

Film shot in central city

By JULIAN SLADE

A wartime story shot around central Auckland is the latest offering from New Zealand/Indian woman filmmaker Mandrika Rupa.

Laxmi was filmed at Ponsonby's Atlas Cafe, a shop front at Old Mill Village, Westmere, and in a Crummer Rd, Grey Lynn house with a working coal range.

Set in 1942, the film is shot through the eyes of a 10-year-old girl as her immigrant family copes with life in Auckland, and the arrival of United States soldiers.

Mandrika specialises in portraying unclined images of Indian people. *Laxmi* is her third short film.

"My people have been here since 1912 but when I went to look at the archives at the Alexander Turnbull Library to research the film I found we were invisible," says the Herne Bay filmmaker.

"There was nothing in the visual or written archives in Wellington so I thought I'd like to make some images to give a visual sense of us being here."

She did her own research — oral history studies of older Indian women that are now in the Turnbull — to background the film. As usual, she worked on a shoestring budget.

"I always have social issues in my work and make the best of what I have. Money is not everything. There'll be ways and people who want to work with you."

Mandrika travels to Berkeley University, California in January to audit courses in filmmaking and to study film theory and worldwide film trends. She'll also work on the structure of her next film, a documentary about the international commodification of water.

Mandrika's last film, *Naya Zamana*, attracted international attention in April when it was shown at the Films des Femmes — a women's film festival in Paris.



MANDRIKA RUPA: Portrays unclined images of Indian people in her latest film *Laxmi*.

The French Government subsidised her airfare to the festival and paid all accommodation costs. She introduced her film (her speech was translated into French) and took part in panel debates.

"I made contacts from around the world and met some wonderful women," Mandrika says.

• *Laxmi* will be shown at the Rialto, Newmarket, next year and at film festivals throughout the country.