Lobtuk

Schools, 12000 feet up.

Project 1 : A Documentary Film

In collaboration with Avalokitesvara Trust

Shubhangi Salinkar | VC 136250009

Lobtuk

STUDENT: In local Ladakhi dialect

Semister II , Project 1

Report : Internship and Film Making with Avalokitesvara Trust

Shubhangi Salinkar
Visual Communication
136250009
Internship Period : April-June 2014
Internship Location: Ladakh, India

AVALOKITEŚVARA
CHARITABLE TRUST

Gotal House, Upper Stalam,

Beneath Leh Palace,

Leh-194101. Ladakh

+919622140328/+919825062969

Dear Shubhangi

We thank you for the completion of your internship with AT from May 12th 2014 to June 12th 2014.

We appreciate the work you have done with us.

Looking forward to the submission of the movie. Wish you all the best.

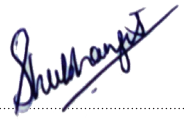
Yours sincerely,

Abhigya Shukla

Director and Founder

Approval Sheet

The Summer Internship Project, at Avalokitesvara Trust, is approved for partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of 'Master of Design' in Visual Communication.



Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Avalokiteswara Trust and the FOL team for this excellent opportunity to work with their
organization and contribute for the cause of rural education in Ladakh.
I would like to thank my parents for trusting me to undertake the journey all by my self.
I thank my co-volunteers for aiding me in the film process and wholeheartedly being a part of the film.
And I thank the people I met in Ladakh, who made the whole experience worthwhile.

Contents

Abstract	11
Indroduction	13
Schedule	14
Tools Used	17
Process	19
Brief	21
Pre Production	23
Execution	25
Post Production	26
The Journey	29
Final Product	31

Abstract

Ladakh is one of the most geographically cut off regions in India. Education in Ladakh is a relitively recent phenomenon. Across an area of about 60,000 square km, that is Ladakh, about 981 schools of different sizes and categories struggle to exist. Schools in Ladakh belong to three major categories: Private Schools, Govenment Schools and Monastry Schools.

The common thread that runs through the different categories of schools across Ladakh is lack of exposure to the outside world, of students and teachers alike. Today, various NGOs are working with Ladakhi schools, providing valuble material resources and sending volunteers to them, to teach the children.

The basic aim of the film is to reach out to the educated people of the country and to get them to volunteer in the schools of Ladakh. By documenting the types of schools, the problems they face, and the environments they have, the film is an effort to educate the people across the country to spend their time and whatever knowlege they have, with the school children of Ladakh.

This is Sameer.
This is Sameer's house.
Sameer and his family
live in this house.

Introduction

Avalokitesvara Trust's vision is to empower children with the gift of education, the joy of learning, bringing previously absent opportunities for a better overall quality of life in Ladakh.

Their aim is to enhance the mental, emotional and psychological development of children within and beyond the education they receive at school, giving them the best possible foundation for the rest of their lives.

Besides acting as a channel for volunteers across the country to teach the childeren, AT also had a programme called Fountain of Learning, from 2011. Under this programme, it set up libraries and reading rooms in various schools across Ladakh, notably, even the very remote ones.

Their project, called 'Fountain of Learning (FOL) has attracted phenomenal interest from skilled volunteers across India, many of whom benefit from the experience almost as much as the children they teach, and has thus become a channel of positive interaction between this remote region and the rest of the country.

The project has also generated much appreciation from teachers in Ladakh, who generally struggle just to push their students through mandatory exams with limited resources and approaches to learning.

I made a short film of about 30 minutes, which covered the work of the NGO, across three schools. The NGO made arrangements for me to visit the schools in the Leh-Ladakh region.

Schedule

The three schools that were visited in a period of a little more than a month, were:

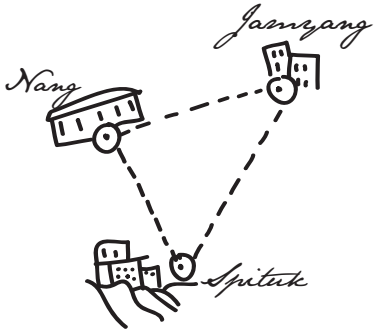
1. Jamyang Leh, a charitable residential school in Leh closely associated with the Dalai Lama Trust, meant for the children from the remote villages of Ladakh. (S1)

2. Government Middle School, Nang, a small village government school.(S2)

3. Spituk Gonpa School, a monastry school which provides a primary education to young monks.(S3)

In S1, I covered the work of two volunteers from Avalokiteswara Trust, for the month, and teaching the children.
In S2 and S3, I captured the general atmosphere of the schools, and highlighted a few key issues.Throughout the movie, the underlying essence remained the need to volunteer in them. I also taught in S2 and S3, but could not capture that experience in video footage, as that would have caused me to deviate either of the tasks. However, my time with the children and the interactions I had with them, definitely colours various aspects of the movie invisibly.

Schools



3 Schools

A Government School
A Private School
A Monastry School

in a 1.5 month stay.

Tools Used

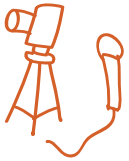
DSLR Nikon D3100
Tripod
Prime Lens, 50mm
18-55 mm Kit Lens
55-200 Telephoto Lens
Intervalometer (For Time Lapse Shots)
UV FIlter
Variable ND Filter

Process

1 **Research**
about Education
in Ladakh

2 **Ethnographic Research**
Living with the locals
Teaching School Children
Interacting with
School Authorities.

3 **Storyline**
Observing
Thinking
Building a point
of view
Recording points
of Interest

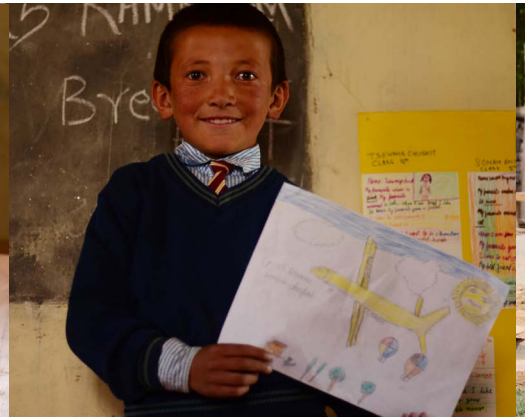


4 **Cinematography**
Sound Recording
Time-Lapse
Videography

5 **Sequencing**
Story Flow
Shot Selection
Chunking

6 **Film Editing**
Color Correction
Fine Tuning

The film is available on http://goo.gl/bb1tXJ



Amul
ATLAC

Brief

I was asked to make a documentary movie of under 30 minutes, based on my volunteer journey.

My task was to capture the atmosphere and environment in the three schools, cover the work of the volunteers in S1, and to cover the usage of the libraries and reading rooms in the other two schools. (S2 and S3)

In addition, I was to absorb, learn, and highlight whatever issues or topics that came to light, during my time in these schools.

The basic goal of the movie was to get volunteers from different parts of India to teach in the remote schools of Ladakh. This was achieved through two means:

1.By capturing the volunteer teaching process, in action, and documenting the progress of the students,
2. By showing the environment and the conditions in the three schools, which would subtly imply the need for people to volunteer in them, due to their lack of resources and exposure.

Pre Production

What I did:
•Before leaving and filming, I read about Ladakh and education in Ladakh extensively.

•The basic format of the documentary was decided. I would have interviews, with footage complementing the message in the interviews playing side by side.

What I learnt:
Education in Ladakh was restricted to government schools before the 1980s, and was hopelessly inadequate an ill suited to the Ladakhi environment. 95% of the childeren failed their class 10 board exams, and it was a systemic falure, and not because the children were not competent enough to pass. The state board of Jammu and Kashmir required the manditory medium of Urdu till class 8, and English in class 9 and 10. With the students ill-versed in both these languages, they were studying in an entirely foreign language in which they were unable to express. Ladakhi is extensively spoken in Ladakh, by all castes, tribes and communities. Post 1988, a group of enterprising young Ladakhi graduates, headed by Sonam Wangchuk, founded SECMOL, Students Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh, and redesigned the whole curriculum and way of teaching for the schools. Since then, the state of education has improved by leaps and bounds and today most Ladakhi childeren go to schools, and pass percentage has improved trememdously. However, my movie was not to be about this education revolution in Ladakh, it was about the schools in general, and the work of the NGO in these schools. Ladakh predominantly has 3 categories of schools,
1. Private schools
2. Government schools
3. Monastry schools
I got to visit all the three types of schools(S1, S2, S3) and film there.

Challenges Faced:
•Before I left, I had very little idea of what to expect. So there was no storyboard, story outline even. I just knew I was going to be sent to three different schools.
•The schools that were pre-planned for me were changed by the time I reached Ladakh. But I was prepared for surprises, and was almost expecting them.

Execution

What I did:

•I landed in each school, spent whatever time was permissible, seeing, experiencing, listening, and absorbing. I spent time talking to the children, the authorities. If possible, I took immediate interviews, asking my questions in front of the camera setup.

•I wrote down immediately, a list of noteworthy things that needed to be filmed. For example, an interesting behavioural pattern, a routine of the children, or a specific place in the school, or a specific activity. These I used as a tick-off list, and made sure I took all the shots before I left the place, as there was no chance of my return there.

•I wrote down insights and information in a notebook. Things that I couldn't get an interviewee to say, but needed to be noted, anyway.

•I had in-depth discussions with my fellow volunteers, about their experiences, what they thought needed to be mentioned in the film.

•I used basic cinematography techniques to capture the actual footage. Panning and still-shots were all that I could use, due to the lack of equipment.

•I used an intervalometer for the time-lapse sequences, which were shot.

An intrinsic part of the whole Ladakh experience is the natural beauty, despite the fact that that was not my primary motivation for making a movie there.

•Based on the interviews with the people, I tried my best to capture footage which complemented the messages and facts in the interviews.

Questions Asked:

A good documentary always raises and answers certain questions.

The questions I asked myself in the process of filming where as follows. I strove to seek answers to the questions, and conveyed them in my movie via volunteer interviews and the visual footage.

•I was on a quest to find what makes the schools and children in Ladakh different from those in other places in India. Sure, India has a lot of remote or undeveloped areas. What is unique about this place?

Besides the geography?
•It is a well known fact that many areas in Ladakh, and Ladakh itelf is geographically cut off. How does it affect the local culture? Does it make the children here different? How?
•Why volunteer in Ladakh? Why not in other under-developed places in India? This was a core question that I was determined to find a satisfactory answer to. Besides the fact that I was making the film for an NGO whose work is primarily based in Ladakh, I wanted my very purpose of the film, ie, to get people to volunteer in Ladakh, to be justified, from the very core.

What I Learnt:
•Interviews are best to be taken when you talk to the people first time around. If they have already answered your questions off the camera before, they often do not give a good enough repeat performance, because this time, it is deliberate and staged, while the first time, they probably wanted to let you know and make you understand the answer, wholeheartely.
Challenges Faced:
•Working to capture footage while causing minimal disturbance to the classes, and school activities.
•Getting requisite camera angles and video content, within the limited boundries of the space I was filming in.

Building Storyline

Based on experiences, footage obtained, and overall goal and idea.

Filtering of Video Footage

Based on nature of content, visual quality, and sound quality.

Categorizing Video Footage

Based on school it was shot in, and content of the shot.

Transcribing Interviews

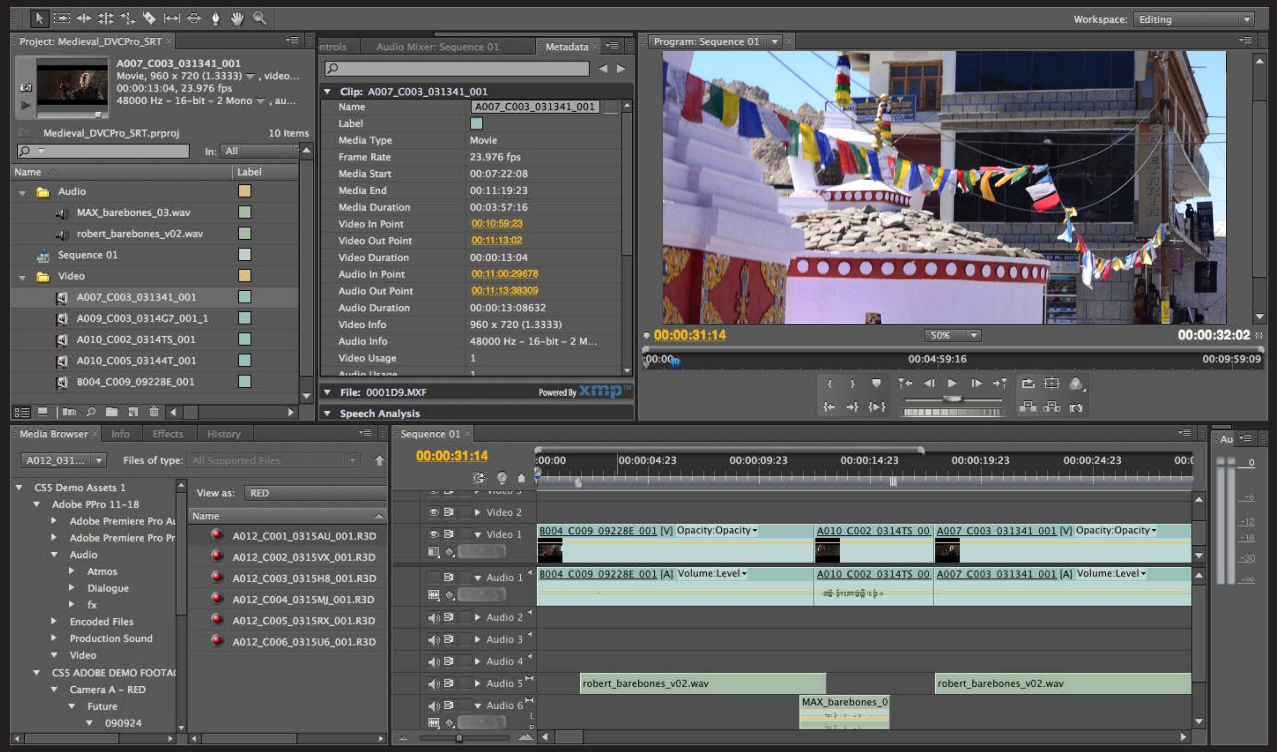
They form the main content of the film, and build the storyline.

Chunking Interviews

Interviews broken into information chunks,based on the topic.

Placing the Chunks

Mixing up the chunks from different interviews according to the super-structure of the film.



Film Editing

Post Production

What I did:
•I followed the process of filtering, categorizing the videos as shown in the flowchart.
•Interviews were broken down and chunked based on the topic.
•They were mixed with relevant footage.
What I learnt:
•I learnt how to structure the flow of a documentary movie.
•Film Editing on Premiere Pro

Challenges Faced:
•Finding a storyline to knit the varied experiences together, was a challenge. School1, 2, 3 were very very different from each other, and apart from some similar subjects that they taught, there was absolutely no point of connect between them. While this gave me a good variety to capture, and while the 3 schools are like representatives of the types of schools in Ladakh, it also created a problem as to how to merge them together into a one story.

The Journey

I travelled to Leh, Ladakh, eager to absorb the sights and the sounds of the place. and not really knowing what to expect. The first leg of my journey took me to Jamyang Leh, a residential school which would be my home for the next 2 weeks. I spent time absorbing the local culture, making friends with the children, and filming their daily routine activities and impromptu moments. Meanwhile, two volunteer-teachers from Avalokiteswara Trust were working with the children, taking daily after-hours lectures with the children. I covered their everyday activity, and charted the childrens progress as well. They improved by leaps and bounds.

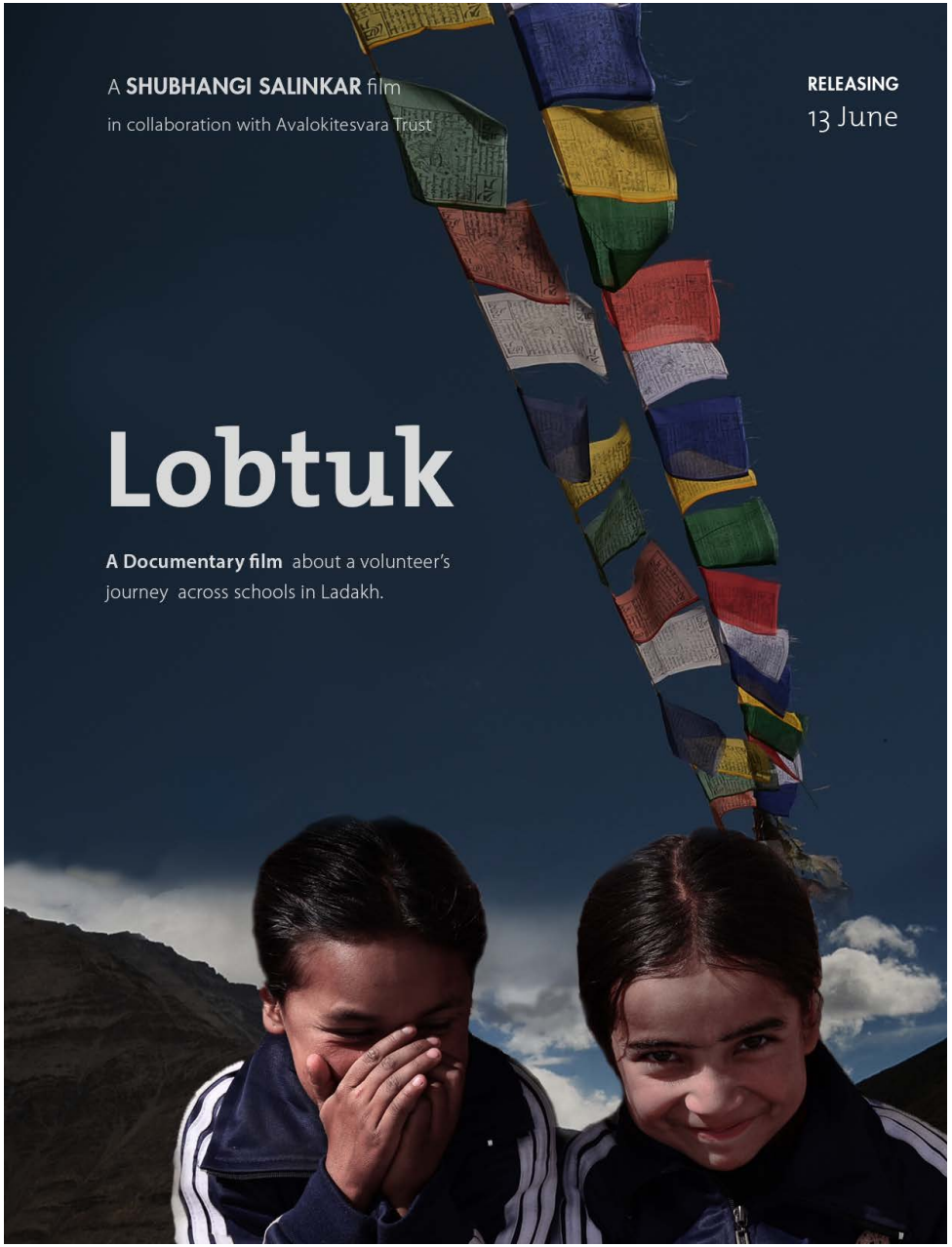
Next, I travelled to a Government School, in the village of Nang. I stayedat the home of the headmistress of the school, in a village nearby. The first thing noticable here was the surprisingly small number of students. With only 13 children from LKG to 7th Standard, I set about investigating the possible causes of this. Most of my time in this school, however, was spent in teaching the children. Doing some basic storytelling modules with them, gave me a lot of insights which I have integrated into the movie.

The third and final school that I went to was a Monastry school. It was starkly different from those I visitited before. There was such an air of a relegious here, whith every activity centered around relegion. The children spent most their time in prayer, an activity I was not allowed to capture. I taught here too, and spent long hours conversing with the little monks. The look of wonder in their eyes when I told them about the earth being a part of the solar system, or about the human body, was priceless. These precious instances I could not capture on film, but shaped my understanding of their world, nevertheless.

The entire experience taught me a lot of things about the people and schools in Ladakh. First, that the students exhibit an amazing and eager keeness to learn. They have excellent attendance. Secondly. Ladakhis welcome outsiders into their midst,making them feel like one of them.They are willing to receive whatever you have, with a smile.

"What are the schools like, in the remote and beautiful land of ***Ladakh***?"

A volunteer makes a ***journey across three schools***, to find out-
And makes some amazing discoveries.



Final Outcome

The final outcome was a short documentary 24 minutes long, titled Lobtuk. Lobtuk means student, in local Ladakhi language.

The film premiered at Design and Degree Show, 2015, and was unveiled in front of a large audience in IDC Auditorium

It was one of the proudest moments of my life.

This volunteership started off with a desire to go to Ladakh, and to make a film. My first film. And that's just what I did.

The film will also be used by Avaloketeswara Trust, as a pitch for their volunteers and potential donors.

I hope to make more films in future, as this was my first documentary, and the process led me to discover a form of story-telling that deeply fulfulls me.