



## Identifying Patterns in a Documentary-*Convergence: Courage in a Crisis*

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### Abstract

*This paper explores how the technical aspects of filming are involved in making the documentary- *Convergence: Courage in a Crisis* in relation to its overarching theme of global solidarity during the pandemic. For this analysis, my study largely depends on textual analysis of the film with the help of the analytical tools-camera angle, pattern of narrative network and mis-en-scene developed by Yale University so as to justify how the set of patterns employed in this visual discourse appeals to its theme in a particular scene. In addition, haptic visuality is studied with special affect. The time denoted, in the paper, for shots is in descending order in the Netflix from the total running time of one hour and fifty-three minutes. Thematically, the entire project focuses on how individuals can make a difference with their selfless efforts even in the face of a global crisis. Shot in eight different countries with nine stories, the Director, Orlando von Einsiedel in a great narrative maneuver, demonstrates the stirring individual grit and compassion with selfless efforts of the unsung heroes, born in the crises. It can also be analyzed as the message towards the global community with the information dissemination for the preparedness of viral emergence next. What makes this documentary poignant and all inspiring is its intimate telling of the stories of the noble heroes through visual discourse amidst the challenging health emergency and trauma. The study is going to be significant because it not only gives the world view of the sweeping chronicle of the global fight against the pandemic but also prepares every individual for resilience with the hope that humans can triumph over the crisis in unison.*

**Keywords:** *film analysis, pandemic, health emergency, trauma, selfless efforts, global solidarity, hope*

## Setting the Context

This paper follows the fundamental tools of film analysis developed by the Yale University to trace the patterns in the visual discourse genre in relation to its overarching theme of convergence during a crisis. To identify them in the documentary and to analyze, the basics such as auteur, diegesis, editing, flashback/flash forward, focus, genres, mis-en-scene, story plot, cinematography, sound and scene sequence are cherry picked where they are thought to be necessary. In the narrative thread, connecting dots to the events in sequence, the documentary unfolds the Director's auteur, which is eventually reflected upon the prejudices made against the underserved communities. The observational approach of its segments, within a framework of narrative network, its cinematography, the intercuts of cheesy covers of inspirational songs and music, the montage of interconnectedness are well orchestrated, and are proportionally related to the themes of politicization of virus, traumatizing flashbacks of the subjects, rallying cry of the *Black Lives Matter*, scapegoating the underprivileged and the misguided nationalism. At its strongest, the documentary reveals the series of events in sequence within visual patterns and builds a narrative thread about the pandemic which further exacerbates the plight of underprivileged communities.

The film opens with New Year Eve 2020 parties in the different parts of the world with the images of massive crowds indoors and out, urban bustle. The breaking news of Covid cases gives a new turn. Soon the tally of the deaths begins here. The movie unfolds Wenhua Lin, a video blogger in Wuhan who volunteers to drive doctors and nurses to hospitals during lockdown. In Tehran, Iran, Mohammed Reza and Sara Khaki comply with the quarantine orders and express their doubts on the Pope on TV, showing their government's weakness to respond to the crisis. Similarly, in London, Syrian refugee Hassan Akkad happens to work at a hospital, cleaning and sanitizing and becomes popular in his social media stories. In Brazil, Renata Alves is a GPS navigator who introduces for the area's first-ever reliable ambulance service. In Miami, Dr. Armen Henderson not only serves at the University of Miami hospital as a part of his job but also helps the homeless and shattered people during the crisis, with showers, medical assistance and facemasks. Likewise, in Lima, Peru, Dr. Rosa Luz Lopez deals with the case of a 15-year-old boy named Aldair, who's intubated and needs a tracheotomy besides series of problems of the health professionals. In Delhi, India, a couple makes their way to an overpopulated hospital to their obstetrician; not

too far away, funeral pyres burn in the streets. At the University of Oxford, Prof. Sarah Gilbert puts on her unflinching efforts to produce the vaccine. And in Geneva, World Health Organization, Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus maintains a low-profile tone as he observes rampant politicization of the virus.

Amidst the tragedy, this documentary, having its harsh realities with the strong journalistic bent, finds some hope within the catastrophe. However, the overarching theme of the film is to inspire unity in the face of pandemic. The documentary- *Convergence: Courage in a Crisis*, despite its narrative sprawl, serves to remind us that individuals can make a difference, even in the face of a global crisis.

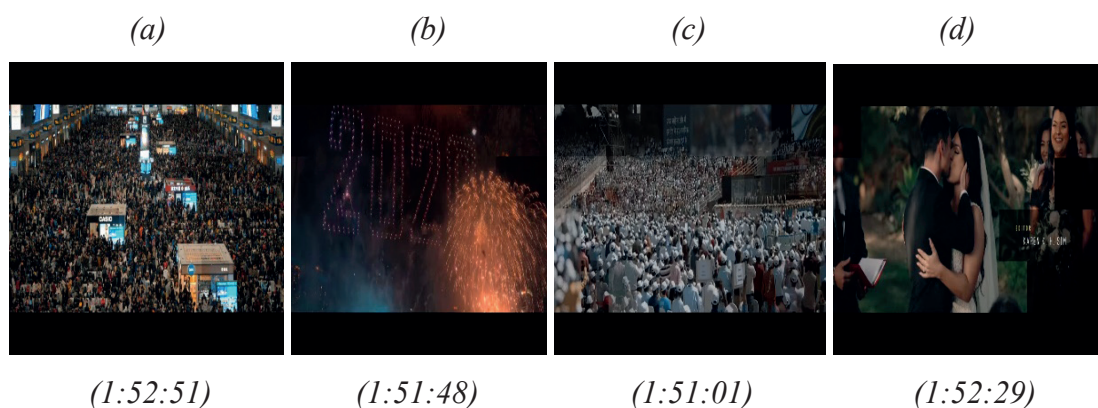
### Images, Shots and Analysis

#### Life before Pandemic

The film establishes its subject of pandemic in the first three minutes (*Convergence: Courage in a Crisis* 1:53:02-1:50:00) visualizing its heroes mostly with close up shots, and then progresses slowly with a narrative thread of each one of their heroic deeds.

#### Figure 1

##### *Normal Life before Pandemic*



**Note:** All the images except the last one in this paper were captured as screenshots from *Einsiedel* (2021) while the documentary was streaming on Netflix. The number codes given below each shot denote the film time in which the events took place. The last image is a picture of a poster of the film downloaded from the Google.

The extreme wide shots in the figure 1(a) and (c), wide shot in figure 1(b) and the medium shot in figure 1(d) all establish a context that how life is going on all around the world. There are prayers, drinks, marriages, graduation celebration, birthday celebration, sports, entertainment etcetera are happening all around the world. Figure (a) and (c) can be analyzed as high angle shot where it shows the subject inferior as to indicate some danger is at yard while figure (b) is a low angle shot which glorifies the New Year, paying deaf ear to the outbreak news of the virus. In figure (d), the subject is captured in a frame to focus on, though the faces are less significant. Viewers can understand that it is a wedding ceremony by their costumes and kisses in the people's presence. Rather than a specific subject, what counts is the surroundings that connect to the main theme. In a couple of minutes, the film involves very many shots to show the world view of different parts of the world. The people are craving for entertainment and watching shows on the auspicious account of the eve-New Year 2020. Very few close-up shots are purposively taken to show the heroes of the documentary with short duration along with the shot change of very few seconds in order to establish the narrative network (*Convergence* 1:50:52-1:50:30). The slow non-diegetic song reflects the colorful thoughts and the rejuvenation of the new year all over the world including people from diverse backgrounds. The cheesy intercuts of the songs (1:36, 55:40 and 5:56) at times refer to the moods and emotions of the people along with crisis. The leitmotif employed in the beginning and at the end, on the image of the globe through the melodious song of voiceovers, shows the order, disorder and again come back of the order in the world.

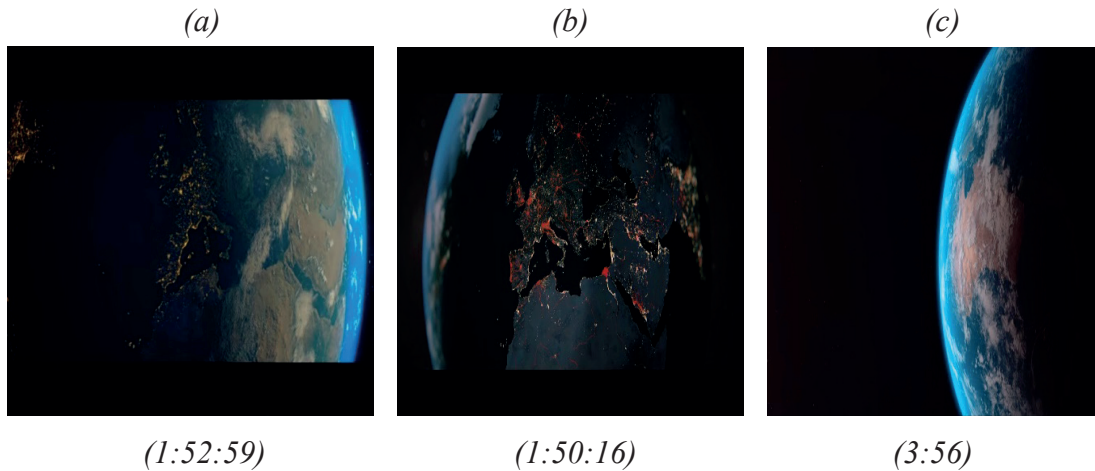
### **Order, Disorder and Order Again**

The extreme close-up shots in Figure 2 done on the globe simply indicates something universal is going to be the subject matter, yet in its underlying pattern suggests how the world grows progressively harder and eventually gets relieved with a hope of life in new normal.

By the time of the second shot on the globe (1:50:16), the world has already begun to feel sick and the deteriorating condition is at stake, as the movement of shadow hovers over it. The red spots, unlike the happy yellow ones in Figure 2 (a), indicate the danger zones of the viral disease while the gray color on the map shows the desolation and dismay on the planet. It suggests the impending danger is at yard. However, in the ending of three minutes, we can see the globe, back into its new

## Figure 2

*Order, Disorder and Order Again*



normal form, devoid of red and gray color, and away from the black space to its left. This technical composition speaks how the world is getting healed after going through the pandemic.

Interestingly, the non-diegetic song is purposively composed that is overlaid from one point of globe, filled with joy and happiness in the new year celebration, to another point where the world becomes sick. The former point deals with the best of the times but the latter, with the worsening condition. The bright key light from the right is lowered and low-key lighting of the fill light is kept intact in Figure (2a) while the lens is administered straight to the globe in the second part only to show the red spots of impending danger. All the same, in the last image, the light is given on the image in between the dark spaces on either side. It suggests a hope to chase the minimal darkness created by the pandemic on the right.

### **Pandemic at Ground Zero**

Although the audience experience the number of shifts in the documentary, for it is shot at ten places, the narrative thread chases each unsung hero and brings to the fore by their stories. This stages the unity and order of the visual discourse technically. The first and ever breaking news comes from Wuhan, China which was the origin of Covid 19.

### Figure 3

*Wuhan, China*

(a)



(1:49:48)

(b)



(1:49:08)

To illustrate, the wide shot in Figure (3a) taken from the drone of the empty Wuhan, China in January gives an inkling to the critical audience that the curfews have already been clamped, the military cordons have been in full force and safety measures of the public health have been unveiled and the Draconian laws, been strictly implemented. Soon the subject of the documentary becomes the sprawling and overwhelming segments of observation which traces the arch of the coronavirus throughout 2020 and is absolutely grueling to watch. Life is filled with terror and horror. The fear of unknown rules over and the world and is left with full of trepidation. The camera then tracks the Chinese vlogger, Wenhua Lin, with the medium shot. Here the subject is speaking and it is important for the viewers what he is saying. The speaker volunteers to ferrying the doctors and nurses to hospitals after officials shut down the public transportations from the ground zero in the early 2020.

### **Coronavirus Outbreak and Trauma**

The official news of Covid 19 outbreak by the WHO (World Health Organization) officials gives a shock to the minds of the huge population. It also confuses people and politicians get carried away with their own narratives and multiple interpretations of the disease. However, it sacks everything with trauma.

Amidst the challenging health crisis, the WHO officials are captured in the Dutch shot where the subject is established in a certain frame of cinematography of slightly tilted mode of either side. In both the pictures we can notice some sort of stress or anxiety in the psychology of the characters. They do not make any eye contact with



## Figure 4

### *Breaking News by WHO*

(a)



(1:51:13)

(b)



(1:50:23)

their audience in the shot because they are sad and have shied away with the efforts that they are all in vain. The overarching point of the documentary is to call everyone to unite under the banner of solidarity. It is not working. The Executive Director of WHO alarms the world to be prepared whatever the context comes next. Followed by the cut away shots again, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the Director General of WHO, announces that the virus is characterized as global pandemic. Thomas Hubl (2020) asserts:

What is perhaps less well understood is how unhealed collective trauma may place similar burdens on the health of human cultures and societies, even placing our planetary home at risk. The symptoms of collective trauma appear to reveal themselves in the condition of collective bodies of all kinds—our communities, schools, organizations, institutions, governments, and environments—revealing where we are injured, fractured, or imbalanced. (p.13)

When the trauma becomes a part of our global community and the planet becomes sick, it has its sickening effects on our cultures and societies as well as collective bodies so as to show that the humans are helpless, wounded and broken down.

### **Inequalities**

After setting up the various story threads during its first half-hour, the film exhibits the inequalities, as the cases increase, all over the world especially in the

underserved communities. Slowly, it grows to be cultural and eventually becomes bio-political. For an instance, there is surveillance footage of Dr. Armen Henderson, a Black physician who is allegedly and racially profiled, and seen handcuffed in front of his house by a police officer.

## Figure 5

### *Escalation of Discrimination*



(21:10)

It is a deliberate wide-shot because it is eyesore for the viewers to watch what really has happened from the close-up shot. The voiceover reads that the cop has spat on his face and pointed his finger so many times with roughs. The objects are foregrounded only to show the subject in a mirage. The cop does not have masks on his face. His acts are abrupt and forceful. The scene exceeds to the extent that his wife and the daughter duck down at the sight. In fact, the doctor was supposed to go to serve people with hospital props-gowns and bundle of masks. The car belongs to the doctor, readied to move to hospital. This is the man who is committed to serving the people who are homeless populace living in encampments beneath an overpass, that the government repeatedly destroyed their camps. He is prepared for the worst in any situation and is dedicated to serving people both in hospitals and outside. Hence, it is a wrong turn of the pandemic escalating with cultural, racial and bio-political issues.



## Black Lives Matter

The film goes off at a tangent when the murder of the George Floyd by a police officer inspires social justice marches worldwide. “Black Lives Matter! I can’t breathe!” become the global slogans.

### Figure 6

#### *Protests after Murder*



The wide shots are taken here in order to intensify the subject of mass protest. The picture on the left seems to be in front of the building of the authority while the image on the right shows the mass protest against the White. People are holding placards for justice almost everywhere and soon it gains the international attention. The demonstrations spread across 140 American cities. Soon it turns out to be an international protest against the condemned act.

When there is crisis, culturally backward group have to undergo traumatic experience and the higher group discriminate the weak in terms of color, race, gender, ethnicity and so on. Cultural trauma comes from the psychological construct of an affect and this very emotion is saved by our own rooted identity. Trauma becomes mediated culturally and gets political to serve the purpose of the large group identity. “If trauma is to serve as a political commentary on violence, it must move beyond personal experience” (Kilby, xii). Trauma goes beyond personal and soon it becomes cultural and bio-political- the White and the Black matter during crisis. *Shared trauma*, defined previously, is the “affective, behavioral, cognitive, spiritual, and multimodal responses that mental health professionals experience as a result of primary and

secondary exposure to the same collective trauma as their clients” (Tosone 2012, p. 625). This can impact on multiple levels—intra-psychic, interpersonal, community, and societal level. Eyerman (2001, p. 4) believes, “...cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion. Therefore, every culture cannot resist anything that comes against the culture only to safeguard their identity in the society.

### Expectations and Frustrations

The crisis not only escalates with the cultural as well as racial issues but also gets intensified with peaceful demonstrations when even the basic needs are not addressed by the government in Brazil. Renata leads the protest here.

**Figure 7**

*Protest in Brazil*

(a)



(27:10)

(b)



(27: 02)

The military cordons are effective while Renata, and people demonstrate in Brazil for the basic needs. In the Paraisopolis favela in Sao Paulo, Brazil, Renata Alves is a GPS navigator for the area’s first-ever reliable ambulance service, the product of private donations; usually an event coordinator. She knows the favela’s labyrinthine tangle of streets and alleyways so well that she decided to help people during the pandemic. However, the government has condemned the people to die and has not even fulfilled their basic needs and safety measures. People face the problem of sanitation,

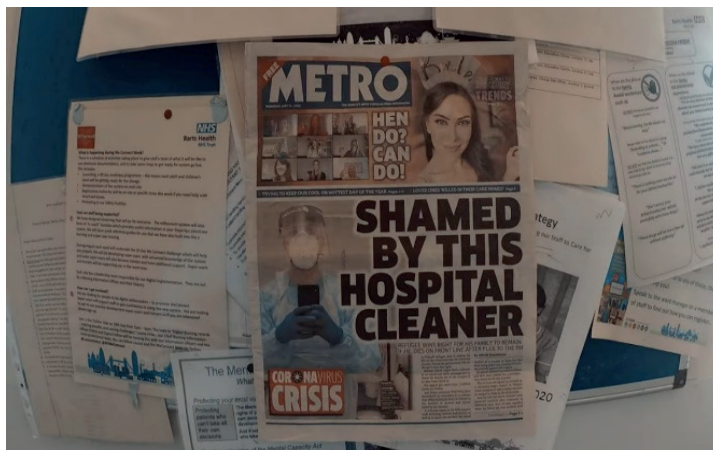
hygiene and drinking water that government is unable to solve. Renata is in hospital dress. She has worn a mask; gloves and she is perhaps taking a picture of the military force. It seems like Renata and her mass are marching towards the district authority. In the frame of medium shot, Renata is highlighted because she is the main activist. In Figure 7(b), we can see the people from different occupations by their lanyards, assembled to protest against the authority. It is a peaceful demonstration, captured in a wide shot.

### **Migrants and the British**

Hassan Akkad, a Syrian refugee in London made the UK government realize that the migrants who work at hospitals at low profile job equally deserve the bereavement scheme through his social site. Finally, the government is obligated to reconsider the scheme for all.

### **Figure 8**

*The Triumph of Hassan Akkad*



(23:09)

The tight shot on the Metro magazine reads the response-SHAMED BY THIS HOSPITAL CLEANER- of Hassan's appeal to the government to reconsider the bereavement scheme including migrants like him. His plea resonates all over the world and the UK government is obligated to change the decision. Hassan vehemently believes that pink collar workers like them are the savoir of the health professionals

and lives of the patient in the hospital because they sterilize everything cleaning and sanitizing at hospital. Although the response is featured in the cover page of the magazine in large case letters, yet Hassan’s identity is predicated by passivation. His image is not given enough light in it. The news on the magazine shows the Corona crisis and its global news in cross cutting shots of the image on the top left. The notice board displays several papers with hospital strategies and safety measures in the crisis of 2020 in London.

### The Climax

The climax of the documentary is when the Professor Gilbert’s team is successful in manufacturing the vaccine at University of Oxford.

### Figure 9

*Interview of Professor Gilbert*

(a)



(20:02)

(b)



(20:12)

In the over-the-shoulder shot Professor Gilbert is being interviewed and scene is shot from the shoulder side of the interviewer. In this case, the subject, Gilbert is foregrounded while the interviewer is not, for she is less important. This shot is taken sometimes with 30° angle to qualify the listener to some extent towards the main subject. The door print tells us that setting is at Oxford University. The fill lights at the low-key level are oriented to the subject from the left to the right while the bright



keys on the right are levelled up to the fill lights. The focus is on Professor Gilbert because she is breaking the news of the manufactured vaccine. The props of the media in Figure 9 (b) and the setting inform us about the important news.

### The Affect

The visceral transformation of affect to the viewers, without narrativization, projected in the perfection of a particular scene by the techniques of cinematography makes the Director, an auteur in filming the documentary. Emotions matter a lot to unfold the global solidarity during the crisis.

### Figure 10

#### *Haptic Visuality*

(a)



(18:28)

(b)



(4:06)

Haptic visuality (Silwal, 2022, p. 1) is “a terminology in a visual text for conveying a sense of visceral touching evoked by the visual image—at the center of which lies the use of gesture. In haptic visuality, the viewer is invited to contemplate the image rather than say or pulled into the images on the screen only to receive the sensations that the images produce. Thus, it evokes human emotions with close engagement of surface details and texture. According to Michael Hübner (2018, p. 199), the visual object and its representation largely depends on the used textual context and the photography and together it can be communicated visually in a combination of techniques. The final close up shot taken on Director General of the WHO, Dr Tedros can be taken as a superb example. In this particular shot, Dr. Tedros claims



the opportunities are born in the crises. He delivers this shortly after the vaccine was successfully tested by the Oxford University team. The moment his tears roll down Figure 10(a) is captured with haptic visual affect to see the silver-line of hope amidst the anarchy created by the pandemic. He is purposively chosen in the documentary not only that he is Director General in the WHO but also that it is a typeface that fits-meaning that his non-verbal gestures of facial expression express the seriousness of the situation. The banner of the WHO in blue, his formal dress and attire say that it is the official setting. He seems to have been relieved as a leader.

The departure from the dark world to the light again evokes the emotions which viscerally transforms the viewers to endure the happiness of the characters via cross cutting technique of editing. The moment the smiles are shown around the globe, it is captured by the viewers and get moved without words. They receive sensations of the positive vibes of the solidarity. The smiles are the symbol of triumph over the crises that the whole human flesh and blood endured. The close-up shots of diverse people taken at different places and different time are edited, and framed in one only to express the unison of the people. Interestingly, everyone is extremely happy except for Dr. Tedros who is hanging on the phone, may be on some serious issue. It suggests his worries are not yet over.

Watching the documentary as such raises the theoretical questions that stretch common responses. Corrigan and White (2018) asserts:

These questions include psychological ones about perception, comprehension, and identification; philosophical ones about the nature of the image and the viewer's understanding of it; and social and historical ones about what meanings and messages are reinforced in and excluded by a culture's films. Far from destroying our pleasure in the movies, studying them increases the ways we can enjoy them thoughtfully (p.8).

Documentary film shapes and interprets factual material with a view to educating and entertaining viewers, be it general or specific, digging out their psychological patterns of their understandings in terms of their identity, politics, socio-historical aspects of life. It also depicts the underlying patterns and reactions of human behavior, especially when crisis hovers around, of one over the other with their intended meanings and interpretations.

## Mis-en-scene

Mis-en-scene refers to the reflection of catch-all for everything placed on the stage or in front of the camera that makes a composite whole of a scene, including people.

### Figure 11

*Mis-en-scene*



(8: 04)

This full body shot allows the audience to relieve themselves towards the end seeing Aldair discharged from the hospital after the intensive care of Dr. Lopez and her team in Peru. Due to Covid-19, the boy nearly took his last breath. This is the very emotional scene between father and son when the father says that the boy's mother has prayed for his wellness and things would get better. He gently kisses on him. However, the boy's response is numb because he cannot speak due to the pipe inserted through the throat for food. His tears speak everything in this sequence. This is a moment when haptic visual affect can be felt by the audience. Cinematically, the ostensible objects are all put in a single frame to bring out the effects.

The mis-en-scene in the above shot contributes to visual discourse by placing everything on the stage for its perfect meaning making process. The setting is at the hospital site. The blocs are visible on both sides. The arrow on the wall shows the way to go in. The zebra cross in the back yard tells us that it remains busy with vehicles normally. The yellow lines mark the parking lanes. There are props such as wheel chair, blanket, PPE dress, dustbins, cannula on the hand, pipe in the throat, masks, gloves and hospital blocs. The boy is in his wheel chair and is being assisted by the medical team. It shows their loving and caring behavior. Perhaps Dr. Lupez is standing to

watch the intimate scene between the father and the son. The father bends down to son to amplify his emotions. A perfect emotional action is captured naturally. The subject is placed from the right to left in the full body shot so that the father can be visible to the lens. All the items captured in the camera are real and no rear projection shot. The bright light on the right is oriented to the characters at the center while left fill light is equalized to the height of the high key lighting. The music is slow and soothing for the emotional expressions. The white color is so relaxing, the yellow stands for happiness and harmony, and the sky-blue color of PPE, for peace.

### Poster Analysis

The poster of the documentary-*Convergence: Courage in a Crisis* unfolds many folds of heroic deeds of the unsung heroes amidst the pandemic. In the poster, they are fore-grounded against the backdrop of the globe which is mostly blue.

**Figure 12**

*The Film Poster*



Unlike the beginning, the globe is in wider blue, meaning that their efforts have triumphed over the miseries and world is beginning to feel well. The silver lining over the blue indicates that the danger is slowly fading away. Because of the disproportionate impact that the pandemic has left on the world, the world is seemingly bulged with crises. The image represents the world view. The erratic edges, yet geometrical cubic shapes stand for the thorns of life that the world has gone through. Hassan, Renata and Henderson at the center stand for they are the change makers of the world who have saved millions of lives. Hassan's outspokenness brings good benefits of migrants who have been excluded from bereavement scheme. Similarly, Henderson is honored and recognized at the end for his selfless deed in the hospital and outside. Renata is a sheer volunteer and therefore she is placed at the center of the image by her grounded look for volunteering further. On top of the image runs the title of the film which is a tell-tale sign of the hope. Over all, the poster qualifies the title with its display quotation- "While COVID-19 exacerbates vulnerabilities across the world, unsung heroes in all levels of society help the tide turn toward a brighter future" is justified in the true sense." The heroes born in the crises transform the world into its brighter side indeed.

Critically viewing, the British documentary- *Convergence: Courage in a Crisis* is full of archived data of the worldwide crisis in 2020 which has beautifully been captured by the craftsmanship- metteurs-en-scene- of the Director, Orlando von Einsiedel. The mis-en-scene, cinematography, montage and the concept of hyperlink narratives for the storyline make it a distinct presentation for viewers, glorifying the common people as heroes. The repetition of /k/ sound in the keywords of the title produces some sort of alliterative music and sets the positive tone of the documentary. Nevertheless, the film does not present any role of the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), while it plays a pivotal role, nor does it talk about the cause and origin of the disease unlike in the movies- *Pandemic (2007)* and *Contagion (2011)*; directed by Armand Mastroianni and Steven Soderbergh respectively. Both the films allow us to consider how ecological imbalance becomes root cause of the spread of the disease and the CDC roles are on the prime focus of the lens in tracing the virus, diagnosing and in giving advice to the government so as to make policies and strategies during the emergency. The positive side of this film is the happy ending after fighting the ordeal by the people around the world in unison. There is no naming and blaming about the origin of the disease to any geography. Donald Trump is trumped for the light

hearted statement he made. He wanted to play politics by post truth without having full knowledge on the pandemic; consequently, more people died in America than any other countries. It can be analyzed as political failure of Trump administration as well. Finally, the birth of baby pronounced as a ray of hope, by the Indian mother, Nupur, in end of the film is everlasting message for all humans to combat the crisis during the emergency.

### **Conclusion**

*Convergence: Courage in a Crisis* has its pattern in filming a documentary. Very like the print, the technical aspects are well staged and made coherent to develop its overall plot. The narrative network is the dominant aspect to connect the dots in a logical way. The shots are predominantly close-up and extreme close-up ones to convey that pandemic is a global phenomenon. However, wide-shots are also emphasized in order to establish the wider context of the globe. The dark shadow of the pandemic that nearly swallows the globe initially turns out to be dispersed by the strength of the global solidarity. The most striking thing in the documentary is the craft of the Director Orlando von Einsiedel to make use of technical craft-matters-en-scene. Every society has heroes but they are sung only in extraordinary times like the global emergence. It has a global message that pandemic is only a wakeup call and we have to be prepared for convergence to combat the viral emergence in the near future. Building resilience to combat emergencies is more of our collective actions that serve the helpless and needy of the global community. Only then can we triumph over the miseries of the pandemic.

### **Declaration**

The author has taken the liberty to fairly utilize the screenshots from the documentary- *Convergence: Courage in a Crisis* in this paper for the scholarly purpose of critical analysis only. To suit this purpose, the researcher screenshot the images from the Netflix live streaming of the film.



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