



Indian Society

Past, Present and Future

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Communication Design

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Approval sheet

This Communication Design project report entitled “Indian Society: Past, Present and Future” by Mrinal Biswas is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Master of Design degree in Communication Design, IDC, IIT Bombay.

Project Guide:  22/11/18

Chair Person: 

Internal Examiner:  22-11-2018

External Examiner: 

Date: 22, 11, 2018

Declaration

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Mrianal Biswas

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Acknowledgment

I would like to thank my project guide Prof. Raja Mohanty for his guidance and insight at every stage of the project. I am immensely grateful to all my professors for their valuable feedback and comments. I extend my heartfelt thanks to my family and friends who helped me throughout the research, which was a crucial part of the project. I would like to thank all my classmates especially Mayur, Siddharth, Minal and all the Animation and film design batchmate for helping me with footages and support.

Minal Biswas
12/11/2018

Abstract

We adopted our constitution to make our country as sovereign socialist secular democratic republic. These were the initial steps taken by our political leaders. In the last two decades of the 20th century we decided to move away from the 'licence-raj' and opened our market to the forces of globalization. But where do we stand in the second decade of the 21st century? Did we solve our initial problems in a significant way? This project attempts to understand Indian Society since independence.

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Introduction



Fishing in lake. Nadia District, West Bengal.

The Initial Idea

Documentation of fishermen community in West Bengal

Love for fish is well known among Bengalis. Fishing is one of the major income source in West Bengal. India is the second largest producer of fish contributing 5.68% of global during 2013-14, earning 30,213 crore foreign currencies and West Bengal is second in production (1.632 million metric tons) relating to other states. But most of the fishermen in West Bengal are poor, less educated and have credit based livelihood. They enjoy themselves despite the poor earnings from fishing in a kind of sacrificed profession. The young member enjoy the charm in the adventure of fishing.

Fishing in West Bengal is much older profession than any other. Traditional fishermen have developed a different kind of technique to catch fish and to sell it in the market. But now due to the pressure of globalization, the local techniques are almost extinct. My initial idea was to document the process of fishing in a film format.

Introduction

“You cannot say I am oppressed.
You have oppression to say is Wrong.”
- Dr. K Balagopal



In a society people are not isolated.
Thane Station , Mumbai

Formulating the Idea

From community to society.

The initial idea was to document the fishermen community of Bengal. Through the study one thing become clear to me that you can not specify that one problem only belongs to one perticular community. The problems and the roots of the problems are deep down and spread across the society.

That was the reason to expand the boundary of the initial thought and try to understand the overall idea and the problems.

Introduction

“You can’t stay neutral on a moving train.”

- Howard Zinn



Tribal people selling hooters, Bastar district.
A still from the film Mati ke laal.

Reading and Thoughts

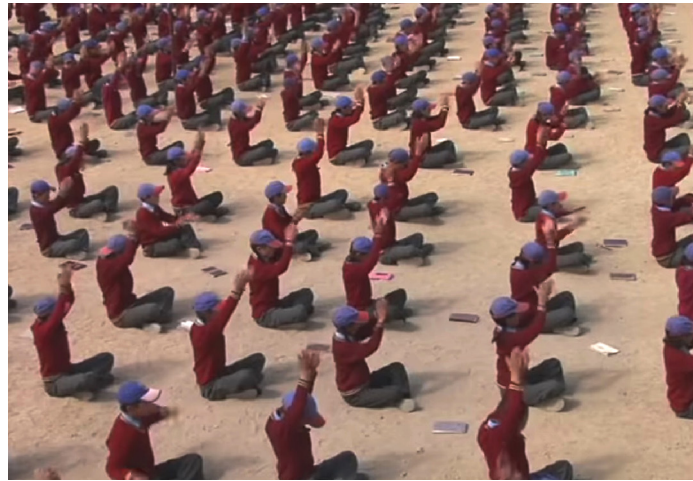
Mati ke Laal - Red ant dream
a documentary by Sanjay Kak

Some people choose not to be silent. Though the path they have taken is questionable but the questions sired by them are not negligible. The documentary well portrayed the condition of people of bastar and the horrible side of India as a state. Bastar is a good example of what happens when we stop listening to each other in our cherished project of democracy.

India is not only a parliamentary body. People who sit and decide what to do and what not to in favour of the minorities are themselves a minority in the house. Though as a democratic state we have achieved a lot of seemingly impossible targets, but we still have a long way to go. And to keep democracy in tact we have to listen the dissent views as well.

Introduction

“Our schools are, in a sense factories, in
which the raw materials - children”
- Sir Ken Robinson



Students in assembly line, Jammu and Kashmir
A still from the film Schooling the World.

**Schooling the World: The White Man's Last
Burden, a documentary by Carol Black**

Education is one of the most vital process to sustain our society. We adult have one duty to educate our next generation. Education primarily is about how to survive in nature. But now a days in our capitalist system it has become a money making process. Students from Kashmir are being uprooted from their native place to learn how to work in the industry that is often dehumanizing.

‘We have Himalaya in our north,’ This statement does not make any scene to a Kashmir student. Yet they are forced to learn the subject as per the central syllabus. India is known for its diversity, a forced school of thought can be dangerous for our future generation.

Introduction

“Consistency is the
Playground of dull minds.”

- Yuval Harari



Harari questions the basic narratives of our civilization.
Still from the Google talk.

Techno-Religions and Silicon Prophets, Google talk by Yuval Harari

If you ask what is the most problematic situation we are facing for globalization the answer probably is the consistency through out our space and time. Every place and people become carbon copy of some western social stricture.

If we are supposed to adopt one single mono culture social structure then we have to ask which culture we should adopt. Historically it is clear every time it happens we adopted the culture of the powerful. We did not question about the validation of the step, only because of the power and resources the majority community holded we forced to adopt there culture.

In this 21st century more than religion the main driving force of our society is Information. If you consider the richest people and organization then it is clear that the information is the new source of power more than even oil.

Introduction

“Forget the ideal. Right now we are
machiavellian fascist force”
- Anand Patwardhan



Burning the property and people in the dark.
Still from the film Father, Son and Holy War.

**Father, Son and Holy War,
Documentary by Anand Patwardhan**

Once B. R. Ambedkar said “Constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment. It has to be cultivated. We must realize that our people have yet to learn it. Democracy in India is only a top-dressing on an Indian soil, which is essentially undemocratic.” In this 21st century people in our country still believe in miracle.

One of the major issue in our society is superstition. Superstition not only about religion, also about society and even in the idea of state. People do not have rationally but with their own belief system. There was a sequence in the film where family member of one “sati” is refusing to understand the images of the god and the girl is photo manipulated. Our own belief system is destroying our future, In the name of god and politics.

Introduction

“Story of India is older than a nation.”
- Romila Thapar



History of India as a state with another perspective
Romila Thapar at JNU campus.

**Lecture on Nationalism
at Jawaharlal Nehru University**

Today after some controversial steps taken by government jawaharlal Nehru university organize an open lecture series on nationalism. The speakers clear the facts that the India as a nation is more valuable than a state only.

The basic question raised through the talk is about how we see our past and take action according to that. With some proper fact and logic they established the main thought of a nation and the importance of “We the people of India” statement.

Introduction

“Identity is the whole train, not only the engine.” - Shelly Kagan



Prof. Shelly Kagan explaining theory of Identity

Lecture on Identity across space and time at Yale university online

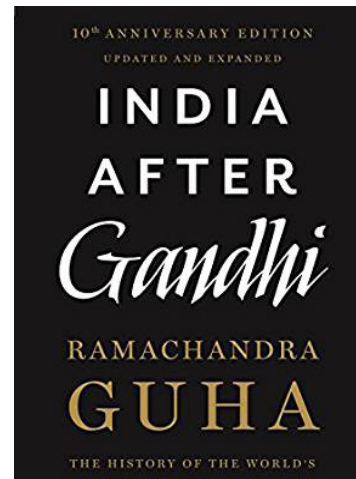
Prof Shelly Kagan explained how we should look into the idea of Identity. It's not only about one specific time or some characteristics. You have to take into the whole picture. If we consider the idea of Indian society then we have to go back as long as possible.

The initial steps taken by our first leaders may or may not be useful at this time. But as a nation's identity those are the integral part. The thoughts given by them is impotent in today's context also.

Introduction

“What is now in the past
was once in the future”

- Ramchandra Guha



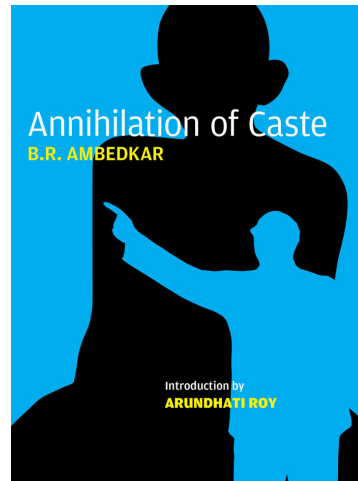
Cover page of the book

India after Gandhi
By Ramchandra Guha

Ramchandra Guha's *India after Gandhi* is one of the finest books written about post-independence India. To analyse the future perspective we need to look back at our past again and again. After Indian Independence there was no external ruler to rule over India. As free people on earth, how we choose our destiny that was well portrayed in the book.

Introduction

“If you ask me, my ideal
Would be a society based on
Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.”
- B. R. Ambedkar



Cover page of the book

**Annihilation of caste
by B. R. Ambedkar**

This book was not supposed to be a book but a speech written in 1936 to be delivered in Jat-Pat Todak Mandal in Lahore, but when they came to be aware of the content of the speech, they withdrew Dr. Ambedkar's invitation. Dr. Ambedkar self published the speech he was not allowed to deliver, as a book. The book was very controversial at the time still is. This book speaks the unspeakable truth of Indian caste system, how it works and how to overcome from it.

Understanding Indian society



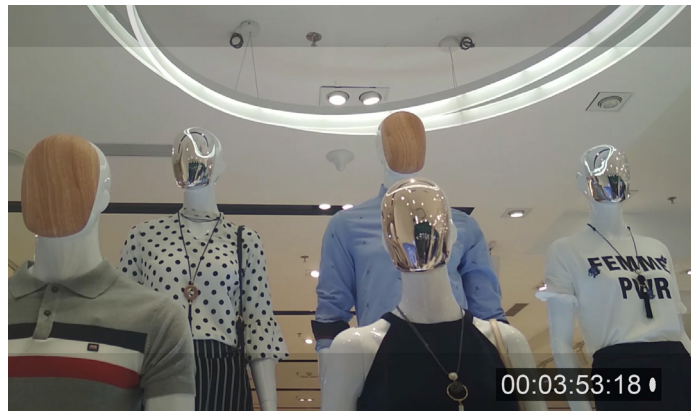
Food and connection with ingredients
Nandubar district, Maharashtra

Roti (Food)

In our diverse cultural identity food always play a major roll. Indian people have different kind of food habit but the basic food processing and respect for food remains same all across the country.

In the modern developed cities the main problem is the lost of connection between food and it's ingredients. In rural area people can see how food ingredients are cultivated so the connection between food and consumer is more rooted. In urban areas the connection between the food and people is price. Here the connection is not physical, so the waste of food is more than the rural section.

Understanding Indian society



Brand cloths in supermarkets
R city mall, Ghatkoper

Kapada (Cloth)

Clothing in India is one of the major diverse section. According to the culture we have different types of clothing which we developed from a long Historical background.

You can identify identity of one person by only look at the cloth of that person. In India religion also play a major roll in clothing. By only look at color or type of cloth you can understand the beleaf of that person. Where the adaptation of the modern twenty first century civilization process we uprooted from our culture. The shopping mall of kolkata selling the same cloth as in one shop in chennai. So the identity basically desoved in one mono culture society.

Understanding Indian society



Housing in Navi Mumbai

Makan (Housing)

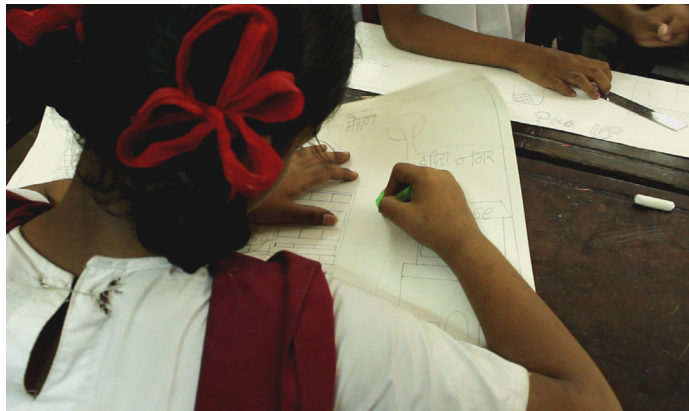
Building says a lot of unspoken words of culture. From north to south the difference between the housing is easily recognizable to us. One common thing of housing is personalization. Every house has some personal choice and touch of the owner.

Due to lack of land the cities does not allow to build the house in more space. Most of the city building grow upwards and have same common stricture because of it's stability we made same type of structured house every where. So the personal choice is totally gone now. The same monotonous suture destroy the personal choice of individuality.

Field Trip

Understanding Indian society

Primary schools in Mumbai and Indapur



Does main stream education kills creativity?
Primary school at powai.

Kids are the future of our next generation. By trying to understand them we can identify the possibility of our generation. During my project I visited two different school one is from Powai, in the heart of Mumbai city and another is from near one village Wighavali, Indapur district, Maharashtra.

In both of them one thing is clear that kids are thought the main stream culture of the state. As one example one boy from Wighavali perticipating one state level poetry competition. The poem he was recitating was in hindi. But through the pronunciation it was clear that the boy was not very clear with Hindi, and his fluency was in Marathi. The chance of wining one state level competition is higher when you speak in Hindi.

Understanding Indian society



Does city fulfill the basic needs?
Slums near Kolaba, Mumbai

Slums in Mumbai

Most of the people come in city side from villages for the first time stays mainly in slums. So to understand the insights of migration, slums are the best places to study. During the project time I visited mainly south Mumbai slums in Colaba.

The basic insight was that people in slums mainly live in substandard condition. The cost of living in Mumbai is very high. In history people migrated before also. Like people from dry places migrated towards river banks in search of food, but this is the first time we are migrating without the conformation of our basic needs fulfillment. People migrating only base of some promises created by Industry in cities. As one example though Wighavali is a village, they have proper water supply and electricity, Where slums in Colaba they don't have proper water and electricity supply.

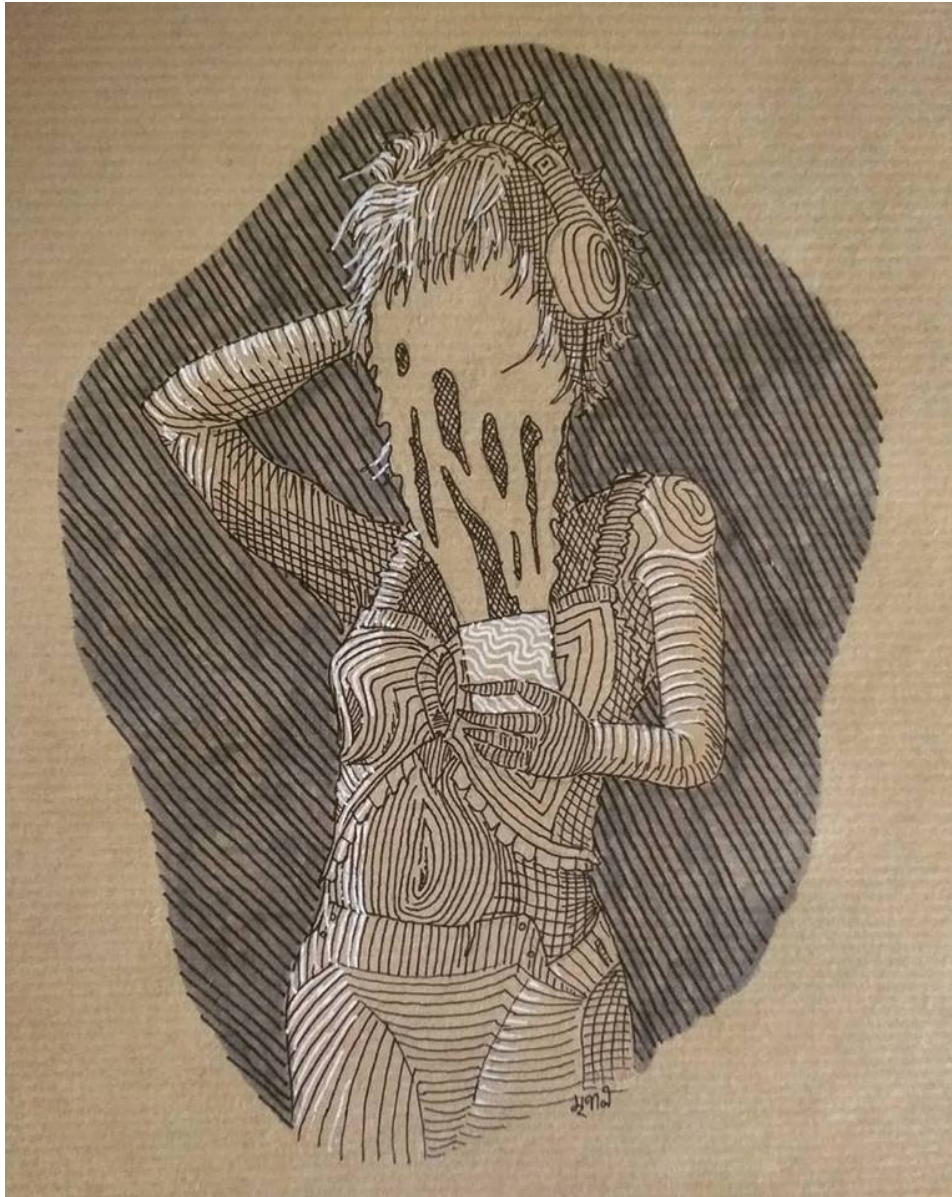
Understanding Indian society



Mr. Sandeep Manchekar with students at Poetry Studio in Vhigahvali, Maharashtra

Pottery studio at Wighavali

In Wighavali, a village three hours journey from Mumbai, Mr. Sandeep Manchekar started pottery studio. He manufactures kilns and wheels and also supplies clay bodies, raw materials and glazes to studio potters, art schools and institutions across the country. Some ten to twenty people work in that studio. And their income is well enough. They have professional training and they train new students also. The main consumer of their products are hotels and restaurants. Art appreciative people also buy their products. So it is evident by providing proper infrastructure it is possible to build one self-sustainable environment. Even if it's not situated in one metropolitan city.



Consumerism, Illustration Pen on Paper.

Essay on Indian Society

India is progressing towards becoming a developed nation. In the last decade we have witnessed an IT boom in our country. People who were totally unaware of new technologies now become one of the biggest consumer in the world. But Sixth largest economy in the world or one hundred thirty three in happiness index? Which identity we should consider and carry on? As a developing country we still need to establish our Identity in the world platform.

We opened up our economy to world market more than thirty years back. We have one dream, give access of basic requirements to every citizen. Now our economic inequality is same and somewhere worse than British Raj. It's the time to re-evaluate our steps to understands what's wrong happened in our society.

“India is the largest democracy in the world” this statement resonate and lots of emotion embrace in every Indian's heart. But the uniqueness of any society cannot be determined only by the size, and that is not the key factor of indian society. If we consider the uniqueness of our society it should be the diversity of our culture. The diversity come into the place by

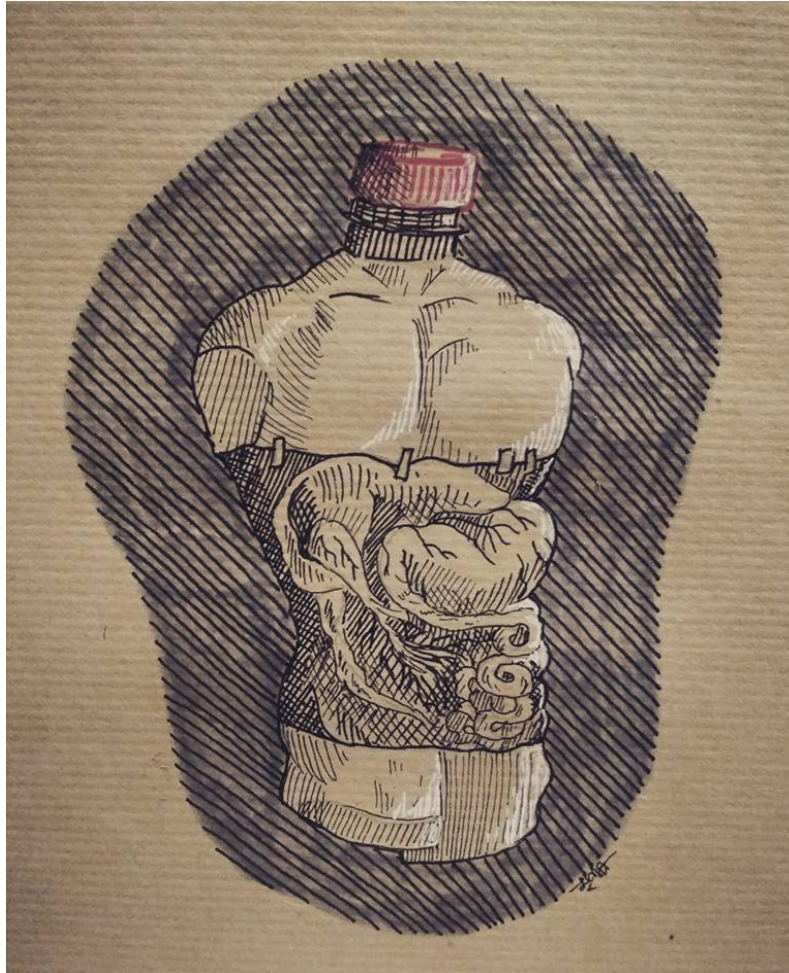


Education, Illustration Pen on Paper.

different survival strategy. People from north they have Himalaya, People from south they have one of the longest coastal area, People from East have world largest fertile land where People from West one of the driest, Thus they adopted world's most diverse culture. Though we have different cultural background from the past we do not have any problem to exchange our culture thoughts. After the British come our problem of survival become one and then we identify ourselves as one Nation, And after two hundred years of struggle we become independent on 15th august 1947 midnight.

The main problem after independence was to unite the nation in one single string, and the problem begins. We adopted democracy and divide our states based on our culture and language. But all these small identity problems become a drop of water in front of Globalization wave. We start adopting new alien culture and our way of day to day living. How did it change our life? Our basic needs? Food? Cloth? Shelter?

Food: As like our tradition, connection with the ingredients of the foods are gone. Shopping mall have packaged food with some unknown formule like



Food, Illustration Pen on Paper

“sucrose, glucose, fructose, sorbitol, mannitol”, what does that mean? No one knows. Any food stall the connection between the food and us is the price chart. No wonder the wastage of the food is so high nowadays. The respect for food is very much encompassed in the process of making, which in modern society we are totally unaware of.

Cloth: We have option, as the advertisement say in those flexes. If you go to any cloth store they will give you plenty of options. But, What's the difference between the clothing available in one Mumbai shopping mall and one in Kolkata? The basic diversity of our cloth is encompassed with our own culture. If we kill the difference the main parameter of our society will be gone soon.

Shelter: Left, Right, Up, Down, South, North, East, West... go anywhere in a new build townships, everything is same. The very own connection with our home is lost. Now it's just become a measurement of price, 1BHK or 2BHK. Every culture has their own architectural style, people humbled down to the places they live. Now all the townships has some alienated structure with no cultural background, We have gothic



Job Market, Illustration Pen on Paper

structure in the middle of the Mumbai. And to get this thing we divide ourselves with various job specialization. From the very beginning in our society we have different kind of job variation. Type of job played a vital role in our society. The Caste System, One of the most rigid system of our system is based on the type of job we do in our day to day life. In the 21st century if we look into the most demanding jobs of our society that's mainly IT engineering jobs. People who are willing to enter the new higher middle class circle the main process is to get one engineering degree and one IT job. In India today we have more than ten thousand engineering colleges. Though some study claimed that 94% of the engineering graduates are not fit for hiring, our govt is determined to invest more and more money into this sector. People who are already in this kind of job are tired. If you just take any of the most IT booming city, the common culture is to work more than eight hours per day and get refreshed in some bar in weekend. The basic need of food, cloth and shelter maybe solved now, but what is the cost we are paying for? People who are in these white collar job trying to escape in new passion based jobs and whose we are not now here trying to get here.



Hope, Illustration Pen on Paper

To get one simple job and fulfill day to day life people are escaping from their villages. They are selling their own land, water source, home. And started to live in some colony near these big cities. In the past also we have seen people are migrating, But this time is different. This time people are migrating only based on some assumption. That they will get a better life in cities. And when they got into these trap where is no way back. They are forced to live in one single small room with four five family member. In unhealthy situation where not even sunlight come. The both way of living of upper class and lower class are totally borke down.

In a these morden cities we are losing our Identity of our very own culture. Identity creates contradiction, everyone's identity is different from other and that's why they have their uniqueness. And the contradiction create culture, the way of living of a bengali is very much different from one who is from rajasthan. Thus culture creates society, with the various types of culture but with one common thought or goal crate the society. That is why Individuality is the most precious element of our life. Globalization helped us in a lot of way but at the cost of individuality.



Rethink, Illustration Pen on Paper

If we question it's good to become one single mono-culture society. Then also we have to ask which culture we should adopt? In the past history we have seen every time it happened to culture, language or civil code we always consider the "sanskriti" of the powerful and the dominants. It's time to rethink about our culture, is it so negligible that we can drop it?

Design approach



Shooting in real location. Still from the film.
Nadia district, West Bengal

Documentation as video essay

The montage technique work in best way to compare the concepts. Film is like visual illustration, to show the extreme reality documentation in movie is the best way. So show the all incidents from past to future the medium as film is the best.

The main aim of the project is to understand the idea behind the transition of society. So visualization is one of the impotent part of the project. I have use footage taken by me as well as the footages from Online also.

The film that I shooted is mainly in documentary format. There was no initial storyboard or script. As well as the shooting process progress I develop the story in editing. The overall concept was based on the essay of the film.

Design approach



Using old available footages, Still from the film.
Nehru inaugurating Hirakud Dam.

structure

The film is mainly in two part, first one is about how India was after independence and how it is right now. The main thought was to show the priority of our society from past to now. And the second part is about how our society will be in future. The future part is not like conclusion of any thought. It is more like an open end, a question that we should ask.

Design approach



Auto line, Still from the film
Kanjurmarg Station, Mumbai.

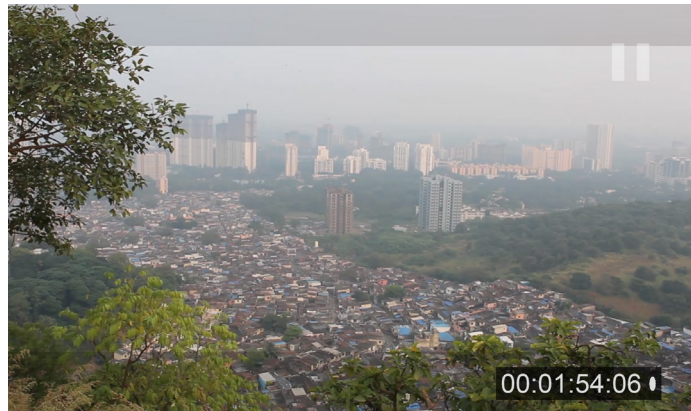
Sequences

The main key points of the film are:

1. Initial problems of India after independence.
2. India as a socialist state.
3. Transition from socialist to capitalist state after 80's.
4. Today's condition.
5. Does it solve the initial problem?
6. Future perspective.

At the time of independence mainly we focused to cover the basic need of our society as a socialist state, like food, education and the electricity. But after the end of the 80's we started to liberalize our economy. As the consequence we removed the poverty rate as far as possible comparing with other developing states. But what we have lost is the individuality. These sequences are mainly based on that thought.

Design approach



Class difference in society, Still from the film
Sammer Hill, Powai.

Voice Over

We adopted our constitution to make our country a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic. The initial steps taken by our political leaders was such so. In late 80's we decided to become an open market capitalist instead of a state dependent socialist society. But after almost 30 years of this decision where are we? did we solve our initial problems in a significant way or is the reality different from our expectation? These questions which were raised in the past, needs to be asked again.

Initial problems of india after independence.

Nehru: "The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance, and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but so long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over."

India as a socialist state.

This was the speech given by our first prime minister on the eve of Independence. After that we have tried to make our nation a socialist nation by nationalizing

Design approach



News Paper on 80's , Still from the film Indian Express. Newsprint

large institutes as much as possible. Setting up big govt projects was the main aim of our initial governments. A lot of steps were also taken to equalize opportunities for all. Food rationing system, Hindu code bill, establishing IITs, IIMs, Green revolution, White revolution were some of those major steps.

Transition from socialist to capitalist state after 80's. A ``foreign hand'' or ``pushing through open doors''?

Though the development was significant, the rate of economic growth was not. Before 1980's, the per capita income in country averaged 1.3%. At the same time Pakistan grew by 5% and Indonesia by 9%. Before 1991 changes within the industrial sector in India were modest. Although Indian industries were slowly improving, its share of national production, in 1991, still accounted for only one 5th of the total economic activity within the country. Thus the consecutive 3 governments took such economic reformation that lead towards private business friendly economic environment or better known as economic liberalization in the country.

Design approach



Own uniqueness, Still from the film.
Juhu , Mumbai

This liberalization opens up a lot of possibilities in front of us. This contribution has mainly been in communication and eradication of hunger. However if we look back after 30 years, and try to figure out what we have done to our identity as one society, the picture is not so satisfactory.

India has always been known for its diversity. The main product of economic liberalization are modern cities. In these modern cities we are losing the Identity of our very own culture.

Identity creates contradiction, and this contradiction create culture.

Everyone's identity is different from the other, and that is why they have their own uniqueness. the way of living of a bengali is very much different from one who is from rajasthan.

Thus many cultures come together to create a society with one common thought or goal.

That is why Individuality is the most precious element of our lives. Globalization has helped us in a lot of ways but at the cost of our individuality. Now you cannot distinguish between Navi mumbai and Saltlake kolkata. Though they have completely different cultural backgrounds, people from both these places behave the same, as one carbon copy of any western city.

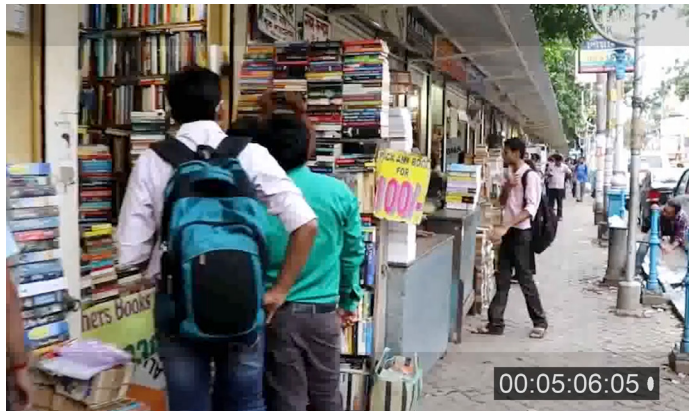


Seeing from windows in R city mall, Ghatkoper the question arise in mind about the future of self awareness.

Conclusion

The project is far wide that initially I thought about it. To understand India itself a huge task. So throughout my project I tried to be fixed on my parameter and to show what changed the identity of our society and what not. As a film medium the exploration of different technique was new to me. Over all film changed a lot of way after the initial edit.

Some part of the film is still remain. The initial part is near about five minutes. With some voiceover and first cuts I was trying to cover the glimps of our past and present. In the next part the rhythm of the film will be slower with some story in context.



College street kolkata, Still from the film.
Main source of knowledge in Kolkata

References

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2. Annihilation of Caste by B. R. Ambedkar, Navyana, 2015.

Films

1. Mati ke Laal - Red ant dream by Sanjay Kak, 2013
2. Schooling the World: The White Man's Last Burden by Carol Black, 2010.
3. Father, Son and Holy War by Anand Patwardhan, 1994.

Talks

1. Techno-Religions and Silicon Prophets by Yuval Harari, 2015.
2. Lecture on Nationalism at JNU, 2016.
3. Margins and Marginality by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 2018.
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