

**DES PROJECT**

# **Exploring happiness through contrasts on film**

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**IIT Bombay**

# Project Approval.

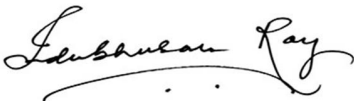
Design Exploration Seminar Project titled "**Exploring happiness through Contrasts on Film**" by Indubhusan Roy (Roll Number 216330002) is approved for partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of 'Masters in Design' in Interaction Design at the Industrial Design Centre, Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sudesh Balan', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Guide: **Prof Sudesh Balan**

## **Declaration**

I declare that this written document represents my ideas in my own words and where others ideas or words have been included. 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 or 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 properly cited or from whom proper permission has not been taken when needed.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Indubhusan Roy". The signature is written in black ink and features a long, sweeping underline that extends across the width of the name.

Indubhusan Roy

Roll No: 216330002

Interaction Design

IDC School of Design, Indian Institute of Technology

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to my guide **Prof. Sudesh Balan** for his valuable guidance at all stages of the project. In spite of various challenges that I faced throughout the shoot I was able to learn and understand the process and how to shoot abstract ideas on film.

I would also like to thank the people in the film who provided their valuable time. The kids for sharing their joy and innocence and allowing me to capture them on film.

Indubhusan Roy

## **Abstract**

In this project I embarked on a captivating journey to create a documentary film exploring the stark contrasts between village and city life, with a focus on the concept of happiness and daily routines that shape people's lives. Throughout this remarkable journey, I immersed myself in bustling metropolises like Mumbai and Delhi, as well as quaint villages such as Pawalgarh in Uttarakhand, Wai and Panchghani in Maharashtra. I further explored the rural communities and their lifestyles in these villages. The experiences and insights gained during this expedition were nothing short of transformative.

## **Introduction**

Happiness is a subjective experience and the idea of this film is not to decide which is better. Rather so that the viewer can take a pause to see how life goes on in both these contexts and draw their own inferences.

People living across different contexts ranging from cities to villages have their own experiences of daily life. Sometimes the context greatly affects the experience of life. This film tries to explore how people lead their lives in these varied contexts and how it affects them on a psychological level.

It is difficult to write a script for a documentary film because it is uncertain what will come in the way when one starts the shoot. However, having a framework was important. So penning down the abstract idea followed by what I would want the viewers to see and feel was put on paper. I was not very rigid about following exactly what was written but I followed my instincts to capture the essence of the idea that I was trying to portray.

Also exploring the idea of contrast through various methods was the primary focus. The various ways through which this idea could be expressed initially were as mentioned below

## **Depicting contrast on screen**

### **Contrast through speed of frames.**

Highlighting the hustle and bustle of the city through fast-paced editing, chaotic street scenes, and crowded public spaces. Speed of cuts will depict the business of city life.

In contrast, showcasing the calm and serenity of village life through sweeping shots of tranquil landscapes, quiet streets, and intimate community spaces.

### **Contrast through artificial and natural light**

Cities suffer from light pollution. Seeing a sky full of stars is almost impossible in a city.

This contrast can be well depicted on film showing the blinding light everywhere in cities. Night scenes also have sounds of industrial equipment and construction

In contrast serene village scenes at night captured in low light can depict the stillness in a village environment. Sound of crickets chirping, a full moon night in the countryside and the silence of the night.

### **Contrast through emphasizing man made vs the organic.**

The brutalism of concrete, glass and construction everywhere. Gardens manicured to seem like boxes. Showing man made objects through geometry. The restriction of space inside the buildings. Claustrophobic places of work.

In contrast showing the imperfections and the organic nature of villages. Presence of greenery around settlements. Vines and creepers growing on top of houses depicting the harmony. The availability of free space around and no restrictions to movement.

Depicting the overall difference in architecture, with the city being depicted as having high-rise buildings and the village being depicted as having more traditional, imperfect rural buildings.

### **Showing Contrast through pace of life**

Everyone seems to be rushing in a city. The anxiety to reach somewhere soon is visible in the faces in a crowd.

In a village setting people seem to take their own time to do things. There is no hurry. People are relaxed and chill.

### **Using sound as a medium to show contrast**

Using sound design to emphasize the difference, with the city being depicted as noisy and chaotic, and the village being depicted as peaceful and quiet.

## **Using community as a medium to show the difference**

In villages there is a sense of community. People gather for different events and help each other. They almost know everyone by their faces and greet them

In urban scenarios sometimes even the neighbors are unknown. This can be used to highlight the contrast. Even amidst so many people many are lonely and suffer from depression.

## **Using color to show contrast**

Continuing with the previous idea the gloominess can be depicted through color. Desaturated tones to show the morbidity of city life.

Bright colors to show the beauty and quality of life in a rural setting

## **The script**

The framework created for the shoot was put in three columns. One column has the abstract idea, the second the way it would be depicted on film and the third the audio or the effects that were intended for the viewer.

Depiction of the idea on screen	Video on screen	Audio
Contrast with speed of frames showing the speed of life	The film begins with people rushing to work. Everyone is in a hurry, Metro train speeding by, people waiting in long queues for tickets, Industrial equipment moving around, construction going on. Speed of frames gradually increasing.	Abrupt audio, loud whooshing sounds, Sounds of cars beeping across the street, heavy metal clanking, sounds of construction equipment, JCBs moving around objects
Contrast with the depiction of free space vs cramped.	Cut to a wide shot in the middle of a farm in the village. Suddenly everything feels silent. This shot stays for a few seconds. Slowly faint sounds emerge of people ploughing the field with cows. A beautiful sunrise near a river where few people have gathered. Each shot stays emphasizing a feel of stillness. Drone shot if possible	Trees swaying around with whooshing sounds. Faint sounds with water splashes around a water body. Every sound will be more crisp and clear
Showing Contrast through pace of life	Following a group of people dressed for work running to reach the station, our interviewee is among those groups of people. Camera follows him as he buys the ticket, runs towards the platform, boards the train and leaves	Sound of hurried steps, background noise of cars passing by, ambient sounds of a lot of people
Showing Contrast through pace of life	Cut to a scene in a farm in the village where someone is starting the day. Everything is relaxed . The subject takes his/her own time to do the work for the day	Once again the sudden quiet will be emphasized. The small actions will be miked properly for great sound. The sound needs to have an asmr effect

Depiction of the idea on screen	Video on screen	Audio
Contrast through brutality of construction	The next scene will be through the eyes of people approaching work. As they reach the camera tries to capture the intimidating nature of the buildings. Still shots of dominating buildings with steel and glass, construction site where work is being done	Ambient sounds of footsteps, Metallic sounds, creaking and cranking sounds.
Contrast through stress of daily life	Interviewee talking about his work, when he came to the city and what his day is like. He talks about his work and everyday duties	Interviewee and background noise
Contrast through exposure to nature	As the person in the village approaches work he looks at the wide vistas, cows or sheep moving around far away, looking upwards the foliage of trees. Will try to capture some falling leaves or flowers.	Rustling of leaves, the silence still intact
Contrast through mundane nature of life	Interviewee talking about daily chores. How he starts the day and what he wishes to accomplish in the day	Interviewee and background sounds
Contrast through confounded vs the organic	Geometric shots of cubicles, Confound spaces, marked with fixed boundaries, capturing residences which look like boxes, people interacting from balconies	Sound as per surroundings. Want the audience to feel the geometric nature of the shots
Contrast through confounded vs the organic	Cut to the village scene. Creepers growing around houses, the non uniformity in the walls, the imperfections in the construction	Relaxing nature sounds

<b>Depiction of the idea on screen</b>	<b>Video on screen</b>	<b>Audio</b>
Contrast through different routine of lives	The two interviewees further talk about their experiences in lifes, hopes, aspirations etc. What they love in their immediate context	Interviewee and background sounds
Contrast through light	Evening shot of city, flashy lights, advertisements everywhere, LEDS showing loads of information, cars beaming around	City sounds in the evening
Contrast through light and color	Sunset shots leading to evening. Crickets waking up, Beauty of twilight, the villager walking away in the distance. Will try to capture a moon shot which somehow illuminates the vista	Mild wind sounds, Crickets and nighworms
Trying to bring out the aspect of happpiness or contentment	The interviewees discussing about their parts of the story and this will be left on the findings during the shoot. Synchronicities of their lives will be shot as the stories develop	Interviewee and background sounds
Contrast through light and color	The film ends with a still shot of night sky full of stars VS a drone shot of the city which is full of lights mirroring the sky of stars in alternate frames.	Quiet vs a night with ambient sounds

The following pages describe the experiences and the locations where the film was shot

## The shoot

Capturing the hustle bustle of the city life was easily accessible in Mumbai. Roaming across the different areas in the old city exploring how people go about their activities. The deafening noises of the streets with cars honking were shot around Mumbai.

The next location was Pawalgarh in Uttarakhand. The valleys in Uttarakhand were so silent that one could just hear the sound of the bubbling water which swept across the stream. Distant cries of sheep emerged through the valley and suddenly there was a large flock of sheep walking across. I met a shepherd and spoke to him about his daily activities. He narrated his daily routine about how he started his morning and his duties throughout the day. A flock of 300 sheep and two of his dogs accompanied him. He highlighted the importance of his dogs and spoke about how they did most of the work of keeping the herd together. Even protecting the herd against any wild animal attacks or looking out for any member which might get lost. He also narrated about how his needs are limited and does not aspire for too much. Once upon a time he had the ambitions of moving to a city for better earning but the situations that followed in his life didn't let him do so. When asked if he is happy with the work he does he mentioned how he doesn't think a lot about those things but he has no problems either. Whatever life has given him he is able to make his ends meet and does not complain about anything.

From Uttarakhand the next stop was Panchgani. Panchgani is a small town a few hundred kilometers from Mumbai. The terrain of Panchgani is so majestic that it induces a sense of stillness in someone that would visit it for the first time. The views of the sunset were stunning and definitely the viewer would be able to feel the essence of Panchgani in the sweeping shots.

The next location was Wai in Maharashtra, a quaint village a few kilometers away from Panchgani. Here the pace of life was even slower.

People working in the farms, women sowing seeds in the fields while some sitting in the courtyards cleaning the grains from the harvest. This village had temples which had their own calm atmosphere which surrounded them. Sounds of tinkling bells on the necks of buffaloes and the ladies bathing these buffaloes in the river.

Capturing the lives of children jumping in these waters having fun. There was a sense of joy and excitement in their faces. There was no one to look after these children when they were in the river. They were free and this freedom was visible in their energy. In contrast the children in the cities are always protected at all times. Their lives are enclosed in these cages that they are not aware of and unable to break free from. Definitely the contrast in the lives of children is worth observing and capturing this was an important aspect of the film.

## **Conclusion**

This documentary journey offered a profound insight into the contrasting worlds of village and city life. Through immersive experiences, I witnessed the hustle and bustle of city existence, the constant struggle to keep up, and the isolation that often accompanies urban living. On the other hand, the serene village life demonstrated the beauty of simplicity, the importance of community bonds, and the joy in finding contentment within one's environment.

As a filmmaker, I hope that this documentary will inspire viewers to reflect on their own lives and the choices they make regarding where and how they live. It is not about what is good or bad or what is right and wrong. It is about understanding these contrasts and how they can lead us to appreciate the importance of balance, finding moments of tranquility amidst the chaos, and embracing the essence of community and contentment in our pursuit of happiness.

**Link to film**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mUTjHwvsru0>

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