

# TROPICAL LIFE

Family  
& Values

The Miami Herald



SATURDAY, MARCH 8, 2008 | EDITOR: TERESA MEARS tmeas@MiamiHerald.com | 305-376-3674 or 954-764-7026 ext. 3674

SD

## MOVIE MADE BY UM GROUP INSPIRES WITH ITS WORLDWIDE SWEEP AND POWERFUL MESSAGE

BY RENE RODRIGUEZ

rrodriguez@miamiherald.com

You normally wouldn't expect an ecological documentary made within the auspices of a university to be as visually enthralling or as narratively sophisticated as a Bertolucci movie.

But *One Water*, the stunning documentary made by the University of Miami about the world's water crisis, is all of those things and more. It's an eloquent cry of despair about the perils facing our most precious resource that is powerful enough to inspire audiences to action without boring them for a single frame.

"Although it was made by a university, this is not a traditional educational film," said Sanjeev Chatterjee, the vice dean of UM's School of Communication and an associate professor of broadcasting, who wrote, produced and co-directed *One Water*. "Our intent was to

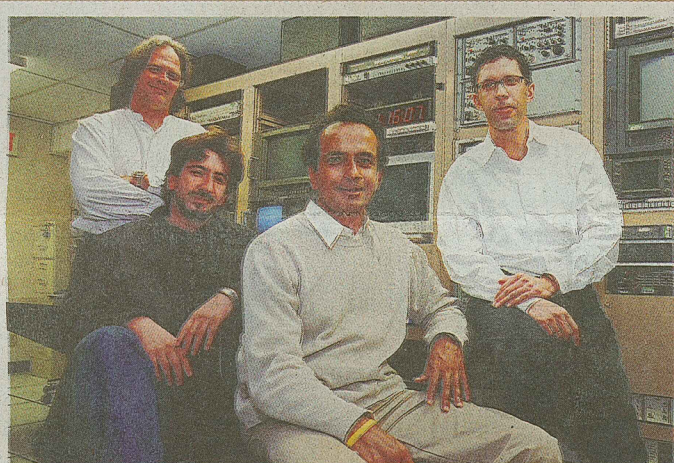
make a movie that would compel people to make a difference. Hopefully, you come out of the movie feeling that something needs to be done."

If nothing else, anyone who sees *One Water*, which is screening at 6:30 p.m. Sunday at the Colony Theatre as part of the Miami International Film Festival, will never take that little portable bottle of Evian for granted again. Shot over five years in 14 countries at a cost of "under \$1 million," the movie intersperses a wide range of interviews (including with the 14th Dalai Lama and Robert F. Kennedy Jr.) with mini-vignettes, often told without any dialogue whatsoever, that convey the role water plays in far-flung spots around the world.

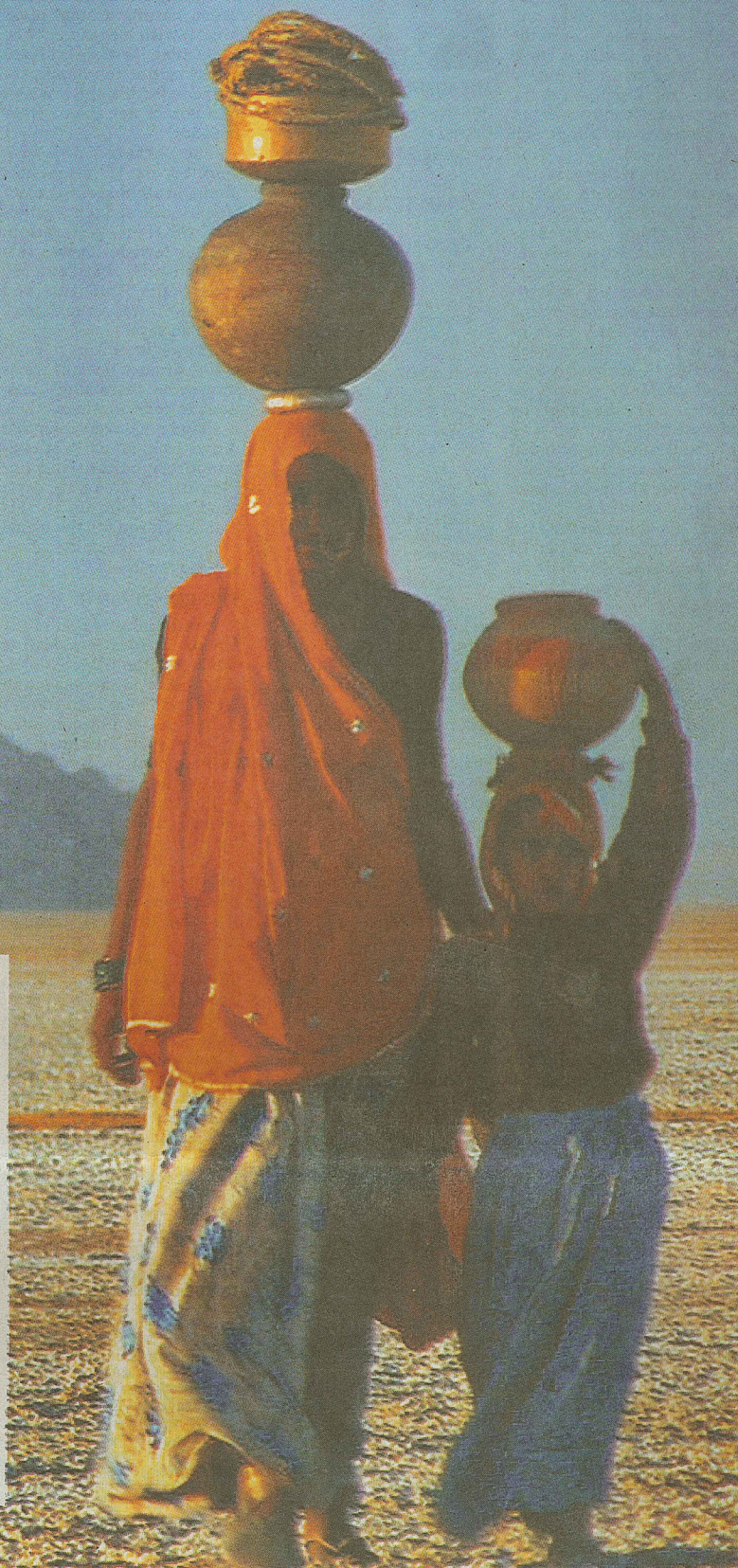
At the foothills of Ecuador's Mount Chimborazo, an ice farmer wraps huge

• TURN TO 'ONE WATER', 5E

# WATER IN PERIL



**THE UM TEAM:** The filmmakers are, from left, Thomas M. Sleeper, Ali Habashi, Sanjeev Chatterjee and Ed Talavera. The woman and child carrying jugs of water in the desert is a scene from *One Water*.



ED TALAVERA



## MIAMI INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

# Film delivers on many levels

• 'ONE WATER', FROM 1E

chunks of mountain glaciers in grass and transports them on muleback to a cafe in a neighboring village, where they are shaved and served with juice to customers. In Japan, an elaborate ceremony around a lake, complete with drums, costumes and dancers, is performed, all in the hopes of getting rain to fall.

In India's Thar Desert Region, women carrying jugs of water on their heads are the key to their village's survival, while a man digs a hole in the sand with his hands until he uncovers a couple handfuls of water.

Shot on Sony Cine-Alta high-definition cameras by cinematographer Ed Talavera, a UM associate professor, the images in *One Water* are striking enough to stand on their own without dialogue. The film's original score, written by Miami-based composer Thomas M. Sleeper and recorded by the Russian National Orchestra in Moscow, gives the images an added majestic sweep.

Befitting the filmmakers' hopes of a worldwide audience, the various vignettes in *One Water* were designed to serve as stand-alone stories that would engage viewers of all cultures and ages.

Ali Habashi, a UM profes-

### IF YOU GO

*One Water* screens at 6:30 p.m. Sunday at the Colony Theatre, 1040 Lincoln Rd., Miami Beach. Ticket information: 305-405-MIFF or miamifilmfestival.com

sor who edited and co-directed *One Water*, says he labored over the design of those sequences. "It is very important for the audience to participate and become part of the film, so some of those stories were structured as little puzzles. We wanted you to feel you were among the people you see, rather than someone watching them from the outside. But you also have to strike a balance, because at screenings we found that younger people are always willing to do the mental work, but older generations want the story told in a straightforward way."

It is *One Water's* effectiveness as a piece of pure cinema that makes its subject come across so clearly to viewers: the threat of extinction looming over the planet's fresh water tables, the inequitable access to water in some of the world's poorest regions and the role — physical and spiritual — water

plays in cultures around the globe.

"Although we cover various issues — access, health, pollution, contamination — the centerpiece of them all is: Is water a human right or is it a commodity that you can sell?" Habashi said. "In many parts of the world, they are not used to paying for water. So if you don't have money, do you not have right to water? And the money is usually used to clean the water, not to pay for the water itself. So where should that money go? To private banks or back into the system to continue cleaning the region's water?"

*One Water's* poetic simplicity makes these issues come alive with an urgency no verbal discussion ever could. "We want the movie to bring attention to the water crisis and inspire people to feel that this is something we can address, as individuals or in groups," said Chatterjee. "Ideally we'd like the film to have a limited theatrical release, because it would bring a lot of attention to the issue. This is not something distributors are going to come grabbing at. But with the release of other environmental films [such as *An Inconvenient Truth* and *The 11th Hour*], I think we have a shot. It may be a long shot, but we do have a shot."