CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

The Hypothesis of the present research states that, "The Indian Documentary films are 'Representation' of prevailing Social Conditions, Issues, Perspectives and Socio-cultural Ethos and if they do, then they must be reflecting 'gender perspective' of film maker as well as the subjects. The era of digital revolution that is 1985-2000 has facilitated the filmmakers to choose the medium of documentary to reflect their own perspectives on social issues to produce sociological knowledge". The Hypothesis has suggested three major areas of investigation, [1] Documentaries are reflection of Social-Cultural conditions and Issues of the people. [2] It also reflects Gender Perspective of filmmaker. [3] The era of digital revolution that is 1985-2000 has facilitated filmmakers to choose the medium to reflect their Issues to produce Sociological Knowledge.

The following observations have proved that the above mentioned Hypothesis has been successfully validated.

[1] The present research revealed that the Issue Based Documentaries have opened up on the screen, the huge spectrum of the various issues of the people and their struggles for their human rights and fights for their dignity. They reflected the reality images of adivasis whose fundamental human right to live being treaded, dalits constantly pleaded their right to live with human dignity, mired poverty, hunger, gender discrimination, social and sexual exploitation of women and children, caste discrimination, communal

These documentaries have exposed duality of the established democratic system that apparently refused to accept the existence of the oppression women, dalits, and minority people. They have also showed the neglect and repression faced by several underprivileged groups, who have remained at margins of India’s developmental initiatives. (*Moksha* by Pankaj Butalia, *Skin Deep* by Reena Mohan). These documentaries traversed through variety of subjects; the increasing hegemony of the State through repressive laws, Market driven economy that deprived and displaced the tribals or indigenous people of their traditional livelihood options and Political Polarizations on the basis of caste, religion and geographic locations. (*I Live in Behrampada* by Dutta and *Lesser Humans* by K. Stalin). All the issue based documentary films provide bare evidences of repression of the struggles of people by branding them either as “Naxalites” or “Terrorists” and thus, deprive them of basic amenities and human dignity. (*Tu Zinda Hai* by Shabnam Viramani)

‘The Space’ in mainstream media and other forms of expression was consistently denied to the marginalized sections. The State, Capitalist
oppressive class, caste and patriarchy have suppressed the independent identities and voice of the marginalized communities. (*Stalin K.'s 'Lesser Humans', Simantini Dhuru's 'Narmada Diary'). The process of empowerment has succeeded in their empowerment and gave them the tools of mass media like Community Radio and Community Video making to express their own plea. Out of extreme repression and miserable conditions compelled many people to take video camera in their hand and shoot to provide voice to their own people. (*Bijju Toppo, 'Hamare Gaon Main Hamara Raj', 'Disaster In Success' by farmer women of Pastapur A. P.) Most of the filmmakers belong to higher middle class who got sophisticated education and opportunities nevertheless they are consistently seemed to be making genuine effort to reconcile the larger socio-political agenda of oppression and the process to bring justice to the oppressed through the Visual Representations in their Political Documentaries.

Therefore it can be categorically stated that all the Issue Based Documentary Films examined for the present research are real representations of Marginalized Classes and they are necessarily Political Documentary Films.

[2] The study reveals that the issue based documentary films gave 'Power to the People' by exposing the established system. The films that told the success stories of fights of the people belonging to other corner of the country have generated the positive strength among those who were suffering from similar kind of oppression. The women in documentaries like ‘Tu Zinda Hai’ made by Shabnam Viramani seemed to have challenged men’s role in Public Sphere and Women’s role in private, they have directly
questioned proponents of patriarchal system and oppression implied therein. It has also challenged the norms of sexuality imposed by heterosexual monoculture. (‘Something Like a War’ by Deepa Dhanraj, Skin Deep by Reena Mohan, Shabnam Viramani’s ‘Tu Zinda Hai’, Punkaj Butalia’s ‘Moksha’)

The documentaries that had different priority other than gender issue, seemed to avoid the confronting the gender dynamics while dealing with the issue of displacement, (Narmada Diary) or the issue of democratic rights (Hamare Gaon Mein Hamara Raj). There was problem of Prioritization of issue and questioning the unequal Gender Social Order was usually faced by male filmmaker, although the film ‘Narmada Diary’ was jointly made with female filmmaker. The filmmakers appeared to be facing the dichotomy between depictions of larger political human rights issues and recognizing the role of men and women in public sphere. Many issue based documentaries such as ‘Hamare Gaon Main Hamara Raj’, ‘Buddha Weeps in Jadugoda’, ‘Namada Diary’, indicate high priority to the issues of focus rather than giving consideration to Gender discussion.

The films dealing with other burning issues like ‘Hamare Gaon Main Hamara Raj’, ‘Buddha Weeps in Jadugoda’, where filmmakers have expressed the gender sensitivity to certain extent, yet the configuration of their mass organizations apparently appeared to be male dominated and male perceptions were often given priority. Their general tendency indicated to avoid confrontations on internal Gender and Caste based Dominations. It is generally observed that mass organization tend to avoid profound discussion on subconscious caste based perspectives, sexuality and different dimensions
of man-woman relationships. The nature and structure of the mass movements has been greatly influenced by male perceptions of 'Social Change' in these documentaries, as a result gender representation appears to be scattered and confused.

The struggles of people depicted in films in general reveal the Vocabulary of Male Dominance' in given male domination system as normal and rebel against it, is treated to be subversive. Mainly Female Film makers have consciously voiced these subversive efforts. Exceptions of few Male Filmmakers like Anand Patwardhan, K.Stalin and Pankaj Butalia who demonstrated sharp focus on Gender Sensitive Issues. ('Father Son And Holi War', 'Lesser Human', 'Moksha' (in order) They have also attempted to explore how the development of masculinity and patriarchal mind-set has been structured by oppressive forces for tyrannical control over the weaker sex.

This study contributes to sociological understanding of people's movements that prominently fought key issues of 'Gender', such as reproductive rights of women, pathetic situation of destitute widows, growing 'Masculinity' and 'Phallus-Centric' violent culture promoted by commercial media and so on. This study enriches (a) Sociological Knowledge (b) New Insight on realistic Media Representation of Gender.

[3] The digital revolution in technology of recording visual images was all pervasive phenomenon. It is evident from the film 'Buddha Weeps in Jadugoda' made by Shrirprakash who shot the disturbing images of tribal people affected by the 'radioactivity' of uranium mining in Zarkhad. This
film was made on simple VHS video camera that was initially used for wedding photography.

Many individuals who had never undergone any formal training of documentary filmmaking have contributed valuable Visual Evidence of the people’s struggles for the various socio-political issues. In fact it could be stated that the social and political situation had reached to such a state that a common persons in India were forced to take up video camera to represent own Issues & Injustice and video documentation so that their voice can be heard.

The general overview of ‘Community Video’, a project implemented for the empowerment of marginalized sections of society as defined by United Nations under the monetary help by UNDP, empowered many rural women who are farmers, vegetable venders or community health workers. These women were made familiar with video technology and were asked to make films representing their own burning issues. This effort has been instrumental to create significant data base on various issues of organic and non organic farming, women and health, ecological and environmental issues. These experiments in ‘Participatory Filmmaking’ such as films made by women from Pastapur from Andhra Pradesh, ‘Disaster in Search of Success’ on the issue of adverse effects of Genetically modified seed of BT Cotton, or Sewa from Gujarat, who made films on water shortage in rural area, ‘Invisible Hands’ and ‘Water’, not only revealed the strength of women but also opened up huge reserve of ecological and geological empirical knowledge base that was carried forward to next generations for several years.
Thus, digital revolution during 1985-2000, has provided space to voice the struggles of marginalized people in public sphere, which mainstream media have constantly denied. Therefore it is proved that Video Documentary films made during 1985-2000 have democratized the medium of communication and re-defined the democratic space of ‘Developmental Communication’.

[4] The Video documentation of the people’s Issues has been used as a powerful tool of expression by marginalized people. Also, it has greatly contributed to the Sociological Knowledge by providing Visual Evidence. Many documentaries chosen for present research have proved that the visual documentation of the reality of life has been instrumental in bringing change in governmental policy, as well as in motivated people to work for social change. For example the visual images of Manual Scavenging in Gujarat shown by K. Stalin in his film ‘Lesser Humans’, practically acted as Visual Evidence before National Human Right Commission of India and also during the International Human Rights conference at Durban (S. A.), exposed the Indian Government’s stand of ‘denial of inhuman practice’, ultimately forced them to eradicate the practice of manual scavenging. Another powerful Visual Evidence provided by documentary filmmaker Shriparakash (‘Buddha Weeps in Jadugoda’) about the horrifying effects of ‘Radioactivity’ on tribals that depicted large scale deformities and death by cancer, prompted National Nuclear Power Commission to take action against Uranium Corporation of India. It has also encouraged people to form an International Coalition initiated by Japan to work among disabled women and children affected by radioactivity. The Film ‘Something Like a War’ by
Deepa Dhanraj has also been instrumental to change the governments aggressive policy on promotion of ‘women’s reproductive technology’.

This study has proved that the Indian Issue Based Documentary films have appropriately represented the prevailing Social Conditions, Issues, Perspectives and diverse Socio-cultural Ethos. These documentaries have also reflected ‘gender sensitive approach’ of film maker as well as the subjects. Thus, this study has established the profound link between Aesthetics and Sociology contributing to recent discipline of Visual Sociology.

Watching Issue Based Documentaries for the present research reveals the fact that under every stone at the corner the road, there is one Story waiting to be told. Many of them are ignored by the mainstream media in the scramble for being ‘more important’. Yet, several documentary filmmakers have shown a passionate commitment to the Issues as they expose the urban proclivity, and glib messages. They are the ‘Films with Social Purpose’. The rules are broken, boundaries are transgressed, prejudices are challenged and aggressively they advocate for ‘Change’, they repeat rhyming slogans ‘YES WE CAN’... ‘YES WE CAN’...!