

*“TALES OF MY CITIES”*

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*Tales of My Cities* is a poetic observation of life in the cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, India. The documentary is an intimate first-person exploration of the culture in these cities. The viewer should find a surreal peace in the life and atmosphere of the cities where life extends from centuries old traditions to the current hi-tech pace of life.

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## PROSPECTUS\*

Title: *Tales of My Cities*  
Length: 30 - 45 mins  
Medium: HD Video

### Description

When I watched *Man with A Movie Camera (1929)* for the first time, I was dazed by the depiction of daily life in a city. I truly felt that the film is second only to *Citizen Kane (1941)* in its cinematic appeal poetic composition, characterization of life, etc. As a Photographer, when I saw *Citizen Kane* I felt Gregg Toland (Cinematographer) and Orson Welles had created a masterpiece because it is presented with so much energy, and I was satisfied with so much less. I felt the same thing again when I saw the documentary *Man with A Movie Camera*. I am comparing a scripted film to a documentary as these two films have a metaphysical standing to me. Dziga Vertov, conjures the perspectives of a city life in a poetical and constructivist art form that has captivated my attention. The film has persisted in its expression, as whenever I view it, I am bound to find something anew. Later, I watched Joris Iven's *Rain (1929)*, which personified the delight of the moment. These two documentaries (*Rain* and *Man with A Movie Camera*) have instilled the desire to document the life of two cities in a poetic fervor.

I would like to chronicle life in the two cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad where I grew up in India. My hometown Hyderabad is the capital of newly formed state Telangana, the northern state of southern India. Hyderabad is the fourth populous city in India, with a population of approximately 6.7 million and a metropolitan population hovering around 7.75 million. Growing up in Hyderabad, I have observed the city grow as a child grows. Now the city

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\*Note: This section was written over a course of two months, from October 2017 to the mid of December 2017. This proposal was submitted, and approved, by the thesis committee.

is carrying the weight of children who grew up with the city. People are everywhere, in and around the corners, in the tall buildings. The atmosphere is bombarded with people. Once a beautiful space, the city is now filled with cement towers. Every person on the road is trying to reach somewhere, but they are tangled up in traffic jams. The traffic moves rhythmically from one stop to the next, the harebrained bicycler is competing with the cars, and the winding roads lead people to their destinations. Everyday life in India can be metaphorical and adventurously exhausting.

### Purpose

The aim of the documentary is to capture the essence of the city. The camera will guide the audience to experience the nature of life in Hyderabad. It will attempt to capture the fleeting moments of lives from the Indian subcontinent. Hyderabad has always been unique in its standing compared to other Indian cities. The essence of Hyderabad is rooted in a poem that the founder of the city wrote. Hyderabad has a history of more than four hundred years. This is the place where Nizam use to live and rule. Secunderabad has a history of more than two hundred years. Its foundation lies in the military, as early Secunderabad was the base for British armies. The two cities have merged into one, but still retain some distinctions.

Hyderabad and Secunderabad are one of the fastest growing megacities in the world. They have become the epicenter of life; the hub of cultural activities where contemporary city life is compiled with age-old customary wisdom and tradition. Hyderabad and Secunderabad both transcend from the slow life of our ancestors to the hustle of a megacity where national and multinational companies have chosen to settle down. The city exists between two different eras. The first is the old tradition of respecting elders, and taking care of fellow humans; the second is

the new financial district of Hyderabad, where the young rule. But Life in Hyderabad and Secunderabad co-exists peacefully between age-old culture and the modern caravan.

My documentary on the life of Hyderabad and Secunderabad will have an opportunity to discover and record the symphony of contemporary life in modern India. I want viewers to feel the anxiety, and the inner peace which exists in these two cities.

### Intended Audience

The audience of my documentary will predominantly will be the immigrant Indian families that have settled abroad. This documentary will as serve an introduction to the children who are not sure about the current culture and the life in the cities around India. Secondly, my target audience will be the members of American society who are interested in the cultures of Indian sub-continent. I will submit the to various domestic and international film festivals.

India is still a developing country, even though it has been developing from the past fifteen - twenty years. New businesses are coming to the cities, and these businesses are leading the change in landscapes around the cities. These changes are further changing the cultures of the people who are living in the cities. This change in culture will be an interesting read to the students of anthropology and ethnography. Also, this documentary will be good introducing point to the students of any discipline who are interested in Indian culture at college level.

### Feasibility

I am proposing to film in India, and my main concern is how to travel safely and effectively with production equipment from the United States to India. University of North Texas provides Travel Insurance to its students who are travelling abroad for academic purposes.



Acquiring travel insurance is the presiding factor to film safely in India as the insurance will allow me to safeguard the film equipment and in some sense will provide peace.

The second factor to film safely is to have the permission from proper authorities. I have emailed to the India Film Commission. I have not heard back from them. While researching on this matter I was able to get in contact with a Delhi based private group which does the location bookings for the international firm shooting in India. I told him I am shooting a documentary, not a film per-se. He pointed out that, if I am journalist, I will be able to go anywhere and shoot. Since I am a student, obtaining the permission can be a budgetary burden, even after getting the permissions I may have to deal with local police and tip them for their services. His advice was, since I am local of India, I should just go ahead and shoot, but be careful. If someone asks me, he said “Just pay them” and move on.

I have also asked one of my teachers from a Film school in Hyderabad where I was studying Short filmmaking. My teacher gave me a phone number and email address of his colleague, who can help me in obtaining permissions. I have sent couple of emails, but I am yet to hear back from him. After reaching India, I am going to visit him, and find out the details on getting the permissions in Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

During second year of MFA of documentary studies, Professor Melinda Levin, who is on my committee, educated us about the Carnet documents, along with the insurance required for protecting the gear while travelling abroad. Also, Ms. Levin has exhaustive experiences in shooting outside of United States. As she is my thesis committee member, I will communicate with her as needed during travel, and shooting phase of the documentary production. The similar is true while corresponding with Mr. Ben Levin and Dr. Andrew Nelson.

Although my UNT peers cannot join me while filming India, my friends in India are willing to help me out. We were all enrolled and met each other during the course ten-week course, Introduction to Direction for Film and TV, at a film school in Hyderabad. They are acutely aware of the functionality and the importance of the film gear. I have worked closely with them during the duration of the course, and also stayed in touch helping each other in their personal projects. The members involved in this venture are Jayraj, Saishree, Vijay and Anita. The other feasibility factor is that my parents are based in Secunderabad, India. I will be residing with my parents, which will help with the budget. Jayraj has agreed to assist me during the shoot. Most of the time I will be the camera person and he will be helping me mainly with the audio. He has a very keen eye for the details, which I presume will help me tremendously. My family will also help me to identify documentary characters. Also, they are familiar with the area where I can shoot engaging footage for the film.

The scope of the project is wide, but I have knowledgeable mentors, who are guiding me along with my parents, family, and friends to achieve success in this venture.

### Treatment

It's around 5:15 am in Hyderabad and there is a call for prayer (muezzin) from the mosque. The streets are at peace with few cars moving at a brisk pace. At the corner of a narrow street, the municipal water supply tap is supported with sticks and is barely standing up and has a long line of empty vessels. The clock is ticking, people are coming to mosque for morning prayer, and some motorcycles and scooters are passing through the narrow road. They slow down momentarily for the speed breakers, and throttle again. There is a yoga studio, and people are parking their cars and motorcycles and greeting each other, and some of them are carrying

yoga mats with them. In the meantime, the yoga teacher comes, and everyone wishes each other good morning. The yoga teacher starts the class. The municipal tap is making a wheezing sound alerting the people gathered with the possibility of water. In couple of seconds the water starts gushing out of the nozzle. The water pressure is so intense that the tap is dancing like a hypnotic cobra. As each water vessel is filled people are lifting it to carry, and putting them on a side of their hips or on the top of their heads. After a while there is no order, a chaos sets in people trying to move their vessels in-front of other people's water vessels. There is water flowing all over the streets. The yoga teacher is explaining the important of yoga pose and how it benefits the body. Someone cracks a joke and everyone is laughing. Pretty soon the class is over. Everyone is laughing, thanking the teacher, leaving and arranging the mats, and then the next class is ready to begin. People start their respective vehicles and are going home to get ready for the office. The traffic on the street is stepping-up, the sun is warming the misty winter surroundings. The tea stalls are opening their doors, a huge amount of milk is on big vessel warming up. People are lining up for morning tea. A car is parked waiting downstairs of a building, and the driver is flipping through the radio and is waiting on a person. The person comes with his lunch bag, keeps it in back of the car and then comes and sits beside the driver. The driver changes the gear and is throttling at a good speed, as he knows that if he is late by couple of minutes he may be stuck in traffic. He drives through the places and picks up other people, proceeding to the main road. The traffic is picking up, and there are all kinds of motorcycles, cars, buses, auto-rickshaw and bicycles drifting through the traffic. There are no rules, everyone wants to reach to their destination.

#### People or Characters

The people and characters in my documentary will be friends and family members.

- Dr. K J Mohan Rao: My father works as a doctor in Bhaskara Medical School in Hyderabad. I will follow him documenting his commute to his work, and back to home through the traffic of the city.
- K Kalyani: My mother is house wife. She cooks some of the most delicious Indian foods. I will be documenting her cooking style and house chores and other forms of work around the house.
- Anita Rao: Anita is my cousin who owns a couple of pre-schools in Hyderabad and Secunderabad. She is also an artist.
- Vijay Babu: He works for the IT Company in Hyderabad. He is also willing to be part of the crew when possible.
- Saishree Soday: Saishree works as a manager in the Training and Development department at Krishna Institute of Medical Science (KIMS). She has also acted in my earlier short film.

I am not sure, if I will be part of the film as a reflexive portrait of the journey in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

### Style and Approach

The style of this film is rooted in Cinema Vérité and Direct Cinema. Cinema Vérité form evolved in France based on Vertov's principle of kino pravada, "a cinema or film dedicated to representing truth in ways not achieved in fictional cinema" (Beattie 83). Later in the sixties, French filmmakers revived the concepts of Kino Pravada into Cinema Vérité. In Canada there was similar revival moment was taking place at NFB. While in United States, Robert Drew and his associates were leading the Direct Cinema moment. Direct Cinema approach has roots in the

journalistic approach, which aims to “reveal the truths of human existence residing behind the surface facts” (Beattie 83). The Cinema Vérité artist is generally a provocateur, an avowed participant creating artificial circumstances that may bring truth to the surface. A Direct Cinema filmmaker is abided by the invisibility, an involved bystander who tries to find truth in the events available to the camera (Barnouw 255). The key element is the involvement of the filmmaker on the screen, he/she is the participant instilling reactions from the characters. In *Chronicle of Summer* (1961), a Cinema Vérité film by Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch, a car mechanic Angelo reveals that that he has to be dishonest to make his living. His girlfriend/wife is taken aback with his confessions, as she is looking right into the camera. While exploring the city, I believe such interaction may take place due to the presence of camera. It is also understood there are lot of similarities between Direct Cinema and Cinema Vérité. As different as these two styles seem, there are lot of similarities. To abridge the discussion, “Cinema Vérité includes Direct Cinema but Direct Cinema does not include Cinema Vérité” (Benson 329).

My directing approach for this film will be to closely follow the Direct Cinema methods. My hope for the documentary is to be in tandem with Frederick Wiseman’s work *In Jackson Heights* (2015). The film is described as a melting pot of cultures, a love letter, an intimate portrait of a community with an immersive experience (Zipporah Films, *In Jackson Heights*). In the film, Wiseman represents the diversity of culture, language, religion, among other things survival, inclusion, education, arts, religious institution etc. Similarly, Hyderabad and Secunderabad are diverse in culture, people from all religion coexist peacefully. All year round there are book fairs, literary festivals, cultural events where people exchange ideas. People enquire and enrich their pasts by visiting museums. People enjoying their lives in work, play and

carrying their daily activities. *In Jackson Heights* inspires me and gives a real insight of the work entailed in a similar mode of documentary.

*Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) is the second film that resonates equally with my documentary idea. The film represents a day in the life of the city of Moscow. BFI sight and sound poll has voted *Man with a Movie Camera* as the eighth best film ever made. (Nicholson, Christie). Dziga Vertov was the foremost creator of the “‘Life caught unawares’ expressed Vertov’s profound commitment to the observational abilities of cinema. [...] The kind of film that took full advantage of cinema’s inherent observational powers, [...] A film without Actors, [...] A film without Scenario, [...] A film without title cards, [...], ... was made with the purpose of creating a true international pure language of cinema characterized by its total differentiation pure language of cinema characterized by its total differentiation from the language of theater and literature” (Ellis 47). These fundamental groundwork created the path work for upcoming cinema Vérité and direct cinema. My aim is to keep the direction and production aligned to these principles.

The approach during the production is to accompany the person(s) of interest for couple of days documenting their daily rituals. The shooting cycle starts in the morning, continues with them through rest of the day and returns back with them. This gives a holistic approach to the documentary from morning to evening completing a full circle of a person leaving his house and coming back in the evening. In advance, I would request for the permissions of people’s involved and the workplace where the shooting may take place.

This method helps to create a rhythm when the characters are intercut between the characters, which in effect creates the ‘mosaic’ effect. This kind of intercutting is quite prevalent in Wiseman documentaries. To create the mosaic effect, we wait till one thought is completed

and cut to a different character. After few cuts we return back to the same conversation and start with a different thought. This gives the viewer (consciously or unconsciously) time to process their thoughts, and reflect on what has been said. This helps to add layers and enrich the context of discussion.

### Production Schedule

Twenty-five days to one month of potential shooting in Hyderabad, Secunderabad and surrounding areas. I will be watching the dailies/ shot footage every day, for possible problems and solutions, along with watching keenly for pacing and editing choices.

#### Pre-Production

*Nov 1 to Dec 15* online research for locations, possible crewmembers and willing participants. Making calls to friends and family in search of potential shoot at their work place. Reaching out to the venues of interest for permission to film at the possible locations.

#### Tentative Production Schedule

Production will be from December 20<sup>th</sup> to January 16.

*December 20-21:* Shooting at yoga center

*December 22:* Shooting on the streets of Hyderabad and Secunderabad

*December 24-25:* Shooting Christmas celebrations.

*December 27:* Shooting at Golconda Fort and the evening lights at Golconda Fort.

*December 28:* Shooting with my father going to the hospital.

*December 29:* Raithu Bazar - Mother shopping in the farmers market.

*January 1, 2018: Barber's shop.*

*January 3,4: Various food Merchant's shop.*

*January 14: Shooting at Kovvali, my mother's hometown.*

## Post-Production

Parts of the post-production activities like syncing and logging the footage will be done every day at the end of shoot. If the net connection is good the footage will be uploaded to the cloud services at the end of the day/week. The main post-production editing of the footage will occur from 20<sup>th</sup> of January to the end of February.

*February 15: Rough Cut*

*February 28: Fine Cut*

*March 7: Final Cut*

*March 12: Sound/Music/Color*

*March 20: Thesis Defense*

*May first week: Screen the film*

## Funding Possibilities

Most of my funding will be in the form of in-kind donation. As I am native of India from Hyderabad and Secunderabad, I don't have the associated expenditure of lodging in hotels. Most of my budget is directed towards the post-production and entering them in film festivals.



## Distribution Possibilities

The film has lot of distribution possibilities. As the film has an international flavor, it has a good chance of acceptance at both domestic and international film festivals/conferences.

- Thinline Film Festival

Thinline Film Festival is a Denton base film festival. Where documentaries and fiction works are equally. From past two years I have been voluntaring at this festival.

- Oak Cliff Film Festival

Oak Cliff Film Festival is a Oak Cliff area, Dallas based film festival. This festival is recognized by The New York Times and Filmmaker magazine. They have slots for Documentary shorts and Feature. Last year I have volunteered at this festival.

- Dallas International Film Festival

This festival is also Dallas based festival. As Dallas is 40 miles for Denton, I will be able to attain the festival and meet other filmmakers.

- South by Southwest (SXSW) Film Festival

SWSX is a highly recognized film festival based in Austin. The festival highlights the independently produced documentary and films. Also the proximity of the location is the added advantage.

- University Film and Video Association (UFVA) Conference

I am a member of UFVA, here I have a chance to share my film with fellow filmmakers who are students and Faculties in other universities. Their critical inputs on films are always appreciated.

- Austin Film Festival

I have known Austin Film Festival for past nine of ten years. I have met and heard the organisers. They also have a grant program. I always wanted to show my film at this festival.

- *Frame of Mind* (KERA)

*Frame of Mind* is a Dallas based PBS weekly television series. Some of my peers have shown their films on KERA. Also Dallas has a huge network of South Asian Indian residents. I think, this will give me an opportunity to share my film with other Indian residents.

- Houston Film Commission

Houston Film Commission showcases the best of Texas-made short films to the industry professionals of Hollywood film community. To apply for this commission one needs a valid Texas driving license.
- South Texas Underground Film Festival (STUFF)

STUFF is a Corpus Christi based film festival I have volunteered in its beginning year also I have shown two of my previous film at this festival.
- Venice Film Festival

Venice Film Festival is known for its taste in off-beat films from around the world. As my film is based on culture, I would like to submit my film at this festival.
- Telluride Film Festival

Telluride Film Festival is known for its documentary line-ups. I think it will be interesting to present my documentary at Telluride.
- Delhi International Film Festival

This festival is based in Delhi, India. I think it will a good opportunity to share my works with other filmmakers from India.
- Hyderabad International Film Festival

This festival is based in Hyderabad, India. My documentary is also based on Hyderabad and Secunderabad. This will give me an opportunity to share my work with Hyderabad community.
- All Lights India International Film Festival

This festival is based in Hyderabad, India. My documentary is also based on Hyderabad and Secunderabad. This will me a opportunity to share my work with Hyderabad community.
- Kolkata International Film Festival

This festival is based in Kolkata, India. I think it will a good opportunity to share my works with other filmmakers from India.
- Chennai International Film Festival

This festival is based in Chennai, India. I think it will a good opportunity to share my works with other filmmakers from India.
- Pune International Film Festival

This festival is based in Pune, India. I think it will a good opportunity to share my works with other filmmakers from India.

- Mumbai International Film Festival

This festival is based in Mumbai, India. I think it will a good opportunity to share my works with other filmmakers from India.

- Patna Film Festival

This festival is based in Patna, India. I think it will a good opportunity to share my works with other filmmakers from India.

I also plan on digital media distribution outlets and aggregators. Some of the examples are YouTube Movie Rental and Google ads, Vimeo on Demand, iTunes, FLM.TV, Amazon (createspace), Distrify etc.

## Research

The information presented in this section consists of compilation of the readings and research carried over the years towards the cinema vérité or direct cinema style of work. These represents the works involved by various documentarians, their ethics, point of view, and scholarly readings. This section can be categorized into the following basic sections:

The sections are the books read, the journal articles reviewed for class or research papers, the extract of the articles and reviews of the films, Websites which hosts the further critical references information regarding, and Films which are viewed as part of the class, or outside of the class.

## Books

- Barnouw, Erik. *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film*. rev ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. Print.
- Beattie, Keith. *Documentary Screens: Non-fiction Film and Television*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Print.
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- Rosenthal, Alan. *The Documentary Conscience: A Casebook in Film Making*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980. Print.

#### Journal Articles, Extracts and Reviews

- Interview with Ellen Hovde, editor of *Grey Gardens* (1975)

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- Zipporah Films <http://www.zipporah.com/>

#### Films

- *Manhatta*, directed by Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand 1921

Synopsis: One of first city symphony film based on the poem of Walt Whitman. (City symphony is a poetic, experimental documentary that presents the daily lives of the people living

in that city. The film endeavors to represent the city's spirit.)

- *Berlin: Symphony of a Metropolis*, directed by Walter Ruttmann

Synopsis: An avant-garde film based on the idea of city symphony and the passage of one day in the life in city of Berlin city.

- *Man with A Movie Camera* (1929), directed by Dziga Vertov

Synopsis: The film is about a day in the life of a camera man, Mikhail Kaufman. Dziga Vertov, directed the film, his wife Elizaveta Svilova edited the film. It's an experimental film based on Futurism, Cubism, Dadaism and other arts.

- *Rain*, directed by Joris Ivens 1929

Synopsis: *Rain* is a city symphony by the Dutch filmmaker Joris Ivens'. Whenever Mr. Ivens is going out to shoot the city, it will start raining, one day after being fed up with rain he started shooting rain in the city of Amsterdam.

- *Primary*, directed by Robert Drew 1960

Synopsis: It is a film about the Wisconsin primary election between John F. Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey. Robert Drew was a writer and editor at Life magazine. He wanted to make documentary interesting. After he came back from Harvard completing one year fellowship where he studied modern novel and playwriting, he handpicked his crew known as Drew Associates. Mr Drew was able to obtain financing of a million dollars from the Time Inc. to develop the portable camera and recorder. Richard Leacock gave the specifications to D. A. Pennebaker, who started working on the camera. The camera also had mercury technology which was used to synchronize the film with the audio. The primary was the first direct cinema and was also the first film shot with the mobile camera and recorder designed by Drew Associates.

- *Chronicle of Summer*, directed by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin 1961

Synopsis: An anthropologist Jean Rouch and a sociologist Edgar Morin, come with an idea to conduct an experiment by asking questions on sociopolitical issues and documenting responses on film. This film started the Cinema Vérité movement.

- *Lonely Boy* directed by Wolf Koeing and Roman Kroitor 1962

Synopsis: A Cinema Vérité documentary about Paul Anka, the film is named based on the title of the song. Directed by Wolf Koeing and Roman Kroitor on behalf of The National Film Board of Canada.

- *Salesman* directed by Albert Maysles, Charlotte Zwerin and David Maysles (1969),

Synopsis: The filmmakers follow a salesman and document his success, hope, daily lives and failure. Albert Maysles is the cameraman, David Maysles is the audio person and Charlotte Zwerin is the editor of the film. David was also involved in the editing. My documentary which uses Cinema Verite and Direct Cinema styles, will require skillful editing. The films discussed here are the prime examples of this style.

- *Bob Dylan: Don't Look Back*, directed by D.A. Pennebaker 1967

Synopsis: A direct cinema style documentary by D. A. Pennebaker recording Bob Dylan's 1965 tour of England, with Joan Baez and Donovan.

- *Grey Gardens* directed by Albert Maysles, Ellen Hovde, Muffie Meyer and David Maysles 1975

Synopsis: The documentary shows the daily lives of mother (Big Edie) and daughter (Little Edie). This documentary characterizes the eccentric nature of mother-daughter relationship. Even though Maysles' brother was part of Drew Associates, this film leans towards the Cinema Vérité style.

- *In Jackson Heights*, directed by Frederick Wiseman 2015

Synopsis: A melting pot of cultures, a love letter, an intimate portrait of a community with an immersive experience. The filmmaker examines the daily lives of the people in Jackson Heights in Queens, New York. The viewer feels that he himself is present at Jackson Heights and is personally viewing all the sites and sights presented by Wiseman.

- *Leviathan*, directed by Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Verena Paravel 2104

Synopsis: The film is a visceral ethnographic film of North American fishing industry. Its innovative use of camera and sound gives the immersive experience to the viewers. The feeling of being there.

- *Sleep Furiously*, directed by Koppel Gideon 2008

Synopsis: The film is a poetic and compassionate representation of the Welsh farming community in Ceredigion. The placid pace of the film makes viewer to feel and appreciate the beauty of the countryside. The film also shows the times are changing and how it's affecting the community.

The poem/prayer by Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (founder of Hyderabad)

Listen to this prayer O Lord!  
Bless my days and nights with contentment O Lord!

Make Thou my country prosperous and populous,  
And grant me a hundred years to live O Lord!

Among all the thrones let my throne be  
Like the gem that adorns a ring O Lord!

Fill this my city with people  
As Thou hast filled the ocean with fish O Lord!

(Translated from Urdu by Professor Syed Sirajuddin)



## RECONCEPTUALIZING BEFORE PRODUCTION

I needed to rethink two areas before production: recording audio as a single system and getting permission to shoot on locations. In documentary films, the audio supplies an immense amount of textual information. My primary concern was to have a proper setup to ensure that the audio could be recorded with ease. To get clean audio, I originally intended to ask my friend Jayraj to help me with the boom; however, once I started shooting, it became clear that this would not be feasible because I was shooting continuously for hours and it was difficult for Jayraj to hold the boom for that long. One of the main reasons for choosing a Varicam camera was that I could record two audio channels separately. Thus, I removed the shotgun microphone from the boom and used it as an onboard mic taped to the handle. I also had a spare boom with two wireless lavaliers for interviews or narrational purposes. While using the on-board mic, I would record audio in stereo; when I had the opportunity to use a second boom or lavalier, I would record separately on individual tracks.

The other important issue I had to rethink was determining the criteria for obtaining permission to shoot on the streets of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. Jayraj and I went to Annapurna International School of Film and Media (AISFM) to meet with a faculty member, Harish Kohirkar, who does all the location bookings for student films and the Annapurna Film Studio. As such, he is knowledgeable about the local regulations for shooting and producing films as well as permission requirements for shooting locally. He explained that, if I were using a small camera, like a Canon 5D, I might be able to get away with filming on the streets; however, if I were using a big camera on a tripod, I would undoubtedly be noticed by local police or traffic police, who would confiscate the camera, leaving me to bribe them to get it back. Kohirkar's advice left me feeling discouraged and concerned as the Varicam is an expensive film camera. I

decided to be cautious. I would not shoot outdoors or on streets. When shooting indoors I would obtain the permission of the building owner or person in charge. If shooting at an institution, I would ask for permission from the director or an equivalent level of responsibility.

## INTEGRATION OF PRODUCTION AND THEORY

### Observational Cinema

*I prowled the streets all day, feeling very strung-up and ready to pounce, determined to “trap” life—to preserve life in the act of living. Above all, I craved to seize the whole essence, in the confines of one single photograph, of some situation that was in the process of unrolling itself before my eyes.*

—Henri Cartier-Bresson

As previously noted, Bresson defined the goal of filming an observational cinema as “preserv[ing] life in the act of living.” The documentarian/cameraman wants to seize the essence of life when it is happening before his/her eyes in order to bring the life and excitement of the moment to the viewer as if they themselves are present to view the discourse of the scene. My documentary follows the styles of cinema vérité and direct cinema as “...every style embodies an epistemological decision, an interpretation of how and what we perceive” (Sontag 154). These two styles give me the epistemological choice of being a silent observer with a camera. Although the camera’s presence is felt, the longer I record, the less infatuated the crowd becomes and they more they go about dealing with their own lives. Thus, I often deliberately recorded for a long time at a particular spot to ensure that I had enough observational footage to edit the scene holistically.

People occasionally approached me to enquire into the nature of the shooting. When possible (e.g., camera on the tripod), I step away from the camera and responded to inquirer’s questions. If my friend Jayraj is with me, I requested him to answer the questions. I also engaged in conversations with shop owners, museum guides asking them about certain items in the shop or museum. This expository/participatory approach gives me (and the viewer of the documentary) the extra textual information needed to describe the item of interest. In addition, I

conducted four sit-down interviews with artists and professionals rooted into the cultures of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. This process enabled me to acquire a great wealth of information on culture and identify various places of interest to shoot for the documentary. It also guided me in identifying the best person from whom to request permission.

Such efforts imparted a phenomenal level of cultural knowledge that I was not aware of even though I lived in the cities for such a long duration. I also wanted to interview the subjects as it gives me the flexibility to provide expository/textual information to the documentary. Renov stated in *Poetics of Documentary* that the aim of a documentary should be to record, reveal, or preserve (Renov 21). The aim of the documentary *Tales of My Cities* is to record, preserve, and reveal parts of the everyday life that takes place in the cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

### Ethics

*If I were just curious, it would be very hard to say to someone, “I want to come to your house and have you talk to me and tell me the story of your life.” I mean people are going to say, “You’re crazy.” Plus they’re going to keep mighty guarded. But the camera is a kind of license. A lot of people, they want to be paid that much attention and that’s a reasonable kind of attention to be paid.*

—Diane Arbus

Ethics are an important factor—if not the most important—in making any documentary. As a documentarian, I am well aware of the need to maintain paper trails and request that everyone sign a form indicating their consent to use footage of them. In the United States and among the media-savvy crowd in India, such forms are a standard operating procedure. However, the general public tends to be more nervous about signing documents, often claiming their spoken word should be enough. Generally, most people trust each other as their word carried more weight than a written document. In my documentary, I obtained permissions from

every individual or institution included. Individuals' permission was acquired from their spoken word as informed consent, which is evident in the documentary. Permissions from institutions were acquired via email communications or applications I wrote to the institution providing them with details on the nature of documentary and my reasons for shooting at their institutions.

Another ethical topic to discuss is shooting at Charminar and Laad Bazaar. Jayraj asked his journalist friend Hameed Khan to help us and accompany us during these shoots. Charminar is a world-famous landmark in Hyderabad, and Laad Bazaar is a renowned bangles market adjacent to Charminar. While Mr. Hameed Khan conducted interviews with the bangles maker at Laad Bazaar, I shot the whole process. Later I shot inside the bangles store, with the owners' permission; they asked about our purpose in filming, and Jayraj and I explained that I was a student making a documentary as my thesis project. Some of the people assumed that we were from the local TV station, so they asked us on which channel and at what time the film would be shown. I explained the purpose of the shooting as much as possible. The shoot at Charminar was made possible because of the presence of the journalist.

### Shooting for the Documentary

*If I could tell the story in words, I wouldn't need to lug a camera.*  
—Lewis Hine

*I'm always mentally photographing everything as practice.*  
—Minor White

As proposed in the prospectus, the shooting style for *Tales of My Cities* follows a mix style of cinema vérité and direct cinema. The style of the shooting includes using both a tripod-mounted camera and a handheld camera depending on the requirements of the scene. When I needed to move with the person in a particular place, I generally kept the camera on my

shoulders and moved as needed for the shot. While shooting the barber's scene in the documentary, the barber was constantly moving from one side to the other, and the area was full of mirrors. If I moved with the barber or followed him using 180-degree rotations, I had to pay careful attention to the mirrors to get a good shoot. I also used the zoom lens to give me various focal lengths for showing the space and what was happening within it. The use of the zoom lens brought me closer to the subject, which helped create intimacy with the subject.

I used mostly prime lenses (i.e., 20 mm and 50 mm). I used the 50 mm prime lens with a polarizer filter when I needed to shoot through glass, such as at the museum; the polarizer enabled me to take away the reflection. The zoom lens can only go as wide as 24 mm, such as when I needed a cityscape or if I was not happy with the composition or the subject was too close. When I needed to focus and get a wider area, I used a 20 mm Nikkor lens. "Wide-angle lenses normally expand the area covered by the camera from one side of the frame to the other" (Spence 197).

At times I panned the camera to contextualize the space and magnitude of the place. At the Dargah Yousufain, the camera tilted and panned "as a means of gathering information [...] the camera movement helps to establish the nature and scale of the subject represented" (Spence 192). This camera movement gave the context of people sitting in a tight space at the dargah (a shrine built over the graves of a Sufi or saint) and listening to the Qawwali. I tried to avoid unnatural or unnecessary movement for the camera, but I felt comfortable moving the camera because at that moment I felt that I should be in the spirit with the movements around me from whatever was happening while also staying with the camera in rhythm with the subject.

Nativism/ Endo-Ethnography

*Dakhan s̄a nahīn thār sansār méh,  
Punjab fāzīlān kā hai īs thār méh.*

*Dakhan hai nagīna angothī hai jag,  
Angothi kuñ hurmat nagīna haī lag.*

*Dakhan mulk kō dhan ajab sāj hai,  
Ké sab mulk sar hōar Dakhan tāj hai.*

*Dakhan mulk bhautīj kh āsā āhay,  
Télangānā us kā khulāsa āhay.*

Shaheen

The study of anthropology and ethnography has evolved over the years. In today's world, the paradigm is shifting where the natives or indigenous are studying their own cultures. In making my documentary, I was the native returning to his native home, where I was basically not considered an outsider, to make a film on the cultures of which I was aware. However, I did inform people that I was a student at the University at North Texas, studying documentary productions and studies. Most people were surprised and curious that I was still pursuing an advanced degree at my age.

At some of the institutions, I noticed that the members working there were really interested in my studies and work. I think me being a native of Hyderabad meant people felt comfortable speaking freely with me and advising me when I was not aware of things. As Edmund Leach said, "fieldwork in a cultural context of which you already have first-hand experience seems to be more difficult than fieldwork which is approached from the naive viewpoint of a total stranger" (Van Ginkel 5). Due to this shared space and background, I felt even more responsible about representing the people in my film correctly and appropriately. I felt that I should stand tall because they trusted and respected me. Thus, I had to represent

everyone with the respect that they had given me. I felt responsible for representing a culture and its people.

Also sometimes it helped me speak to people in Hindi directly, without any third-party translator or intervention. According to Rob Van Ginkel, “sharing a language with informants is an asset because it facilitates communication, saves time, and enables avoiding distortion by interpreters” (9). Yet I also had to be careful; being so close to my own culture, I might be incautious.

Even though I speak in Hindi and get along most of the places as a native of Hyderabad. There are few places where I take my camera, I am still considered as an outsider. Yousufain Dargah is open to everyone, but natively it is the epitome of the Muslim culture. While I follow Hinduism, for me the culture of Dargah Yousufain is exotic. Even though I am in Hyderabad, I am native to one culture, and an outsider to another. It’s true, that we all carry “Multiplex Identity” as described by Kirin Narayan (673).

### Ethnography in *Tales of My Cities*

Ethnography is the study of culture in time and space. A city symphony embodies all the individual cultures of the people living as part of the self, as evidenced by the Qawwali singing at the Yousuf Baba Sharif Baba Dargah or Dargah Yousufain at Nampally, Hyderabad. Two Muslim Sufi saints named Hazrath Syed Shah Yousufuddin and Syed Shah Sharifuddin are buried at Dargah Yousufain (TOI). On Thursday night after prayers, people stay back for Qawwal singing, which starts around 8:00 pm and goes until 1:00 am in the morning. Friday or Jumu’ah is considered a holy day for prayers in the Muslim religion. Each group of singers spends around an hour singing different Qawwalis in appreciation of the Sufis of the Dargha.



After an hour, there is a break and a new group replaces the earlier group. The Qawwal singers have been pursuing the tradition of singing Qawwalis/spiritual songs for generations as their means of livelihood (Khan). They also sing at different shrines, making anywhere from Rs 400 to Rs 600 per sitting (Khan).

Ethnographically, the Dargah Yousufain is the cultural symbol of Hyderabad. People from all religions come to pay their respect at the dargah. The devotees make a wish and enjoy the mystic environment of the dargah. “Many devotees offer their offerings to the singers for connecting them to the divine through their music” (Goyal). This way of life has been central to the Hyderabadi cultures for centuries.

### Music in Documentary

The music and voice in the documentary give the “sensory embodiment to the historical world” (Nichols 92). The music in my documentary is diegetic. The music in Dargah Yousufain gives the historical sense of the Qawwali singers singing at the same spot on Thursday nights for centuries. Yet time has no significance; this musical experience at the dargah induces a sense of timelessness.

I am not planning to use any non-diegetic music or sound design for the documentary, as I think it will reduce the effect of the native (diegetic) sound of the place, which actually gives the effect of being part of the documentary in a visceral sense.

## PRE-PRODUCTION

### Overview

The preproduction of *Tales of My Cities* lasted between November 1, 2017, and December 15, 2017. While doing research, I was surprised to discover that someone had written a graphic novel on Hyderabad. The author's profile on Amazon.com included a link to the graphic novel's Facebook page. I reached out to Jaideep Undurti, the author, sending him a note to request a meeting to talk about his book. I introduced myself as a student making a documentary on Hyderabad. He agreed to meet and talk over coffee when I was in Hyderabad. I bought the Kindle edition of his book so that I could have talking points and formulate insightful questions. Undurti introduced me to many cultural outlets he explored while researching for his graphic novel, including the Sufi Saint Dargah "Yousuf Baba Sharif Baba Dargah" in Nampally and Manohar Books in Begumpet. Undurti also worked as a part-time journalist and had studied documentary filmmaking.

Hyderabad is a rich city in terms of linguistics, heritage, and culture. I wanted to showcase of the linguistic side of Hyderabad. The genesis of Hyderabad is based on a poem. I started researching on Google and Amazon for any books on Hyderabad and languages and found Routledge's *Languages and Literary Cultures in Hyderabad* (edited by Kousar J. Azam). I learned that Azam recently retired from the Osmania University of Hyderabad, where they published her email and the conference on which the book is based. I sent an email to Azam, who offered to introduce me to any of the authors of the article I wanted to meet. When I reached India, I ordered the Indian version of the book before it was picked up by Routledge. It was much more affordable. I read all the articles that I thought would add to the documentary and asked Azam to introduce me to Shagufta Shaheen and Sajjad Shahid, who wrote the article "The

Unique Literary Traditions of Dakhni.” Dakhni encompasses the State of Telangana and reaches a few other states, but the article presented the literary tradition of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. Shahid is a poet and scholar who works as a civil engineer with the Department of Archaeology of Telangana. Interviewing Shahid was an eye-opening experience, as I learned a lot about Hyderabad in one four- to five-hour interview. Shahid is an opened-minded individual who invited me to an Archaeological Society seminar at Telangana. He also guided me on from whom I should seek permission.

#### Request for AISFM Shoot

After reaching India, my production and preproduction schedule overlapped. For preproduction, I was visiting places to obtain the permissions. I wanted to shoot couple of classes at Annapurna International School of Film and Media. I especially wanted to record the teachings of Sanjeev Kumar’s audio class. I spoke to the dean of the school, who granted me permission to do so, although he asked me to send him a detailed email requesting permission. I copied my thesis chair Professor Ben Levin to provide proof that I am a student at the University of North Texas working on my thesis documentary. Thus, if the AISFM dean wanted to reach either of us, he had the required email addresses. I subsequently shot two classes at AISFM with two different professors who taught audio at AISFM.

#### Request for Shoot at Kalakriti Art Gallery

Kalakriti is famous art gallery in Hyderabad that was displaying maps of India made in around 1500 AD. I was interested in this exhibit as it depicted Hyderabad and Secunderabad in maps. I requested permission, via email, from the Kalakriti Art Academy, and subsequently met

the gallery manager, Harmeet Singh, who invited me to shoot on any day other than opening day, when they were expecting lot of celebrities and press. I was glad that they gave me the opportunity to shoot in the gallery.

#### Request for Birla Temple and Archeological Center Shoot

The head of Birla Museum, Shyam Kothai, requested that I provide all details about shooting at the museum. He explained that the museum generally did not allow anyone to shoot on the premises. Ultimately, because I presented myself as a scholar working toward the thesis project, the museum authorized me to shoot on the grounds as long as I used the footage only for educational purposes, no commercial purposes. Kothai asked me to sign a document agreeing to these rules. I also included my Indian cell phone number on the document if the museum needed to reach me. (My Indian cell phone is with my parents presently.) I wrote a similar letter for the director of Birla Mandir. I realized that institutions respected me as a student and allowed research based on that criteria (for me, research is to film and present the material). This was true when I met with the director of Salar Jung Museum, one of the biggest museums in India. The directors of all museums helped me so I could shoot the objects of archaeological importance. Sometime they narrated for the camera and sometimes they showed the object of interest and explained its importance.

## PRODUCTION

### Overview

The production of *Tales of My Cities* was based primarily on the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. The schedule was for the duration of my stay in India, from December 20, 2017, to January 30, 2018. The basic mantra for my approach to shooting was to shoot every day and shoot anything as long as thought it would work for my documentary.

### Travelling to India with Equipment

I was carrying two bags weighing between 35 and 40 pounds. One bag had the Varicam camera (disassembled), and the other bag had the Canon 5D, lenses, batteries, and all remaining camera equipment. An immigration officer at Hyderabad airport asked me about the Carnet document. I was trying not to panic while trying to explain that I had no time to obtain the Carnet document because I was defending my thesis prospectus two days earlier. I showed her the letter from Media Arts, which listed all the equipment and its serial numbers. The officer was skeptical and suggested that anyone could make such a list. I was surprised and explained that doing so in the USA could land a person in jail. I showed her the UNT equipment tag on the Varicam camera, indicating that it is university property. She studied the equipment tag and number listed on it, noted when the camera was made (July 2017), and then asked me show any other equipment with a tag on it. I retrieved the Canon 5D camera from the bag and showed her its nearly worn-off tag. After that she seemed to relax a little bit.

I then showed the immigration officer the drafts of my thesis prospectus, which included written comments by thesis chair Professor Ben Levin and Professor Melinda Levin. The officer read some of the contents on the first page and browsed through the other pages. She then called

another officer over who was working on his Ph.D., focusing on cultural studies of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. I told him that I was looking for any help I could find and gave him my contact information. He said he would definitely call me, but I unfortunately did not get his contact information and he never contacted me. When I was leaving for the USA, I looked to see if I could find either of these immigration officers to thank them.

My production was scheduled from the time I landed in India on December 20, 2017, to January 17, 2018, when I flew back to the United States. The day I landed in India, I unpacked my bags and assembled the camera gear. I spent two days still getting used to the camera gear and settings. I called my friend Jayraj, who lives in Nalgonda, approximately 150 kilometers from my house, and asked him when he could come to my place. The trip would take approximately 3 hours, and he said he would come on December 26, after Christmas.

My first big shoot was December 25, when I met Brian Krieger at the church and shot the Christmas celebration with his family. This was a little bit later than I was supposed to start. Although I was supposed to head back to the US around January 5 or 6, I realized that I needed to request a 13-day extension from my thesis chair so I could shoot other cultural activities taking place around Hyderabad. Therefore, I booked the return tickets for January 30.

#### Crew

Sunil Kilaru—Director, Producer, Editor and Photographer/Cameraman

I am currently an MFA student in Documentary Production and Studies. My films have been screened in film festivals in the United States and India. After completing my MFA program, I intend to teach. I also want to travel around the world making films and documentaries.

Chinnabathuni Jayraj—Production Assistant/Boom Operator/Cameraman

Jayraj is a filmmaker who completed the Introduction to Directing for Film and Television short film course at AISFM. He has an encyclopedic knowledge of Hindi, Telugu, and Tamil films. He is an exhaustive reader with varied interests. He has a degree in library science from Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University. He previously worked in the medical transcription industry. Jayraj was initially shooting with a Canon 5D and GoPro, but we stopped shooting.

Jayraj helped me throughout the production. The shooting of Charminar and Laad Bazaar happened only because of his presence. He asked his reporter friend Hameed Khan to be present with us so that we could shoot around the areas of Charminar without the fear of police interference or other intervention. Jayraj returned to his hometown on Tuesdays and returned on Thursdays. The second location where I was able to shoot because of Jayraj was the transcription training service. He was able to obtain permission for us to shoot there.

At the end of every day, we discussed the plan for the next day, including times and other relevant details. According to our plan, we also needed to film the sunrise in the mornings. We would wake up at five in the morning, get ready, and move. Jayraj had a GPS phone, so he would guide us where to go while I drove. This film would have been difficult/different without Jayraj's help. He stayed with us for a whole month. I am very thankful for his help.

Vijay Babu and Saishree Soday—Production Assistants

Vijay Babu and Saishree Soday, my other friends with whom I stayed in Gachibowli, Hyderabad, are filmmakers who are married to each other. Vijay is an Software Engineer, while Saishree is an Manager at Training and Development at Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences

(KIMS). I was enrolled along with them at AISFM. I wanted to shoot the current financial district of Hyderabad, where recent growth has taken place. I stayed with them for two days, but we mostly accomplished the night shootings, where I shot the outside of the buildings of the global brands and recorded nighttime construction. Vijay would drive the car while Saishree guided us on landmark buildings and companies to shoot. We shot a couple of hours in the night and even into the morning.

### Equipment

I chose to use the Panasonic Varicam LT for production. I had a choice of the Sony FS5, RED, or Varicam LT. I had already worked with the FS5 and RED cameras in previous semesters. During my trial with the Panasonic Varicam LT, I found that it has two native ISO settings: 800 and 5000. Within these two settings I had a wide latitude for shooting outside in sunlight and indoors in low light conditions. I did the test while shooting outside during the night to see how the footage looked. The footage looked a lot cleaner compared to other cameras. The camera also had two ports for audio, so I could directly record the sound and video simultaneously. I also tested out the shoulder mount for the Varicam, which offered a great option for shooting; the camera also shot 4K. The only problem was that the camera was heavy and posed some challenges for travelling internationally. In addition, the camera used Anton Bauer batteries, which were bulky and heavy to carry around. But I thought the benefits of picture quality (i.e., capturing the wide spectrum of colors and flexibility of shooting at different hours of the day) outweighed the difficulties of working with the camera.

I used Lectrosonics wireless lavaliers, which were the best and most reliable lavaliers I have worked with. I got two shotgun microphones with wind socks. To be safe, I also carried the



Canon 5D, along with the Samsung VR camera. After ten days of shooting with the Varicam, I realized that I would not be using the Canon 5D or Samsung VR. Things became very clear to me in terms of how I wanted to proceed with the shots: get permission from the owner or person in charge; take the Varicam, tripod, and other equipment needed for the shoot; and shoot with one camera, focusing and paying absolute attention to the one camera. I did not need to worry about anything else because shooting with one camera made things simple and efficient.

Shooting with the Varicam on the shoulder for long hours was difficult. Most of the time I would carry the camera mounted on a tripod on my shoulders. By the time I left India a month later, I had lost around ten pounds.

### Shooting Schedule

12/22/2017

Shooting – Morning sunrise, people walking and testing the camera settings.

12/22/2017

Shooting – Morning sunrise, people walking.

12/25/2017

Shooting – Brian Krieger celebrating Christmas at the Church.

12/26/2017

Shooting – Morning sunrise, people walking.

12/27/2017

Shooting – Chawl's and traffic of Secunderabad.

12/28/2017

Shooting sunrise at a Dargah.

Shooting—Srinivas Raju's Yoga class.

12/29/2017

- Shooting morning Yoga class with Pari and Srinivas Raju's class.
- Shooting – Anita painting on canvas.

12/30/2017

- Shooting – Sunrise at Shameerpet.

- Shooting – Barber’s saloon.
- Shooting – People playing badminton.
- Shooting – Evening Bazaar.

12/31/2017

Shooting – Yoga seminar with Mr. Vikas.

01/01/2018

Shooting – Midnight scenes of fireworks along with the nightscape of Secunderabad.

01/02/2018

Shooting Yoga in morning with Uttra, and in evening with Chandrakant Sir.

01/04/2018

- Shooting at Manohar Book Store
- Shooting at Kalakriti Art Gallery.

01/05/2018

Shooting at Kalakriti Art Gallery.

01/06/2018

Interview with Mr. Vinit Deendayal, who is great grandson of Raja Deendayal, a photographer to Sixth Nizam of Hyderabad.

01/07/2018

Shooting – how traditionally people iron their shirts.

01/08/2018

- Shooting while driving in Auto-rickshaw.
- Shooting at Birla Archeological Museum.

01/09/2018

- Shooting at Dhobi Ghaat.
- Mechanic fixing head light of the motorcycle.
- Shooting at Birla Temple.

01/10/2018

Shooting at dairy farm, Organica Dairy.

01/11/2018

Shooting at Salar Jung Museum Hyderabad.

01/12/2018

Shooting Qawwali at Yousufain Dargah.

01/13/2018

- Interview with Mr. Sajjad Hussien Shahid on the beginnings and culture of Hyderabad.
- Shooting at bangles market at Laad Bazar and Charminar.

01/14/2018 – 01/17/2018

Shooting at Kovvali Makar Sankranti festival.

01/18/2018

Interview with Ms. Anuradha Reddy on the beginnings and culture of Secunderabad.

01/19/2018

- Shooting at Transdyne Medical Transcription Services.
- Shooting first day of Seminar – The State Archelogy of Telangana.

01/20/2018

Shooting second day of Seminar – The State Archelogy of Telangana.

01/22/2018

Shooting at Deccan Pen Stores with Mr. Haleem A. Siddiqui.

01/23/2018

- Shooting an audio class at AISFM, taught by Mr. Sanjeev Kumar.
- Shooting Hyderabad Book Fair 2018.

01/24/2018

- Shooting in morning at Gachibowli Hyderabad.
- Afternoon shooting a sound metaphor class at AISFM.
- Late afternoon shooting at Deccan Pen Stores with Mr. Haleem A. Siddiqui.

01/25/2018 – 01/26/2018

- Shooting buildings and night life at Gachibowli Hyderabad.
- Shooting few events on the eve of Republic Day of India.

01/27/2018

- Shooting at Hyderabad Literary festival.
- Interview with Kranti, an active participant in Mukta Art Organization for Women Artists.

01/28/2018

Boys playing cricket.

## Budget

Budget details are found in the appendix.

## POST-PRODUCTION

### Overview

The post-production period lasted from the first week of February 2018 to the end of March. I was viewing and logging the footage during the production itself. Before I wiped the cards to get ready for the next day's shoot, I would make sure that all the footage was downloaded safely.

### Barry Thornburg – Editor

Barry Thornburg is a third-year MFA student in Documentary Production and Studies. He is an award-winning cinematographer, designer, and creative at heart. His artistic eye and talent for storytelling earned him a Golden Addy, the AVA Digital Award, and the international TEECA Video Award. His previous projects include “Life Project” and “FLAT!”; he is currently in the preproduction phase of “I AM, BUT I’M NOT,” which will be partially shot in India.

He currently teaches media writing and cinema production at the University of North Texas and has successfully defended his thesis. By the end of spring 2018, he will have a Master of Fine Arts in Documentary Production and Studies.

Barry has always been interested in my project, but he joined somewhat late as an editor. I met Barry during the fundraising of his upcoming project “I AM, BUT I’M NOT.” I was discussing the progress on *Tales of My Cities* project and my frustrations dealing with the 4K Varicam footage. Barry previously worked with Panasonic Varicam LT camera and was aware of the problems footage may pose. He expressed an interest in editing the documentary. I was not sure if I wanted anyone to edit my documentary. I did not want to sound as if I did not appreciate Barry's help, but my previous experience has proved to me that editing makes or

breaks a documentary. I asked Barry to give it a day so we could both think seriously on this matter. During that time, I realized that if I continued to work as an editor on the project, I would not be able to finish things on time and would not graduate. On the other hand, I was also thinking that, while logging, viewing, and editing the footage, Barry might find some resources that could help him shoot in India. I was hopeful that this venture might prove symbiotic.

The next day, I telephoned Barry and asked him if he was still open to the idea. He said he had thought it over and believed it would be an interesting project to edit. The following week, I proposed the idea to my thesis chair, Professor Ben Levin. He requested that both of us meet with him in person. After hearing from both of us, Professor Levin granted permission to bring Barry on board.

#### Schedule

Partial Viewing and logging of the footage was done at the end of day after shooting. I have created folder structure based on dates and would create a text log file e.g., LOG.txt file. In log files I will write down the key phrases relating to the shoot.

03/01/2018 – Placed order for new drives. (To duplicate the data on multiple drives.)

03/10/2018 – 03/14/2018 – Duplicating the drives.

03/15/2018 – 03/20/2018 – Viewing and importing the files in Adobe Premiere Pro.  
Checking if all the files are copied.

03/20/2018 – Discovered part of the footage missing

03/21/2018 – 03/31/2018 – Researching for Data Recovery Services

04/1/2018 – Contacted SUMURI customer services.

04/2/2018 – Barry Thornburg is on board as an editor.

04/9/2018 – Appointment with Ben Levin.

04/10/2018 – 04/15/2018 – Barry Thornburg starts viewing, logging and transcoding the footage.

04/16/2018 – Barry starts editing the footage.

04/21/2018 – Editors cut

04/27/2018 – Defend Thesis

05/01/2018 – 05/04/2018 – Color correction

05/05/2018 – 05/07/2018 – Work on sound

05/11/2018 – Screen the film

## RECONCEPTUALIZING BEFORE POST-PRODUCTION

During my previous experience with Adobe Premiere, I noticed that it continually crashed from time to time and sometimes the files could not be recovered. Therefore, for my thesis project, I wanted to stay away from Adobe Premiere Pro. I chose Autodesk Smoke, which I had also used earlier and knew that it could handle big projects well. One thing I missed was that Panasonic has not developed any good software for working with Autodesk. Although Autodesk supports Varicam files, it was difficult processing the 4K footage. In the meantime, while I was duplicating the drives, one of the 4TB disk drives crashed and I almost lost around 700 GB of prime footage that I wanted to use for the edit.

I was really frustrated with the 4K footage available and the drive crash. I was trying to go through the sources and find the best way to recover the footage; by the time I gave up trying to recover the footage, I had already wasted two months of valuable time. Barry Thornburg came on board, I gave all the hard disks to Barry, he said he would not edit in 4K, but would transcode them to 1080p DNxHD to work with them. As I knew Barry has worked with Varicam footage earlier, he was aware of the best ways to transcode the 4K files. After pushing for two months to edit only in 4K, I was fine with Barry's decision.

### Equipment

My initial choice of editing software was Autodesk Smoke, which is free under student licensing. The software is only available for Apple machines. My choice was carry out the editing on my personal iMac. Also, if I needed to further color-correct from the Smoke software, I also downloaded Davinci Resolve 14 (free version) for Mac. Davinci Resolve can also be used as a NLE editing software.

Barry Thornburg suggested using Adobe Premiere Pro, which is the best editing software in these conditions. He was going to use Adobe Media Encoder to transcode all the relevant files from Varicam MXF format to DNxHD format. I gave Barry a 4TB hard disk especially for transcoding purposes.

## Editing

*Photography is a system of visual editing. At bottom, it is a matter of surrounding with a frame a portion of one's cone of vision, while standing in the right place at the right time. Like chess, or writing, it is a matter of choosing from among given possibilities, but in the case of photography the number of possibilities is not finite but infinite.*

— John Szarkowski

*An editor takes "twenty-four decisions per second."*

— Murch

Barry and I had an initial discussion about the important footage for the film, and he labelled the footage based on the hierarchy of selection. We also discussed the mosaic style of editing as implemented by Frederick Wiseman. Barry later suggested using one full sequence at a place before moving to the next sequence. The transitions used to join two scenes ranged from driving in traffic to observing traffic from a distance.

The edit shows a day spent in the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. The morning starts with the physical training of the army in Secunderabad before going to the dargah in Hyderabad and then ending with the bonfire scene in Secunderabad. It completes a circle starting from Secunderabad to Hyderabad and then back again.

I am happy that Barry chose to join this project as an editor.



## EVALUATION OF COMPLETED WORK

### Preproduction

During the summer and fall of 2017, I proposed and discussed several documentary ideas with my thesis chair, Professor Ben Levin. However, all of these ideas fell apart for various reasons. Near the end of October 2017, I made up my mind to visit India. I always wanted to make a film on the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, so when I made the decision to visit India, I expressed an interest in working on *Tales of My Cities*. I was excited for the project and started visualizing the scenes from the places I had previously visited in Hyderabad and Secunderabad.

I started planning the details of possible shooting locations in the two cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. As part of my initial research, I visited Wikipedia as well as travel and state websites to identify the best possible spaces to shoot. The list of possible locations grew quickly. I sent several emails to the India Film Commission and to other groups, asking about permissions and procedures. I never heard back from some, and the few that replied were not encouraging. At times I felt overwhelmed, as if I had proposed an impossible project, but I had to keep going.

To be more proactive, I reached out to a couple of friends and family members, asking them for ideas about good places to shoot. I also enquired if it would be possible to follow them with a camera for a day or two. The idea was to show their workplaces and other places they visit throughout the city. I wanted to view the parts of the city through the people who live and work there. My cousin works for IBM, which meant it would not be possible to shoot there unless it was a corporate video that had been preapproved by the parent company, IBM in the USA. My brother-in-law said he often meets with high-profile corporate employees, so it would be illogical to follow him. My father works in a hospital, whose management would not allow filming.

Similarly, my sister also had doubts. Ultimately, I did not receive much enthusiasm from their side. I thought I was making all of them nervous because they did not know what to expect.

Finally, I slowly started narrowing the scope to present the life and cultural aspects of Hyderabad and Secunderabad. When I started to pivot away from my family and friends, I found that people working in the areas representing the culture of these two cities were more receptive and open to my efforts. I also noticed that they were more knowledgeable about working with the press and media. The individuals and institutions interested in spreading the cultural values of the twin cities also understood the values of scholarly works and granted permission to help master's and PhD students with their research. I sent emails enquiring about location permission, interviews, and meetings.

### Production

Production was the most fun part of the film. I remember realizing that this was why I joined the MFA program. Every day I went to some cultural happening or met members of the society to talk to them and understand more about the culture and history of Hyderabad.

I spent most of my time trying to resolve problems. If I did not get permission to shoot somewhere, Jayraj and I would find different places of interest. In this process I learned what Arthur Conan Doyle said: "I never guess. It's a shocking habit, destructive to the logical faculty." The only feasible approach was to approach the person in charge and ask; guessing and assuming meant I would be losing on both sides. Sometimes I expected to get authorization, but was refused; I realized these were lost cases. This was an eye-opener for me.

I learned more about the culture of Hyderabad, including things I never had the faintest idea about, even though I lived most of my life there. Meeting with Mr. Sajjad Shahid, Anuradha

Reddy, Professor Kousar J Azam, MR. and Mrs. Vasant Kumar Bawa who are the custodians of the culture of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, talking to them, learning from them about cultural heritage was a great learning experience.

### Post-Production

Post-production was in some ways a more difficult time than preproduction and production. I always wanted to edit 4K footage on the machine itself, but I later realized that the whole industry works with proxies. Only during color-correction and when outputting files do they use 4K files. The technology and machine power needed to deal with 4K footage can be really expensive for a student film budget.

While working with Barry Thornburg I learned to develop trust in my peers, learned to give them independence to make their own decisions. Also learnt to trust their decisions. It also taught me to think holistically when working with my crew members. I listened to Barry's ideas for crafting a sequence and understood why he made certain choices. It was uneasy for me in the beginning because I always loved editing my own footage. It took me some time to relax and develop trust. But eventually it became a relaxing process, and I was able to enjoy the collaborative efforts.

I think shooting a documentary is a like an engineer working to create something wonderful; it involves solving problems, creating new ventures, approaching challenges creatively, learning to psychoanalyze in the field (as mentioned by Levis Strauss (Susan Sontag — Against Interpretation 70)), staying strong on ethics, talking to everyone with respect, and staying calm in even the worst situations. Shooting a documentary in the field taught me many things and honed my skills as a filmmaker. I learned to think creatively and resolve issues

quickly while also making sure everyone was happy. For me, shooting documentaries became a part of my self-engineering.

APPENDIX  
BUDGET

Item Description	Rate	Time/Amount	Total	In-Kind	Need
		<b>Above the Line</b>			
Production Unit		0 45 Days	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
		<b>Total</b>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
		<b>Production</b>			
<b>Camera</b>		45 Days			
Varicam LT (Camera, shoulder mount kit, 256 GB (5 Card)) Kit	\$1492 for 3 days	45 Days	\$8,964.00	\$8,964.00	\$0.00
Anton Bauer Digital 90 Gold Mount Battery	\$70 for 3 days	45 Days / 3 units	\$967.00	\$967.00	\$0.00
Anton Bauer Performance Series DUAL Charger Gold Mount	\$95 for 3 days	45 Days / 1 unit	\$530.00	\$530.00	\$0.00
Nikon Prime AIS Lens (20mm, 50mm, 180mm)	\$100 for 3 days	45 Days	\$4,500.00	\$4,500.00	\$0.00
Canon Zoom 24-70 mm	\$53 for 3 days	45 Days/ 1 unit	\$278.00	\$278.00	\$0.00
Canon Xoom 70-200 mm	\$58 for 3 days	45 Days/ 1 unit	\$304.00	\$304.00	\$0.00
Canon EOS 5D Mark III Digital SLR	\$80 for 3 days	45 Days/ 1 unit	\$706.00	\$706.00	\$0.00
GoPro HERO6 Black Camera	\$36 for 3 days	45 Days/ 1 unit	\$181.00	\$181.00	\$0.00
GoPro HERO5 Silver Edition Camera	\$28 for 3 days	45 Days/ 1 unit	\$174.00	\$174.00	\$0.00
Miller Tripod	\$83 for 3 days	45 Days/ 1 unit	\$780.00	\$780.00	\$0.00
SDXC 64 GB UHS-II U3 Class 10	\$45.00	Flat Rate/ 2 units	\$90.00	\$90.00	\$0.00
SDHC 32 GB UHS - I Class 10	\$13.00	Flat Rate/ 1 unit	\$13.00	\$13.00	\$0.00
microSDXC 64 GB UHS-I / V30 / U3 / Class 10	\$40.00	Flat Rate/ 1 unit	\$40.00	\$40.00	\$0.00
microSDXC 128 GB A1 / UHS-I / V30 / U3 / Class 10	\$80.00	Flat Rate/ 1 unit	\$80.00	\$80.00	\$0.00

Item Description	Rate	Time/Amount	Total	In-Kind	Need
<b>Sound</b>					
Microphones (Boom)	\$24 for 3 days	45 Days/ 2 unit	\$263.00	\$263.00	\$0.00
XLR Cables	\$7 for 3 days	45 Days/ 3 units	\$45.00	\$45.00	\$0.00
Zoom H4n	\$21 for 3 days	45 Days/ 1 unit	\$147.00	\$147.00	\$0.00
Blimp System	\$32 for 3 days	45 Days	\$154.00	\$154.00	\$0.00
Lectrosonics	\$62 for 3 days	45 Days	\$320.00	\$320.00	\$0.00
<b>Storage Media</b>					
8 TB Hard Drive	\$180.00	Flat Rate/ 4 units	\$720.00	\$720.00	\$0.00
4 TB Hard Drive	\$100.00	Flat Rate/ 4 units	\$400.00	\$400.00	\$0.00
12 TB WD My Book Pro	\$700.00	Flat Rate/ 1 unit	\$700.00	\$700.00	\$0.00
<b>Travel and Expenses</b>					
Conversion rate US Dollar to INR (Indian Rupee) (\$1 = Rs 65)					
Plane Ticket	1600 round trip	One Person	\$1,600.00	\$1,600.00	\$0.00
Extra luggage to carry in person (Camera Gear)	\$ 100 one way	Round trip	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$0.00
Gas	\$12 per day	45 Days	\$300.00	\$300.00	\$0.00
Food	\$10 per day	40 Days	\$400.00	\$400.00	\$0.00
Driver for Hire	Rs15000 Flat rate/ month	4 Days	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$0.00
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$22,956</b>	<b>\$22,956</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>Post Production</b>					
<b>Editing</b>					
Adobe Creative Cloud (All Apps)	\$20 per month	Full Year (Educational)	\$240.00	\$240.00	\$0.00
Davinci Resolve	0	Free User License	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Autodesk Flame 2018	0	Free Student License	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

<b>Item Description</b>	<b>Rate</b>	<b>Time/Amount</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>In-Kind</b>	<b>Need</b>
<b>Publicity/Distribution</b>					
DVD/Blu-Ray	\$100	Flat Rate	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$100.00
Festival Submission	\$1,000	Varying Fees (20 Festivals)	\$1,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
Festival Travel	\$500	Varying Fess ( Attend 5 Festivals)	\$500.00	\$250.00	\$250.00
Graphic Design	\$500	Flat Rate	\$500.00	\$200.00	\$300.00
Website (Domain, Hosting, Design)	\$200	Flat Rate (Student Pricing)	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$0.00
Data Recovery	\$350 per hour	Variable Rate - Estimated 10 hrs	\$3,500	\$0.00	\$3,500
		<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,040.00</b>	<b>\$890.00</b>	<b>\$5,150.00</b>
		Total Production Cost	\$28,996.00	\$23,846.00	\$5,150.00
		Contingency @ 10	\$2,899.60	\$2,384.60	\$515.00
		<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$31,895.60</b>	<b>\$26,230.60</b>	<b>\$5,665.00</b>



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