

Crumbling Mountains, Mighty Women.

A tale of sisterhood from the sinking city of Joshimath

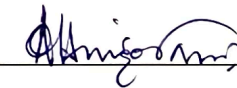
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Project Guide
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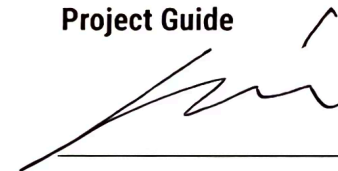
Approval Sheet

This project entitled 'Crumbling Mountains, Mighty Women' by Reshma Issac, 216450003, is approved for partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Design (M. Des) degree in Communication Design, at IDC School of Design, IIT Bombay

Examiners

 (Int. Examiner)

Project Guide



Date 29th May 2023

Place IDC IIT Bombay

Chairperson



Declaration

I declare that this written submission represents my ideas in my own words and where others' opinions or words have been included, I have adequately cited and referenced the sources. I also declare that I have adhered to all principles of academic honesty and integrity and have not misrepresented or fabricated or falsified any idea/data/fact/source in my submission. I understand that any violation of the above will be cause for disciplinary action by the Institute and can also evoke penal action from the sources which have thus not been appropriately cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

Signature of the student



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Acknowledgement

I have many to thank for helping me materialise this project, but I especially want to express my gratitude to Prof. Shilpa Ranade for her gentle guidance and insightful perspectives. I would also like to thank Prof. Sudesh Balan for selflessly imparting invaluable wisdom on documentary filmmaking and more importantly, on setting attainable goals.

This project would really not have seen the light of day without my friend Sky (whose knowledge of photography and ability of forming deep friendships with complete strangers continues to mesmerise and inspire me). Sky (Anil N R) and their partner and my dearest friend Joe (Joanna Koshy), were also patient with me through my many breakdowns and for that I am eternally grateful.

I would like to thank Vivek Parmar for his advocacy, and lending his voice to the land and its inhabitants. Finally, I want to express my gratitude to 'the didis' (Leela Rana, Usha Pal, Manju Pal, and Khushboo) who have inspired me and hopefully many with their stories and their genuine love for native culture.

Abstract

Crumbling Mountains, Mighty Women - A tale of sisterhood from the sinking city of Joshimath, is a 15 minute documentary film that tries to capture the human story of the native pahadi women of Joshimath who are facing eviction from their homes due to the threat to their lives imposed by the unstable lands of which they are inhabitants of.

While a lot of the sinking of Joshimath is attributed to it being located on a seismically active zone, it is said to have been further accelerated in recent years due to unchecked, extractive human activities in the region such as tunnel boring for mega power projects. The brunt of this is borne, as per usual, by the most marginalised of people in the region , the indigenous pahadis. The documentary is an attempt at making the mainstream discourse revolving around the topics of extractivism, climate change, etc., inclusive of the people directly affected (and how it affects them exponentially more than those who stand to gain from extractive activities).

Key Words Indigenous activism, Joshimath, Land subsidence, Extractivism, Sisterhood

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1. Introduction

Photography Anil N. R., 2023.

1.1 Theoretical Premise

Anthropological research has over the years identified two broad 'worldviews' - the indigenous or native worldview and the western contemporary worldview.

Indigenous Worldview identifies that the human system is deeply interconnected to the ecological system. That animals, plants, birds, and even objects we often consider inanimate such as rocks and mountains are considered as having life and being part of the same family. And how these require constant fostering for the relationship to continue¹.

Western Worldview understands the human system as being separate from and often times as superior to the ecological system. It is a worldview that looks at the natural world as an infinite resource that can and must be extracted to sustain the human system. A mindset of colonialism and consumerism accelerated by industrialisation is said to have led to the proliferation of extractive industrial societies across the world, replacing and degrading native models of living.

Extractive Economies tend to treat most local, regional and even national economies as places from which wealth – resources, money, labor, etc. – can be extracted.² Environmental concerns of extractivism include; climate change, soil depletion, deforestation, loss of food sovereignty, declining biodiversity and contamination of freshwater.³

1 Dalla Costa, W., Rachel Dorothy Tanur Memorial Lecture, Walking Backwards Into the Future: Indigenous Design Thinking. Harvard University GSD. 2022.

2 Goerner, S., Regenerative Development: The Art and Science of Creating Durably Vibrant Human Networks. Capital Institute. 2015.
<https://capitalinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/000-Regenerative-Devel-Final-Goerner-Sept-1-2015.pdf>

3 Burchardt. Neo-extractivism (p. 469). Extractivism. Wikipedia.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extractivism#cite_note-6-12

Regenerative Economies recognise that the human economy is embedded in both culture and the ecosphere and must operate in a dynamic and cooperative relationship with them, respecting cultural needs and planetary limits. It allows for critical value adding exchanges to occur at all scales in reciprocal relationship, in contrast with commoditised transactions.⁴

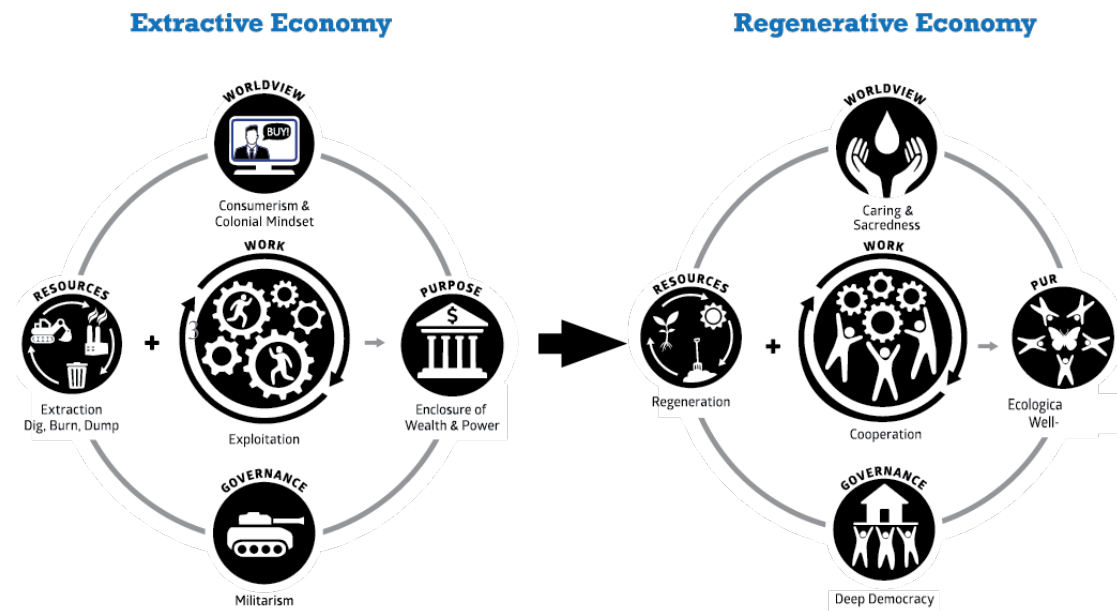


Fig 1.1: Extractive vs Regenerative Economies, Just Transition. Climate Change Alliance: Communities United for a Just Transition. Source: www.climatejusticealliance.org

4 Regenerative Economics 101, Regenerative Principle 101. Natural Capitalism Solutions. <https://natcapsolutions.org/regenerative-economics-101/>

5 Just Transition. Climate Change Alliance: Communities United for a Just Transition. <https://climatejusticealliance.org/about/>

Just Transition recognises that the adverse impacts of an extractive industrialist society is not felt equitably among people - the most marginalised are often the most vulnerable and the least 'extractive'. Just Transition redresses past harms and creates new relationships of power for the future through reparations.⁵

1.2 Context

Geography Joshimath is a town in the Chamoli District in the state of Uttarakhand and is located at a height of 1,875 m above sea level. It is a gateway to several Himalayan mountain climbing expeditions, trekking trails and pilgrim centres like Badrinath.⁶ It is part of an area that locals refer to as Dev Bhumi (the land of gods). Joshimath is located in an area that geomorphology refers to as a seismotectonically active region. This makes the region prone to disasters such as landslides, earthquakes, cloudbursts, etc⁷

Socio-Economic Pressures in addition to natural phenomena, human activities like unscientific development and land use pattern, unwarranted changes of landscape, ecosystem structure and functions, forest degradation, and increasing pressure of tourism have also contributed to the vulnerability of the region to disasters.⁷

Religious / Tourist Significance the town is of religious significance to the followers of the Hindu religion of the subcontinent and is considered a holy town. Pilgrims on the Char Dham Yatra enroute to Badrinath stop by at Joshimath.

⁶ Agarwal, M., The Ascent of Trisul, 1970. The Himalayan Club. 2013. Joshimath. Wikipedia.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joshimath#cite_ref-trisul_4-0

⁷ Phukan, N., The geographical history of Joshimath and all the disasters in or near the area. Ground Report. 2023.
<https://groundreport.in/the-geographical-history-of-joshimath-and-all-the-disasters-in-or-near-the-area/>

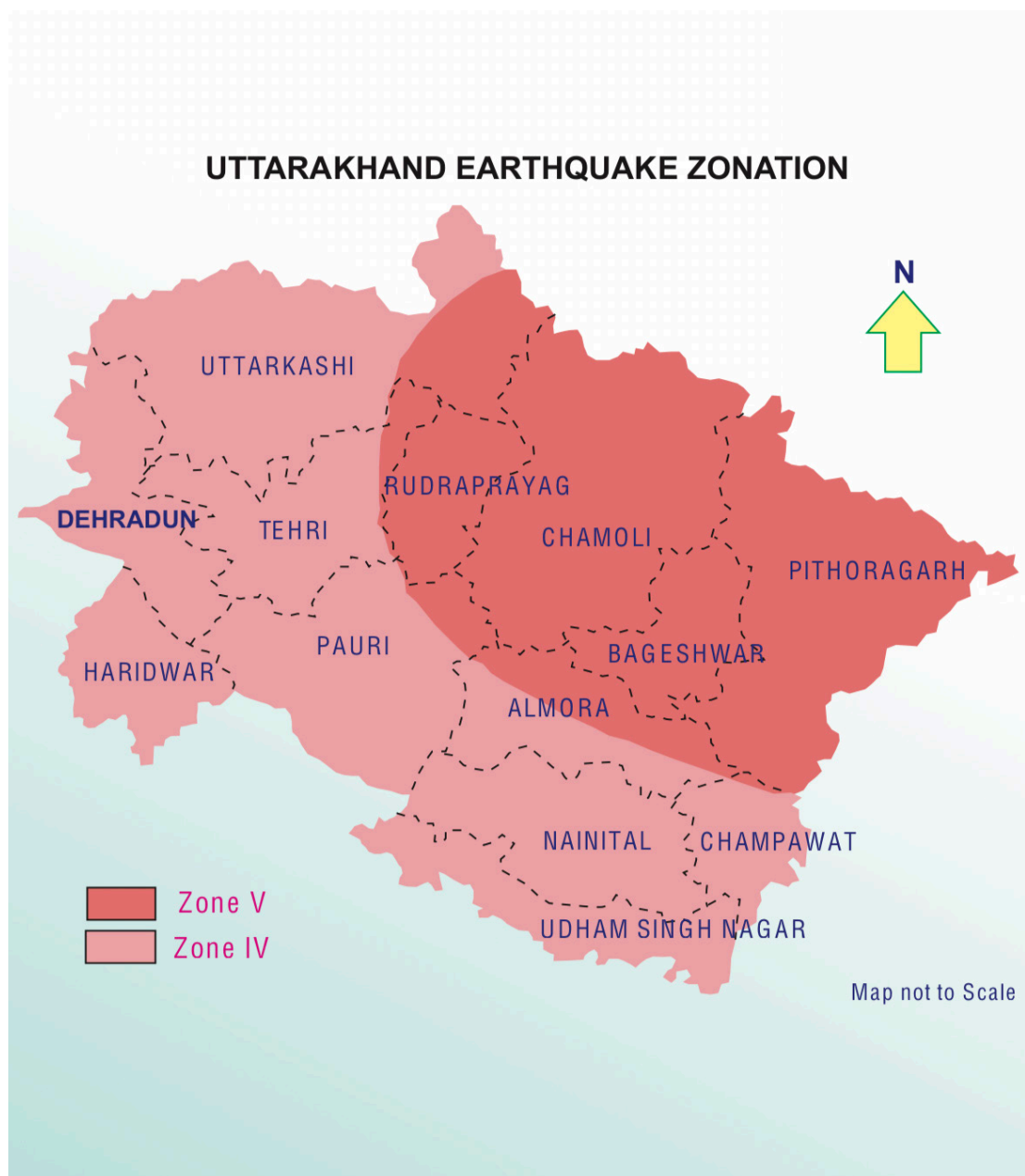


Fig 1.2: Uttarakhand Earthquake Hazard Zonation Map, www.groundreport.in, Original Source: NIDM Report

Fresh water discharge at Joshimath triggers fears

Fig. 1.3

. The town, which has been built on loose soil deposited by landslides, loose soft rocks and moraine (material left behind by retreating glaciers), does not have a systematic drainage.

Fig. 1.4

Joshimath sinking: How man-made factors assaulted fragile ecology

Fig. 1.5

Joshimath: What's the future of India's sinking Himalayan town?

Fig. 1.6

Over the years and more recently, the Geological Survey of India and the Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority (USDMA) had warned against construction and big projects in the area.

Fig. 1.7

Fig. 1.8

Hundreds of people have been evacuated from Joshimath, a Himalayan town which has been slowly sinking into the ground in India.

Multiple factors including unplanned construction, over-population, obstruction of natural flow of water and hydel power activities are being cited as reasons

Fig. 1.9

Local anger is directed at a top Indian power company, the government-owned NTPC Ltd, whose ongoing Tapovan Vishnugad hydro power project, they allege, is tunnelling through the fragile ecosystem.

Fig. 1.10

1.3 Motivation

Over the course of the two years at IDC, I have been able to gauge better the tools that I have now access to as a communication designer. One such realisation, and what I believe is a vital one, is that I can perhaps work with voices that often go unheard and use my tools to help these voices tell their stories in their raw, unfiltered form.

When I was made aware of the situation at Joshimath, I immediately wondered what was happening to the people who are most affected by such catastrophes - the people who are considered to be at the lowest rung of societally imposed structures, people who are often expected to make the most space and accommodation. I wondered what these people had to say, how their lives were affected, especially because their identities are often deeply tied to the spaces they inhabit.

And as a feminist, I especially wondered - what of the voices of the women in these situations, because their perspectives are some of the most systemically unheard and dismissed. This prompted me to actively seek out women affected by the subsidence, and in turn, their families, their lifestyles, etc

Fig 1.3 Talwar, G., The Times of India. Feb 27, 2023.

Fig 1.4, 1.7, 1.9 Joshi, P., Business Line, The Hindu. Jan 17, 2023.
<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/bl-explainer-what-led-to-the-sinking-of-joshimath/article66361433.ece>

Fig 1.5 Bathla, A., India News, Hindustan Times. Feb 08, 2023.
<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/joshimath-sinking-how-man-made-factors-assaulted-fragile-ecology-101673290161100.html>

Fig 1.6, Fig. 1.8, Fig 1.10 India, BBC News. Jan 24, 2023.
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-64369752#>



2. The Protagonists

Photography Anil N. R., 2023.

2.1 The 'Pahadi' Women

Who are the Pahadis? A group that represents one of the largest ethnic groups in Nepal and the neighboring Himalayan regions of India. Many Pahari have no formal record of ownership of their lands, making them constantly vulnerable to dispossession by governments and private parties.

These lands are not just crucial for their livelihoods but for many Pahari their lands are also intimately linked to their culture, identity and way of life.⁸

The protagonists Usha Pal, Leela Rana, Manju Pal, and Khushboo are indigenous Pahadi women who have homes in Joshimath but are native to the neighbouring Niti Valley. They moved to Joshimath after they were married off (and Joshimath is the nearest town with basic facilities such as schools for their children and hospitals). They live in their Joshimath homes all through winter and go back to Niti when its summer.

These women have been relocated to a lodging facility since January of 2023, ever since the local government sealed off their homes as being unsafe to inhabit, except for Leela

⁸ Malhotra, M., The Pahari indigenous people: dispossessed. Open Democracy. 2013.
<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/pahari-indigenous-people-dispossessed/>



Fig 2.1 Issac, R., Illustration of Leela Rana. 2023.



Fig 2.2 Issac, R., Illustration of Usha Pal. 2023.



Fig 2.3 Issac, R., Illustration of Manju Pal. 2023.



Fig 2.4 Issac, R., Illustration of Kushboo. 2023.

whose house has stayed intact. Usha and Leela have been close friends for nearly two decades and are deeply distressed by how the situation would affect their relationship.

Ever since news of the deepening cracks in Joshimath made it to mainstream news, Joshimath has sunk into a degree of economic instability. The tourist flocked town turned into a ghost town, and people dependent on tourism were directly affected. This included the families of these women, whose husbands drove tourists around for a living.

In such times of financial instability, these women took to foraging in the forests for medicinal herbs - a native ancestral practice that was passed down to them. What they soon realised was that the forest provided them respite from the shackles of reality that held them down everywhere else in life and also deepened their bond. Hence, going into the forests became an everyday practice for these women despite the uncertainty of making any money from selling the foraged goods.



Fig 2.5 Issac, R., House to be demolished marked with an 'X'. Joshimath. 2023.



Fig 2.6 Issac, R. People set up a temporary structure in the debris of a demolished house. Joshimath. 2023.



Fig 2.7 Issac, R., House with a poster that reads 'Unusable'. Joshimath. 2023.



Fig 2.8 Issac, R., A concrete structure that was demolished, one among many. Joshimath. 2023.



Fig 2.9 Issac, R., The cracked plinth of house marked for demolition. Joshimath. 2023.



3. Documentary film

Photography Anil N. R., 2023.

3.1 Key Details

After several interactions with the women and other locals from Joshimath (such as environmental activist and snowboarding/ skiing champion Vivek Panwar), and the natural tendency I developed of documenting artefacts through photographs during my visit to Joshimath, it became clear that a documentary film would be an appropriate medium. It could become a powerful way to express and document the unique viewpoint of the interpersonal relationship of marginalised people , especially women running households, affected by catastrophes (accelerated by human activities).

Title for the film Crumbling Mountains, Mighty Women

Intended audience Intended for all age groups (general audience), but since it has concepts such as geo-politics, marginalisation, activism, climate change, etc an audience with atleast a basic understanding of such concepts would be the target.

Length 15 min. (including end credits)

Location Joshimath and Auli, Chamoli District, Uttarakhand, India



Fig 3.1 Issac, R., Women foraging along the forest floor for lichens. Auli. 2023

3.2 Objective

The people who are most affected by the consequences of extractive human activity and also the most overlooked tend to be marginalised people. These people often also contribute the least and experience devastation and loss disproportionately. The indigenous people of third world countries are some of the most exploited and marginalised groups.

And within such groups, the stories that women hold often go untold. This documentary is not just aimed at giving indigenous women from some of the remotest parts of the country a voice, but also gives us a peak into how indigenous people deal with adversities as it manifests in many areas of their lives, such as friendship.

Heart of the story A story of sisterhood among indigenous women faced with displacement and how their bond strengthens as they seek out a safe space in a truly indigenous way - by foraging in the forests.

3.3 Film Summary

Subject Sisterhood, Indigenous Folk, Joshimath

Summary Leela and Usha, two indigenous Pahadi women from Joshimath, a small tourist town nestled in the Himalayas that has been affected by land subsistence, have been close friends and neighbours for over a decade. The local government starts sealing off houses in danger of collapsing, and one of the houses that were sealed off is that of Usha (and her sister-in-law Manju). Faced with an uncertain future, and the local economy which was hit as tourists stopped flocking in to the town, the women seek solace through foraging in the forests as a mode of secondary income. What they also discover is that the forest, in a way, has also provided them with a way to strengthen their bond through contemplation.



Fig 3.2 Issac, R., Leela foraging along the forest floor for lichens. Auli. 2023



Fig 3.3 Issac, R., A shrine in the forest dedicated to a native diety/ forest gaurdian spirit. Auli. 2023



Fig 3.4 Issac, R., Seval or Lichen . Auli. 2023

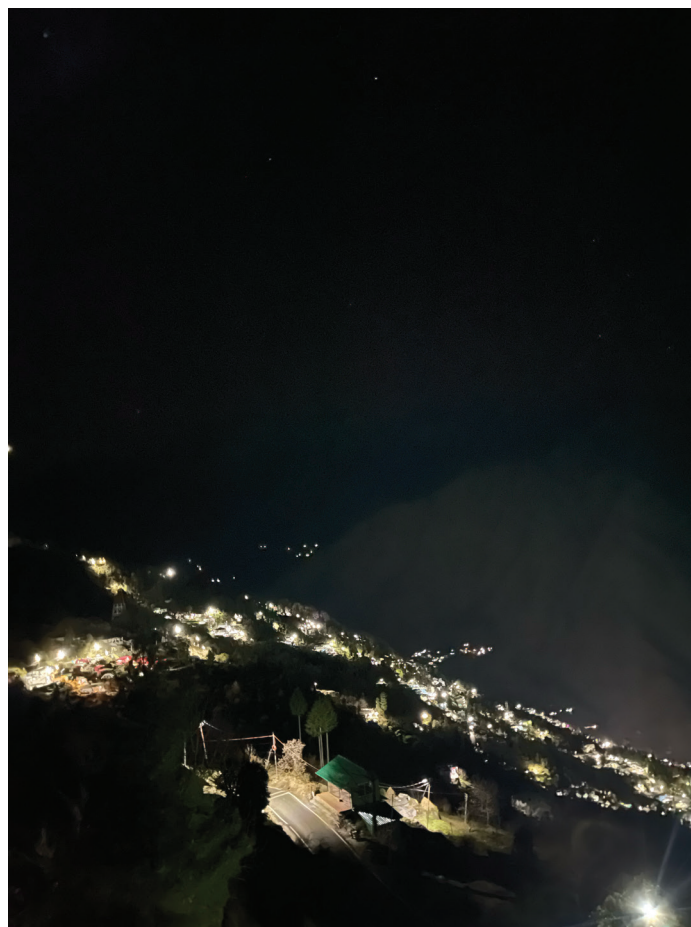


Fig 3.5 Issac, R., The town of Joshimath at night, as seen from Sunil, lower Auli. Auli. 2023



Fig 3.6



Fig 3.7

Fig 3.6 Issac, R., Manju with her collecting bag. Auli. 2023

Fig 3.7 Issac, R., Forest covered in mist. Auli. 2023

3.4 Narrative Structure

The development of the narrative structure of the document was the most crucial part and saw two phases and a final phase. Phase 1 was the layout of the film that was roughly sketched out while filming, although parts of it were pre-determined before filming began in order to set the tone of the film. Since the sisterhood angle of the film only developed a week into living and interacting with the locals at Auli and Joshimath, Phase 1 could not be entirely developed before filming began. The initial idea was to interview locals who were affected in some way by the land subsidence and the media coverage that followed it. This is why the first few interviews were that of Vivek Parmar, a international level skiing and snowboarding champion, and a vocal environmental activist.

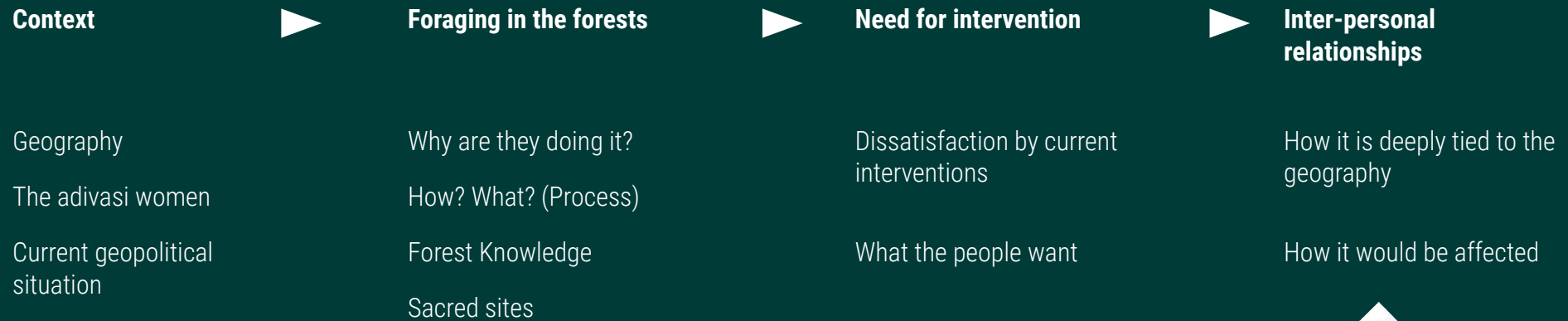
But a week into my stay at Joshimath, I befriended the foraging women while on a hike and they learned that they were directly affected, as in they lost homes to the subsidence were facing eviction. They agreed to interviews and filming and were fairly compensated for their time. On further interaction with them, I quickly learned that their story was worth telling and would appeal to the humanity of the intended audience, and could effectively drive home the point of the film - that of empathising with the most marginalised people and their stories.

3.4.1 Phase 1

Content	Visuals	Audio/ voice-over.
<u>1} Introduction :</u> → Context setting • Sneak peak @ the geography • Introducing characters • The state of Joshimath	→ Text frames about Joshimath. → Shots from chair lift + temple shots. → clips of them making 'Thya' and introducing. → Their house, buildings in ruin.	→ " } → Leela didi singing → Temple bells. } Leela, Usha & Manju didis talking about their current state (mental/physical).
<u>2} Foraging in the forests:</u> • Why are they foraging? How long? • What? • How it helps. • Sacredness of the forest	→ clips of women at work in the forests. → clips of lichen → stories of the forests. → Scenic forest shots → forest temple	→ Leela didi explaining why they forage (how they do it to take their mind off of things). → Women singing in the forests. → accomp. audio

<u>3} Need for intervention :</u> • dissatisfaction by current interventions • What the people want	→ Shots of women discussing their dissatisfaction → " → Vinod Kumar's explanation	→ audio from interviews → interview audio
<u>4} Friendship</u> • Women discussing among themselves their life & friendship • How Usha & Leela's friendship is affected.	→ discussion at chai time → clips on chair lift of Usha & Leela talking about their close friendship → clips in the forest where they discuss how Usha moving will affect their friendship → Women dancing together	} accompanying audio. } → women singing song.
• How they celebrate their sisterhood		

3.4.2 Phase 2



Phase 2 helped crystallise the story of the women to a higher degree but seemed too structured and the flexibility that is part of storytelling seemed to be getting lost. It was here that I reassessed my inventory of shots and took time to determine the story that was being conveyed naturally. I played around with the clips and tried to break away from strictly looking at them chronologically. On further research and reading, I came across the basic way to structure documentaries - the Three-Act Structure.

3.4.3 Final Phase



Fig 3.8 The Three-act documentary structure, Desktop Documentaries. <https://www.desktop-documentaries.com/documentary-structure>. <https://www.desktop-documentaries.com/documentary-structure>.

Act 1 determines the tone of the film and is usually where a conflict or unusual situation is introduced to keep the viewer engaged. Act 2 is the main gut of the story and is traditionally where the protagonist(s) try to resolve the conflict. Act 3 brings in some kind of resolution and helps tie the entire story together.

With these cues in mind, I developed the final phase for the narrative structure (although the structure sometimes slightly breaks away from the three-act structure as well as it was determined to be the most effective way to convey a more impactful story).

The final structure of the movie is as follows.

Act 1 Introduction to protagonists and conflict

Here, the main characters, Leela, Usha and Manju are introduced and the location is the very house that was sealed off, already making the conflict clear - women faced with tragedy of forced eviction and improper resettlement, and the larger issue of how it is bound to affect their friendship. Vivek Parmar is also introduced and this helps further build on the conflict as he talks about the geo-political situation of Joshimath.

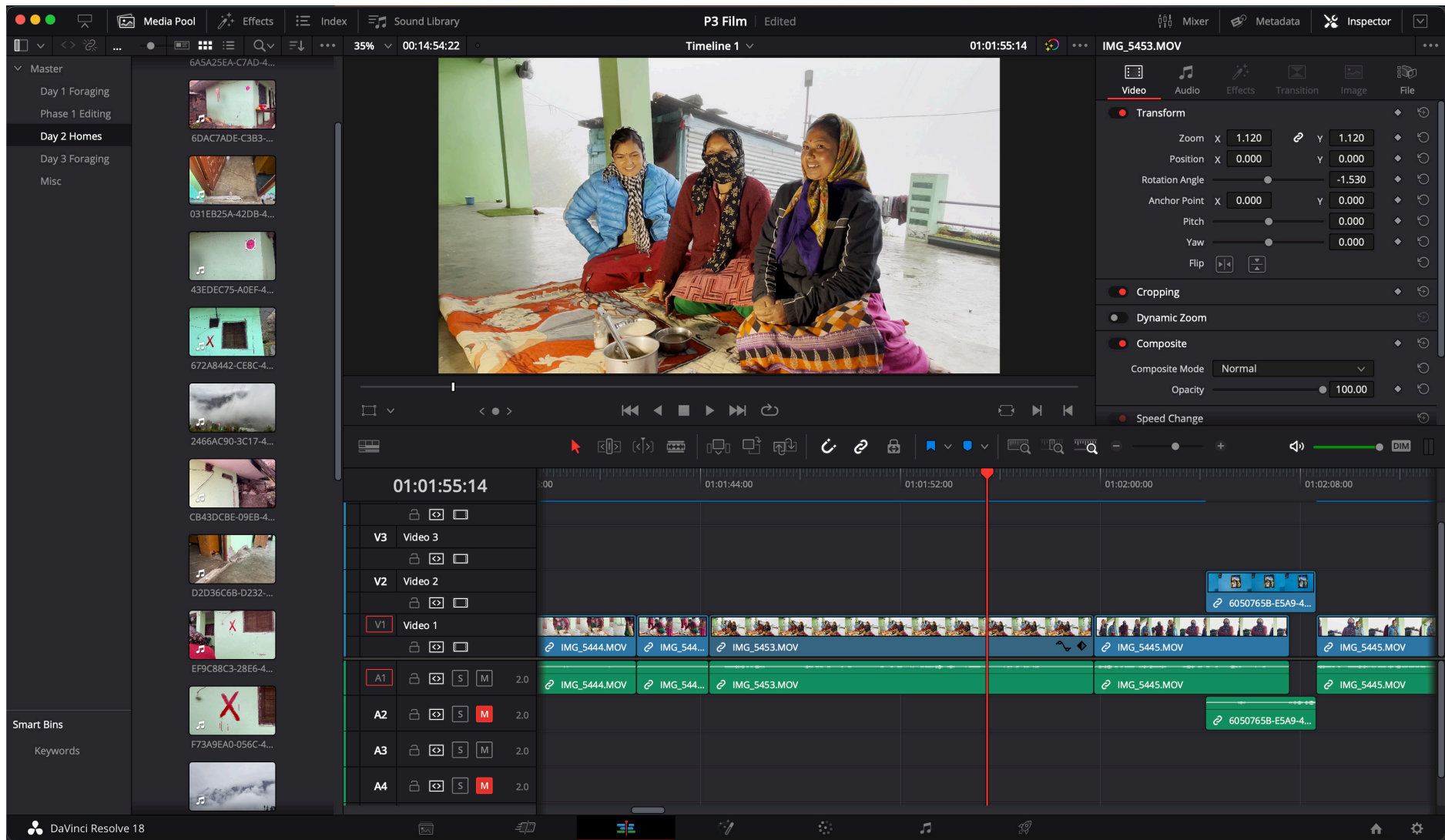


Fig 3.9 Editing on DaVinci Resolve 18

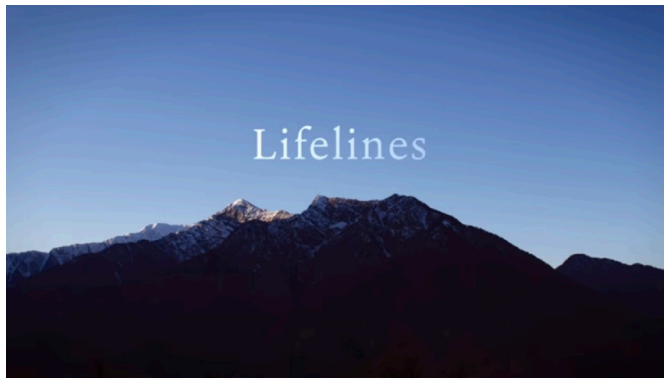
Act 2 The meat of the matter

Divided into several scenes, the camera here follows the women into the forest where they show us how they've picked up foraging in the forests, a skill that was generationally passed on to them by their ancestors, and how it has come to their aid at a difficult financial time. The scenes also show them indulging in activities such as stopping at all the shrines strewn across their path, and the contemplative atmosphere the forest provides for them. Their minds often drift and they naturally turn to song and dance - symbolising a ray of hope amidst possibly the hardest time of their lives. The women also open up about their sentiments around the deep friendship that they developed over the years.

Act 3 Resolution

This particular documentary is structured in a way where the boundaries between the second and third act is somewhat blurry. They both weave in and out of each other but the intent is to still convey a sense of closure / resolution for those viewing. The documentary draws to an end with women making bold statements of keeping up the good fight and not letting go what is rightfully theirs. They also speak up about not letting this situation affect the bond that they developed over the years, that going back into the forest in recent times only helped foster further.

4. Case Study



4.1 Lifelines - a short documentary from the Indian Himalayas

Directors Jane Dyson, Ross Harrison

Duration 15:58 min.

Description (as described by the filmmakers)

In a village 2500m high in the Indian Himalayas, life is changing. Many of the younger generation seek to chart a new course, different from those of their parents. This is one man's story of juggling responsibilities and fighting for dreams, both for himself and for his community. This short documentary is part of a research project on education, unemployment and social change in South Asia, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. Social geographer Dr Jane Dyson is based at the University of Oxford and has worked in the village in Uttarakhand since 2003.

Why study this film?

1. Location: The documentary is mostly set and filmed in a remote village in the Indian himalayas. This was particularly helpful because my film was also going to be filmed in the same geographical location and was helpful in analysing the geography from the perspective of the camera before filming began. Even before filming began on site, I could draw inspiration for how to frame my shots, how to pace them, what to film, etc

2. Length: This short documentary was very close in duration to the length I had in mind for my film. Essentially, it helped with understanding pacing and structuring a narrative within a specific time duration. This also helped with the arduous exercise of shortlisting very specific clips from a large pool of clips - how do you chose the right clips to convey the story in it's most meaningful and impactful form? Such were the questions this particular case study allowed for me to reflect and work on.

3. Protagonists: The film features Makar Singh Negi, a family man from this small Himalayan village, one of many who's future (including that of his children, his wife, and his extended family memebbers) looks bleak because of the severe unemployment crisis that he faces. He is a character with much conflict and struggle and is societally marginalised. The story of the protagonist is similar in many ways to the stories of the people in my own film - both groups of people are faced with uncertain futures, unemployment, financial crisis, families to take care of, are marginalised, and share the same pahadi culture. In a way, the film provides us with a different perspective on similar problems faced by similar groups of people from the same ethnogeographies.

4. Structure: This film follows the classis three-act documentary structure, a conventional but impactful way, in it's own right, to structure films. Especially as a complete amateur to documentary filmmaking, it was important for me to understand how three-act structures could be implemented to make a short docu film. The first act starts of with a conflict,

in this case the problem of severe unemployment affecting a particular marginalised section from a specific geographical location. The story then transitions into the second act, which introduces us to the lifestyles of these people, their families, their occupation, etc. Essentially giving the viewer a quick but thorough glance into the lives of these people and how the conflict introduced in the first act is affecting them at different levels.

In the final act of the film, the tension that was sustained throughout the film sees a little bit of relief and to an extent, resolution, making the film feel complete yet leaving the viewer with some questions, some contemplation - and perhaps prompting them to contribute to important discourse and action.

It was insightful in that, I was able to understand how a narrative consisting of three acts can be structured cleverly within a limited time duration and still convey a complete and comprehensive story. These were some important take aways that I could draw from for my own process.



Fig 4.2 Stills from the documentary film



4.2 The Elephant Whisperers

Directors Kartiki Gonsalves

Duration 41 min.

Description

The Elephant Whisperers tells the story of an indigenous couple named Bomman and Bellie who are entrusted with an orphaned baby Indian elephant named Raghu. They take great pains to ensure that the fragile, injured infant survives and grows to be a healthy juvenile. A strong bond develops between the couple and the elephant. They adopt another elephant Ammukutty and eventually have to give up Raghu. Set in the Mudumalai National Park in the border of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu states of India, the documentary also highlights the natural beauty of the location. It explores the life of the tribal people in harmony with nature and also showcases Indian culture and tradition of environment conservation.



Why study this film?

While the documentary film centers around animal conservation, it also tells this story through the lens of adivasi lives. It captures how closely indigenous folks and their lives are interwoven with nature and the habitat they occupy. It tells a cohesive story told in many layers. What speaks to the viewer upon watching the documentary is not just the story of the forest and the elephants, but also the humanity of its characters and the bond between nature and human, and between humans.

Trying to capture such dynamism in my own film would thus be important to keep the viewer engaged and deliver a more powerful message than just the tale of a sinking town in the Himalayas. It would make sense to also capture the story of the people that occupy this town, their interpersonal relationships, their daily lives, their livelihoods, etc.

Although *The Elephant Whisperers* is longer and more fleshed out, hence it would present a challenge to try and capture such dynamism within the time constraints of a short documentary film.

5. Conclusion

The film, as stated previously, is merely an attempt at making the discourse that usually just circulates among the more privileged circles of people, as it was seen when sensational news first broke about Joshimath earlier this year, more inclusive of diverse voices. And most importantly the voices of people who are severely affected by a large scale catastrophic event caused by extractive human activities that do not even benefit, but in fact make their situation worse off than it was, and the economic strife that affects an entire region, especially one that relies heavily on tourism, by the sensationalising of news.

To create the most impact, it was necessary to tell a story that talks to the humanity of the viewership, something relatable to everyone that might chance upon this documentary. To do this, the story of human bonds, that of sisterhood - the stories that often take a back seat when the focus is on the catastrophe itself. It was eye-opening to witness women finding respite in the very forests that are also threatened by these human activities and how different groups of people approach problem-solving given their circumstances and means.

6. Learnings

What does being 'indigenous' or 'marginalised' entail?

Before I started this project, I was under the impression that all marginalised groups immediately exist at the extreme end of marginalisation. And my takeaway has been that this way of looking at the problems of privilege-marginalisation is very black or white. In a way, my perspective invalidates the existence of groups that are marginalised but are also more privileged than others. The Pahaadi women I interacted with very much certainly affected, and do not have access in many areas. But at the same time, these women are a more privileged group than others - their husbands work as drivers, they themselves have had education at least until undergraduate levels, their children go to schools, they own property, etc. But this in no way invalidates their story, in fact it made me realise that it is alright for people to be more privileged than others and yet have valid life problems that are worth being spoken about. They were certainly not the most marginalised people that I've come across in life, but their stories still held weight, and their stories still go unheard. And I think shifting my focus in this way could be helpful to how I look at problems, and how I can look at the authenticity of problems. And the various layers at which problems exist. It is simply a universal truth that some problems are bigger than others, but it is also true that speaking about one does not invalidate another.

Pahadi people are considered an indigenous group, but when compared to the generic

experiences of native people elsewhere, the understanding of what is “indigenous experience” becomes more vague and perhaps need deeper understanding. What I understand right now, is that the terms ‘indigenous’ or ‘marginalised’ or ‘oppressed’ are not catchall, umbrella terms and require more nuanced and authentic understanding, and is perhaps beyond my scope at the moment.

Other takeaways

In continuation to my reflection on ‘scope’, what I realise that during the initial stages of the project (even before primary research), I tend to ask big and broad questions. While it is not wrong to ask questions that require long, sustained research, what happens as I get further into the research is that many more broad level questions start cropping up and addressing it all becomes an tedious and unrealistic task for the time duration I have in hand for my project. While there are ways to navigate such situations and arrive at more nuanced topics that can be explored in a much more richer fashion, it often takes skill to identify it. Perhaps spending more time in the initial research and figuring out what works and does not is what is needed.

Technicalities

More time understanding technical aspects of the filming process and documenting every step of the way, be it journaling, site notes, photographs, interviews, etc would have come in handy. Good quality audio recording can make or break a film, and recording audio outdoors and figuring out the equipment at hand (even if it is just your phone) is quite important. Another inconsistency while filming was that some clips were shot at 60 FPS while others at 30 FPS, and hence the final output was at 30 FPS. Making sure that a consistent frame rate was set at the beginning of shooting everyday, would’ve been a helpful exercise for greater video output quality. A final technical detail that came from an amateur understanding of light outdoors was shooting in log, especially when it was overcast on most days.

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