



'City of Life' and Happy Endings

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‘CITY OF LIFE’ AND HAPPY ENDINGS

Everybody who enjoys watching movies has undoubtedly noticed that happy ending is one of the most standardized and well-known features of filmmaking. The technique has always been widely applied in the field of cinematography. Producers tend to portray a love story of a romantic couple with a high possibility of happy ending, or they may interrelate fates and lives of some characters who are unaware of each other's existence. However, a film cannot exist without conflict, which does not necessarily end happily. The aim includes describing one of the periods of life three characters have experienced and focusing on the importance of *City of Life's* happy ending. Moreover, the paper will discuss an importance of happy ending as a reward for heartrending experience.

In 2009, the *City of Life* by Ali Mostafa premiered at the Dubai International Film Festival. It is a drama which represents complexities of multiculturalism. Dubai, the city where the actions take place, was always stereotypically if compared to Disneyland. However, it is a real city with its real problems, and the movie gives a glimpse of lifespan beneath the glossy appearance, which is often associated with life in this place. Audience makes the acquaintance of a disillusioned Indian cab driver, a former ballet dancer who is temporary living in UAE, and a privileged young male Emirati. As the events of the film develop, lives of the characters collide and intersect (Schulte-Peevers, 2010, p. 42). The *City of Life* illustrates dramatically the consequences that random interactions can have on lives, and the profound effect the actions inevitably have.



The film introduces some particular signs which create the certain meaning of the film: there are expatriates who live in the country, and their conflicts arise among their demographic group, not with other nations and ethnicities (Yunis, 2014, p. 61). Obviously, the main idea is to portray and explore issues and conflicts of the various classes and nationalities by interrelating their destinies.

Cinema serves as a mean of teaching culture and conflict. The intercultural cinematography, in its turn, is a method of focusing on the dynamics between the 'self' and the 'other' (Roy, 2016, p. 7). Nonetheless, sore trials do not have ethnicity or gender; they affect different people who happened to be in the same city and at the same time. Natalia Moldovan, a former ballet dancer and a stewardess falls in love with a wealthy advertiser, and when this woman becomes pregnant, she discovers that her man has an affair. Basu, the counterpart of a famous Bollywood star, is a cab driver who overworks himself in order to help his parents. The life of Basu changes fundamentally on his way to audition. Two friends, Faisal and Khalfan, wealthy and poor, would give their lives for each other. Ultimately, these heroes have the accident, where Khalfan perishes and Basu gets facial scarring. Later, Natalia decides to keep the baby, Faisal marries Khalfan's sister, and Basu gets a role in the theatre.

All the aforementioned confirm the importance of happy endings. Open endings, on the contrary, often leave the audience with vague feelings of missing plot resolution. There are no clues as to the future of the main characters. Moreover, it does not fulfil the viewers' expectations

concerning the upshot and that is why the audience does not feel emotional relief. In this case, on the contrary, the audience sees that the happy ending is a reward for the heartrending experience of protagonists. No-win situations are the way for the main characters to discover and reflect their inner-selves, understand the value, and appreciate everything they have. Besides, it is the way to transform weak points into strong ones and break the impasse. Thus, the conflicts, mirrored in the *City of Life*, definitely demand happy endings in the film: the viewer realizes all significance of true friendship (Faisal and Khalfan), remembers to never surrender even if everything is lost (Basu), and shows how to make vital decision (Natalia Moldovan). It is not clichéd happy ending depicted in cartoons or fictional Hollywood love story films. *City of Life* draws a clear distinction between a land of dreams and the real world as well as encourages struggling for happiness.

In conclusion, this drama represents complexities of multiculturalism showing real people with their actual problems. It is stereotypically considered that Dubai is Disneyland, but the movie presents everyday life that hides behind glossy appearance often associated with life in this city. There are three protagonists in the film: disillusioned Indian cab driver, a former ballet dancer temporary living in UAE, and a privileged young male Emirati, whose lives collide and intersect. Such random interactions can have profound effect and consequences on their lives. The conflicts in the film arise among their demographic group, and not with other nations and ethnicities. The intercultural cinematography helps focusing on the dynamics between the 'self' and the 'other'. Nevertheless, the movie

characters are just different people who appeared in the same city and at the same time. Open endings often leave the audience with ambiguous feelings of missing plot resolution. People have no idea of how the future of the main characters will hold; it does not fulfil the viewers' expectations concerning the outcome, thus they are not emotionally relieved. That is why the *City of Life* reveals great importance of happy endings in the films. The conflicts, mirrored in the *City of Life*, definitely require happy ending in the film: the viewer realizes all significance of real friendship, remembers not to surrender in difficult situations, and learns how to make vital decision.

