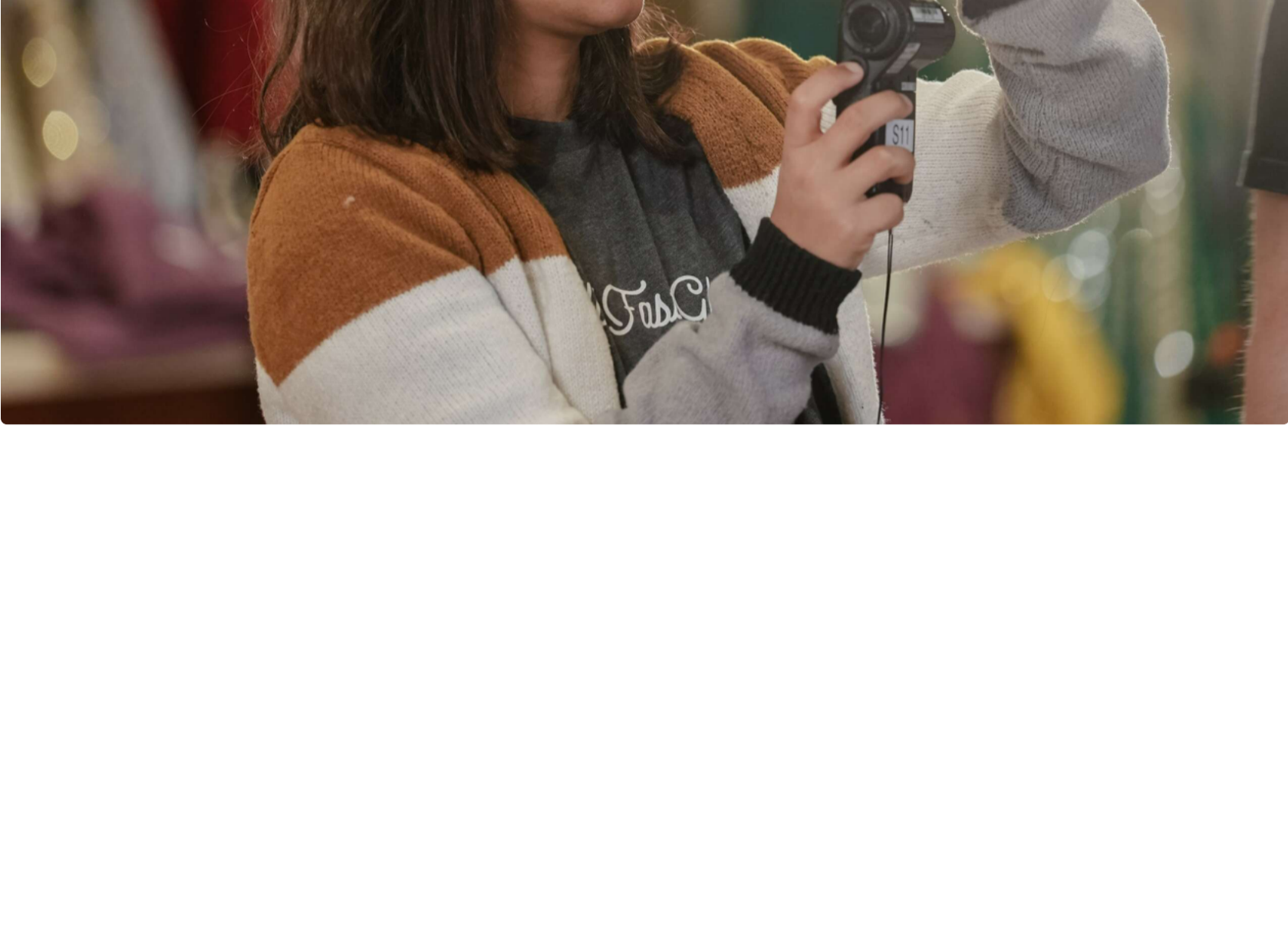
Ever since I was a kid, my grandparents used to tell me bedtime stories and I was captivated by them. Stories were a medium for me to channel my ideas, thoughts, and the stories I would go on to write.

The simple ability of stories to deliver deep and complex meaning in concise narrations fascinates me. I found meaning and fulfillment in making this a career.

Jasmine Flowers is a short film about an elderly Indian woman who challenges the cultural norm of widows being bad luck, decides to go to a wedding uninvited but finds herself reevaluating the meaning of traditions and acceptance.

I began writing the script for my thesis film 'Jasmine Flowers' as a dedication to my grandmother. After her husband, my grandfather, passed away, she was shunned by society owing to archaic and backward traditions. I was too young to speak up for her then, and had to watch her suffer.

Now that I am a Filmmaker, and have access to a medium to reach a significant number of people, it is my responsibility to bring forth stories like my grandmothers to a bigger audience through my films.



Nethra, love having you share your insights with us. Before we ask you more questions, maybe you can take a moment to introduce yourself to our readers who might have missed our earlier conversations?

Born in a South Indian family, art was introduced early on in my life through dance and music, but I never considered art to be a viable career path. I used to watch films with my parents from different languages, which made me realize how films transcend language barriers. Much like my dance, where stories are narrated through feelings, expressions, and movement.

I started dancing at a young age. Performing arts made me see a version of bliss. I understood early on that my communication was through a visual sense; both while projecting ideas and consuming knowledge.

My academic journey began with Science, as is the case for a lot of kids in India. This came in handy later on in my career, as I was able to understand the "How" behind my craft. I saw it as a vehicle to materialize my ideas in Filmmaking.

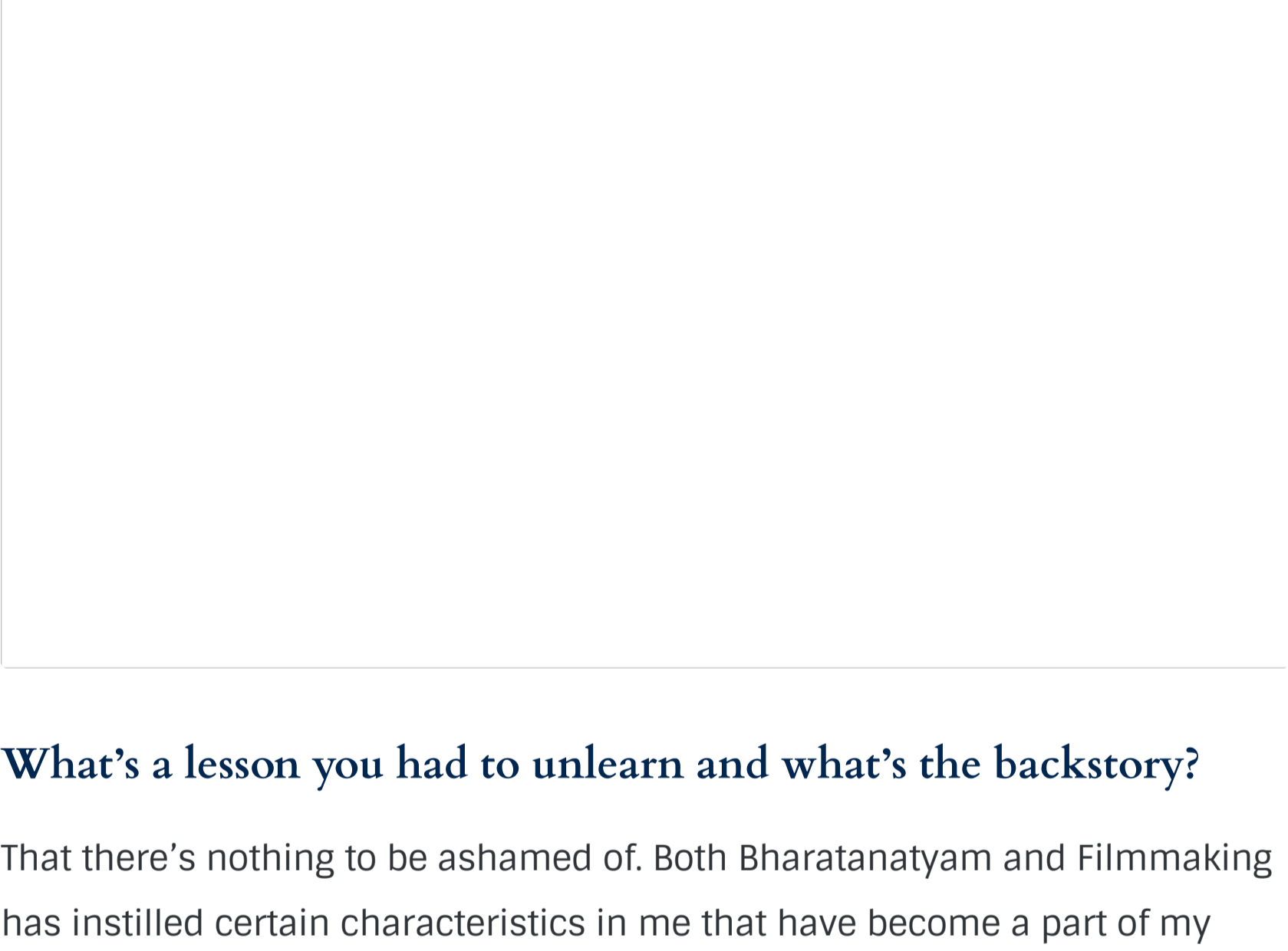
Cinematography in the field of filmmaking is where art meets science. The craft involves utilizing technical knowledge and skills to bring out creative vision (director's, writer's or your own) that in turn helps tell an effective story with complex emotions and meaning.

After working as a Cinematographer for two years in Los Angeles, in various narrative shorts, a feature film, music videos, and other visual content, I have been able to create my mosaic which has become a testament to my commitment to the craft.

How can we best help foster a strong, supportive environment for artists and creatives?

I think a lot of people don't realize the time, effort, scientific and physical involvement it takes to make art. Moreover, the influence art has over society is highly underestimated. Be it dance or films, when an idea is conveyed in the form of art, it creates waves of change in society. Science and art cannot be seen as two separate entities, Da Vinci knew that, and so did cinematographers in filmmaking.

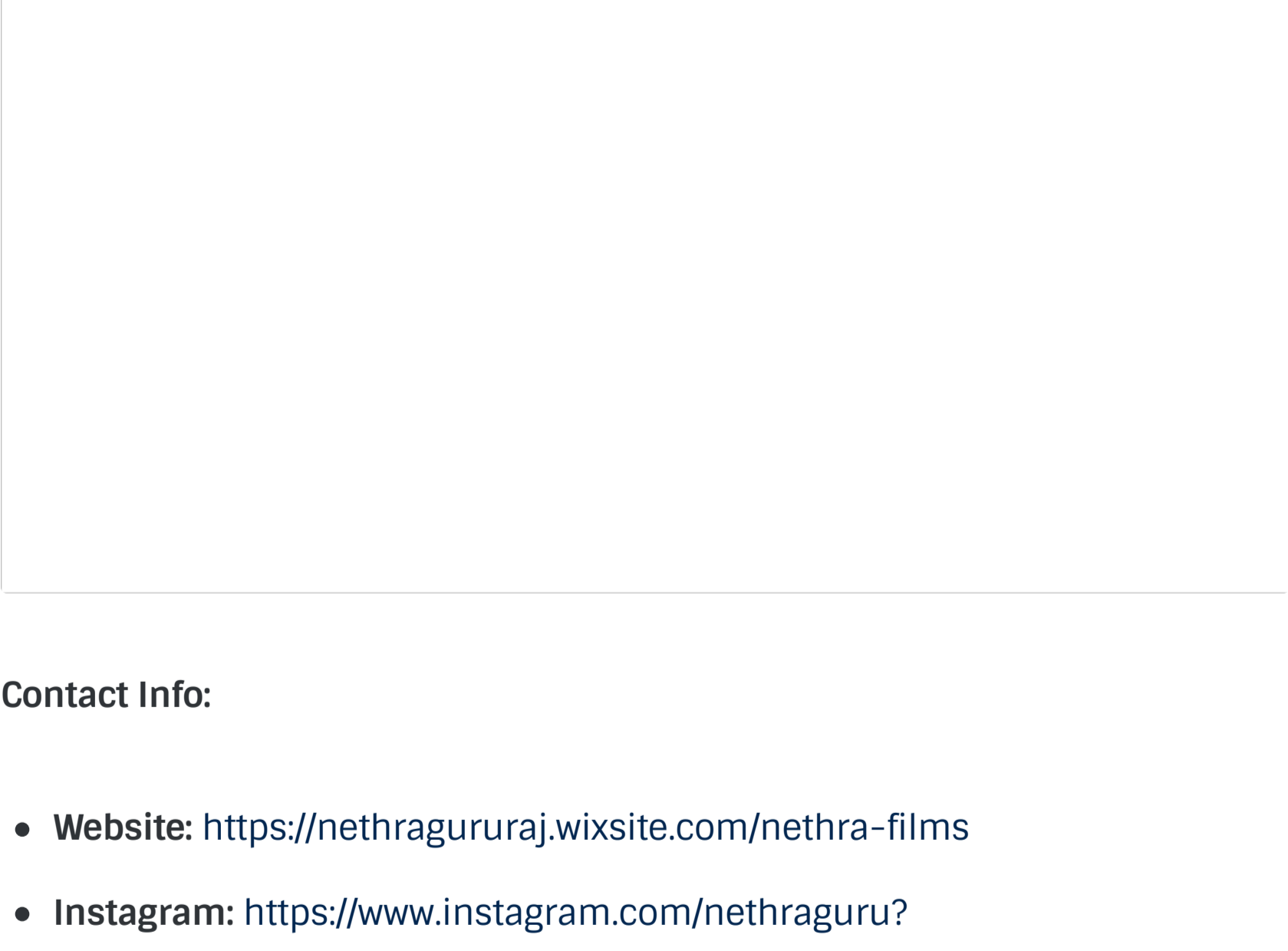
If society can help support science and technology to create a more convenient world, then it is imperative that we also support artists to help create a more inclusive and progressive thinking. Once we come to this realization, then we create a more thriving creative ecosystem.



What's a lesson you had to unlearn and what's the backstory?

That there's nothing to be ashamed of. Both Bharatanatyam and Filmmaking has instilled certain characteristics in me that have become a part of my attitude and conduct. Keeping a straight back and having animated body language is nothing to be ashamed of, I realize today - which I didn't when I was younger and was judged for reflecting dancer discipline even when I wasn't dancing.

Do not mix personal and professional life, they say. But in my world, both affect each other in ways that are out of my control, right from discipline to communication. And that's what makes art a path for all-round development. "We are writing stories with light and darkness, motion and colors. It is a language with its own vocabulary and unlimited possibilities for expressing our inner thoughts and feelings," said Vittorio Storaro. When Cinematography is so intertwined with our personal emotions, then hiding becomes impossible and accepting who I am as an artist becomes my new lesson.



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- **Website:** <https://nethragururaj.wixsite.com/nethra-films>
- **Instagram:** https://www.instagram.com/nethraguru?igsh=MmVIMjlkMTBhMg%a3D%3D&utm_source=qr
- **Youtube:** <https://youtu.be/UeQLtxkuvrI?si=4GhwRrWKVABdDsvG>
- **Other:** <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm1311622/>

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