GENDER PERSEPCTIVE EXPRESSED IN ISSUE BASED INDIAN DOCUMENTARY FILMS DURING 1985 TO 2000
A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION

In today's world of Infotainment (Information and Entertainment), Mass Media is playing a vital role in building up social and cultural mindsets. Many social researchers in Western countries had acknowledged the power of mass media and carried out profound study on its mesmerizing effect on the social conscience. In South-East Asia it is only recently that the social scientists have begun analyzing the significant role of Mass Media in structuring the National, Communal, Sectarian and Ethnic personality which is reflected in the outburst of conflicts and violence. (Report on Films South Asia, 1997) These diverse social interactions and upheavals have been recorded in various visual forms of mass media such as print and television news, fiction films, street or proscenium theatre, posters, paintings, sculptures and photographs.

The documentary film has unique power that persuades the audience to become aware and take notice of socio-political discrepancy, poverty, inequality, and unnerving situation around them. The Government machinery utilized the documentary form predominantly to promote the state sponsored 'national development paradigm'. However the new generation committed filmmakers born after independence challenged the propaganda model of development. This disturbing presence of the independent issue based documentary films tended to be inconvenient to politicians, unprofitable to capitalist and uncomfortable to hedonist community, hence it was constantly kept out of mainstream.
Documentary film appeals to the reason and motivates its audience to confront the problematic situations. Being an eye witness to various social situations, Documentary Film acts as a 'Visual Evidence' of Historical World. Thus, Documentary creates Epistemological base and validates the information gathered by Social or Anthropological researchers. Documentary film, simultaneously functions at two distinct levels; Medium and Message. On the one hand, documentary being an artistic medium of expression has been constantly dragged into several debates for its Aesthetic aspects. On the other hand, in Social Anthropology, its basic purpose to 'depict reality' and convey 'social message', was considered as vital 'visual resource' to understand social realities. Therefore, very recently many social anthropologists, who primarily relied upon audio-visual resources to collect historical data and to draw sociological knowledge, for the first time, described this method as 'Visual Sociology' (Becker, Howard, 1994). Thus, the discipline of 'Visual Sociology' has emerged as an important methodological tool in the hands of social researchers. The discourse on Visual Sociology puts forth the tools to examine dialectics of the complex historical and socio-cultural process.

In light of this contemporary discourse on Visual Sociology the present research critically examines the Indian Issue Based Documentary Films as fundamental 'Visual Resource.' The objective of present research is to examine the 'Gender Perspective', of the people in social movements fighting on various issues. The reflection of 'Gender Perspective' may be direct or indirect in the documentary, however this research basically intends to investigate the 'gender sensitivity' of filmmaker as well as his/her subject in the film.
The Indian Issue Based Documentary Films are basically ‘Political’ in nature therefore the ideologies on gender, class, nation or sexuality are woven together in very complex structure of society. The cinematic expression of this complex fabric is inscribed in visual symbols difficult to isolate. Nevertheless, many feminist scholars have constantly worked to ‘decode’ these signifiers of ideologies existing in complex structures of cinematic representation of society. They have used the parameters drawn from various theories of psychoanalysis, sociology, aesthetics and many other faculties of empirical science. The parameters used by feminist theories are useful to analyze cinematic representation of Gender. The present research explores to establish the inherent link between those feminist parameters and documentary theories. I have discussed it in detail in the chapters namely ‘Documentary Form, ‘Visual Evidence: A Sociological Discourse,’ ‘Feminist and Historical Perspective’ in the context of ‘Issue Based Documentary films.’

At International level, tradition of documentary film study has been greatly enriched with sociological point of view. In U.K., pioneers like John Grierson, Paul Rotha, (1930) laid the foundation of Documentary Study; in USSR D’Ziga Vertov, (1920) seriously explored and established the evidential validity of ‘Film Truth.’ Anthropologist Jean Rouch (1956) elevated documentary film to the status of scientific evidence of complex social process of human relations. Eric Barnaouw, (1978) made tireless efforts to analyze and contextualize documentary films with historical process. Bill Nichols, American critic contributed (1991) a lot through his significant research work while exploring ‘documentary representation of reality’. Most importantly,
feminist scholars Diane Waldman and Janet Walker added new dimension of feminist perspective in documentary film studies for the first time in the history.

However, in spite of the international acclaim, documentary film has been always considered as 'Poor Cousin' in India. Despite having glorious tradition of documentary film making, no Indian scholar has ever attempted to analyze Indian documentary films from sociological point of view. The Films Division is being held responsible to push documentary to such status. The Films Division produced peculiar type of ‘Information’, ‘News reel’ and ‘Heritage Ethnographic’ films that aimed only at advocacy. Similarly, the Indian critics and research scholars of documentary study infringed their work to the writing of historical account and largely glorified the state controlled process of documentary film production. They prominently concentrated their work within the area of history of ethnographic diversity, aesthetics of information films that mainly glorified greatness of cultural heritage of India. Therefore I felt the urgent need to take note of the vital record of sociological history in Indian documentary studies.

When I came across the films made by Sukhdev who depicted impact of drought on rural India and heart shattering pictures of Indian poverty, (1973) or a film made by Lokslen Lalwani, titled ‘they call me Chamar’, (1976) that depicted the caste discrimination in feudal system in India and films made by Sukhdev and Tapan Bose, titled ‘The Indian Story’ on Bhagalpur prisoner’s blinding case that exposed oppressive government machinery, had shocked me and provoked me to take serious note of several historical accounts of bitter reality of post 60s Indian society. The connivance of
Indian documentary films as powerful medium Representing Social Issues in Visual Form has been significant starting point of present research.

CHAPTER 1:- SIGNIFICANCE AND OBJECTIVE OF RESEARCH

HYPOTHESIS:-

The Indian Documentary films are ‘Representation’ of prevailing Social Conditions, Issues, Perspectives and Socio-cultural Ethos. 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 present research is carried out to verify the same and document the observations.

SIGNIFICANCE:-

1) Documentary film is historical visual evidence which helps the social researcher to construct the knowledge of sociological importance

2) It has unique power of persuasions which motivates the people to become alert and take note of the issues faced by the society.

3) Documentary film acts as an eye-witness to state repression and later serves as significant evidence in legal as well as social research.

4) Issue based documentary film is used as powerful weapon to protest against established system

5) Analysis of Gender perspective informs the Social researchers and Social Activist whose socio-political perspectives are instrumental to Social Change.
6) This study is first of its kind taking into account the sociological knowledge produced by this visual resource for Sociological discipline.

OBJECTIVES:


[4] To analyze the content of selected documentaries and explore the ‘Gender Perspective’ expressed by filmmaker and subjects.

SELECTION OF PERIOD:-

In this age of ‘Digital Technology’, Information Web is bringing every aspect of human life under its purview. The digitalization has revolutionized all the means of communication such as camera, sound, recording of moving audio-visual images and broadcasting infra-structure. The revolution in communication technology has changed the scenario to such an extent, that the whole world could be brought in captivity of tiny button size digital apparatus. Thus, due to easy accessibility of communication technology during 1985 to 2000, all forms of ‘mass media’ started building modern social and cultural atmosphere. At International level, there is a rich and creative tradition of sociological research that acknowledges the power of Mass Media in changing social and cultural ethos. In South-East Asia it is only recently, that social scientists have begun analyzing the role of mass media in National, Communal, Sectarian, Ethnic conflicts and Violence. The
documentary film is the significant form of mass media; therefore, it has put forth the urgent necessity to analyze its content through sociological point of view.

**METHODODOGY**

In view of above, the visual social research could be carried out by two methods,

[a] ‘Content’ analysis of documentary films through which prevailing social conditions and socio-political perspective could be studied

[b] Analysis of ‘Impact’ on the audience or the Society as a whole.

**I intend to study documentary films by using first method of ‘Content Analysis’,** which itself has very wide scope. The foremost task of ‘content analysis’ method is, to distinguish between ‘Information based’ and ‘Issue based documentary films’. Prominent Indian Issue based documentary films made during 1985-2000 are selected for detail study.

**COLLECTION OF DATA**

The chronological data of Films Division documentary films has been collected from Films Division’s office in Mumbai. Data on Private Sector Indian documentary films made until 1985 was collected from Media Journals, available in XIC (Xavier Institute of Communication) Mumbai Library collection. Data on Indian Issue based documentary films made during 1985 to 2000 was collected from various sources namely National Film Archives, Pune, Media Unit TISS (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai), Abhivyakti Media for Development, Nasik, AVEHI (Audio Visual Centre, Mumbai), and Majlis Cultural Centre, Mumbai. The Data
collected from all these governmental and non-governmental organizations helped me to categorize and prepare my own Catalogue of Post Independence and Issue based documentary films for the present study.

**FILM SELECTION CRITERIA**
First and Foremost criterion of selecting film is the ‘Social Issue’ being prime focus of a documentary film.

1) Visibility of Gender perspective of filmmaker and the subjects expressed directly or indirectly in the film.
2) Period of documentary. The documentary should be made during 1985-2000.
3) The film should be made by Indian filmmaker
4) Accessibility of film to the Indian viewers and researchers. Whether it is accessed by NGOs, people’s movement and government agencies in India.
5) Popularity: - Whether the film is popularly talked about, discussed and debated through articles, workshops and various viewer ships groups.

**CHAPTER 2:- REVIEW OF LITERATURE**
Very little has been written on modern Indian documentary films. Few people like Jag Mohan, S. Krishnaswamy with Eric Barnaouw made early attempts to chronicle the history of the documentary during pre and post independence era. Other efforts include Mohan Bhavnani (1960), Dr. Gopal Datt (1968), Dr. P. V. Pathy (1972), Sanjit Narvekar (1995), and most recently Captain Purush Bawkar (2005).
The discussion on basic theoretical concepts and prime objective of ‘advocacy’ of documentary form was enriched by Prof. John Grierson (1898-1972) a founder of British documentary movement. Grierson had many followers like Paul Rotha, Basil Right, who contributed to the huge reserve of documentary film theory and conceptual paradigms. There are many other film professionals and academicians such as Brian Winston, (‘We Are in Trouble’ 1978), Richard Barsam, (‘Non-fiction Film: Critical History’, 1973), Robert Edmonds, (‘Documentary: An Anthropology on Film,’ 1974), Calvin Pryluck, (‘Ultimately We Are Outsiders’ 1’976), were extremely critical about the claims of ‘objectivity,’ ‘truthfulness’ ‘realism.’


established by Elizabeth Chaplin in her book, ‘Sociology and Visual Representation’ (1994). ‘Approaches to Media’ edited by Oliver Boyd-Barrett and Chris Newbold provides huge knowledge-base to examine all forms of mass media.

‘Feminism and Documentary’ edited by Diane Waldman and Janet Walker has been main resource in the development of feminist perspective for the present research. Griselda Pollock, in her essay included in ‘A Concise Companion to Feminist Theory’, Laura Mulvey’s groundbreaking essay titled “Visual Pleasure in the Narrative Cinema” (1975), focused feminist attention to ‘Masculine Visual Pleasure’, has been essential factor to understand the fascination of mainstream fiction cinema.


**CHAPTER 3:- DOCUMENTARY FORM**

The term ‘Documentary film,’ has been frequently misunderstood with newsreels, instructional films, travelogues and television special reports. However its purpose and meaning has been extended by various
documentary film practitioners over a period of time. Thus, it is inevitable to review various attempts to define documentary films that highlighted its different aspects. This chapter examines the definitions and various approaches to express the social message and debates over the moral responsibility of filmmaker towards his/her subjects and viewers.

The film critics of Film Studies have constantly dragged documentary films into various Aesthetic debates. These debates underlined the uniqueness and distinction of documentary form. However, the scholars reminded us about the moral and ethical responsibilities of filmmakers while discussing the issues of propaganda, advocacy, and various approaches such as reflexive, observational, interactive and participatory goal sharing. I have discussed the issue of ‘Power Imbalance’, ‘Objectivity’ and ‘Veracity’ of documentary text in depth to authenticate scientific evidential status.

CHAPTER 4:- VISUAL EVIDENCE:
A SOCIOLOGICAL DISCOURSE

This chapter is vital part of my research work, as it examines the possibility of documentary form to become ‘visible evidence’ in light of various discourses on ‘Visual Sociology’. It consists of ‘Theory of Representation’ and ‘Depiction’ by using various stylistic devices such as metaphoric, symbolic depiction, ironic and poetic depiction etc. The ‘theory of representation’ and depiction consists of analysis of factors that determine and hold its evidential validity. The factors such as ‘referentiality’ and ‘Indexical Binding’ within the text of film contain specific historical context of ‘time and space’. It also involves important factor of ‘Ideology’ and ‘Construction of Argument’ for the topic of representation.
Many social scientists have built their work around photographic visual representation because visual records created by camera, are considered to be more accurate and provide sound visual evidence of historical process of society and the world around us. During early 20th century one of the masters of documentary films, D’Ziga Vertov had proved (E Barnaouw, 1993) that there are many physical limitations to human vision compared to ‘camera eye’ (kino-eye). Vertov emphasized the greater degree of accuracy and reliability of mechanical device like camera while recording physical actuality. More recently, researchers used visual representation methods to capture, the meanings behind phenomena such as co-operative dairy farms (Howard Becker, 1997) or modern sociologist Lomax and Casey used video documentary films to discuss the relationship between midwives and their clients in maternity hospital wards. (Lomax and Casey 1998).

The method of visual representation has its roots in anthropology, in which scholars such as David Livingstone who wrote the book, ‘Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa’, in 1857, (Chaplin E, 1994) used engraved visual illustrations for the first time to describe the various tribes he had seen in South Africa. Similarly, Robert Flaherty, (1913) known as father of documentary films, (Barnouw E, 1993 S.E.) went on an anthropological excursion, used documentary film as an ‘Visual Evidence’ for the first time in history to substantiate his research findings and information on the life of tribal people (called Eskimo). Subsequently, in recent years, Howard Becker, John Berger, Elizabeth Chaplin, Marcus Bank, H Lomax and N Casy, D. Harper, have contributed alternative theoretical paradigms in the field of Visual
Sociology. C. Stasz, who initiated 'the sociology of visual representation' also defended her stand by citing thirty-one articles which were included in the early volumes of 'American Journal of Sociology' (1896-1916), used photographic illustrations as social evidence. (Stasz, C,1 979).

CHAPTER 5:- FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

In this chapter various feminist discourses on documentary film studies and media studies are discussed. There have been several media studies with regard to women in various countries. The uniform observation noted by them states that a media representation of women has been gender biased. The popular commercial media distorts images of women and advocates gender stereotypes. The traditional roles of men and women are grossly glorified to maintain the status quo. The widely accepted feminist Perspectives are Liberal feminist and Radical feminist perspectives, which predominantly influenced the sociological analysis of Media. They have mainly scrutinized the effects of fictional narrative films on the audience and society.

The liberal feminist often believed that the inequality of women is simply matter of irrational prejudice that can be resolved through rational argument. They believe that equal opportunity is possible within existing capitalist socio-economic system or structure where as Radical feminist argue that the equality can not be achieved without affecting the traditional structure which is hegemonic in itself; hence it has to be criticized and challenged. The discriminatory social attitudes and value systems have been so deep rooted and operate on subconscious level.
Therefore, Radical Feminist criticism of Media and Literature tries to go to the roots of 'Portrayal of women in Media and literature. It goes beyond analysis of 'stereo types in media' and emphasizes on 'rebel women images' who challenge given patriarchal system. However both the perspectives stress the importance of modeling and reinforcement of women’s images in Mass Media.

Media has a two way relationship with social reality. On the one hand media reflects what exists but on the other, it affects social reality, by being selective in what and how it shows, the way it interprets and creates its own reality. It is selective reinforcement of values, attitudes and behavior. The media perpetuates absence or passive presence of women, represents stereotypical images of women as mother or housewives and portrays demeaning images of women. The reflections of social relations in media indicate subordinate status of women that grossly defend the superiority of male in the society. This 'Status of Women' has been rigorously discussed and interpreted in many Feminist Discourses.

This research study investigates social dimension of 'Gender', appearing in relation to various social issues and problems represented by Indian filmmakers in their celluloid re-presentations. The present research discusses the feminist discourses on Phallus centric Male Film Gaze, Feminist’s argument on women’s films creating counter history and politics of sexual difference. Thus the new feminist theoretical perspectives and tradition of writing counter history have acknowledged the experiences of women and marginalized people reflected in alternative/committed Documentary Films. The parameters set on this paradigm make foundation of this research.
CHAPTER 6: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE
PRE & POST INDEPENDENCE ERA

‘History of Indian Documentary films’ evidently reveals that British Rule laid the foundation of the Indian Documentary film movement, during colonial period. Therefore, Indian documentary films, produced during pre-independence and post independence era by government were clearly based on given British paradigms. The British paradigms of documentary film making practice were based on the theory of John Grierson, a founder of world documentary filmmaking movement. He had played pivotal role in the developmental communication in Indian documentary film culture.

The Grierson’s theory of documentary film was framed against the backdrop of World War I, economic recession which tried to build up national pride. His theory of documentary film was conceived against a dual context of national and international instability and the growth of social-democratic and corporate ideology. Ian Aitken, a research scholar, points out that, as a consequence, the Grierson’s theory of documentary film implicitly endorses a hierarchical practice of social ideology production, in which social communication is passed down from bureaucratic elite, via documentary film, to the public.

The Griersonian legacy was extensively followed by Indian documentary production institutions such as Films Division, mainly owned by government and a few sponsored by private corporate institutions for 50 to 60 years to promote state ideology. The didactic nature of Film Division documentary invoked adverse reaction of Indian Public. Films division’s
documentary films, by and large tended to stick to non controversial subjects such as Art, Culture & Ethnography. Few film-makers have attempted to experiment with the forms within a given structure. They have experimented with various forms such as (a) Autobiographical & Biographical Films (b) Lyrical presentation of Art and Culture. (c) ‘Cinema Verite’ or the depiction of social realty with observational style (d) Compilation film. (e) Archival film. In this section I am trying to present an overview of various forms dealt by private and public sector.

Many of independent documentary films were poor in terms of budget, film craft, and modes of distribution, but they have extensively experimented in terms of ‘Forms & Content. However, they have questioned and raised the critique of dominant socio political hegemony.

CHAPTER 7: ISSUE BASED DOCUMENTARY FILMS (1985-2000)
In India after 1977, during the ‘post-emergency’ period, various socio-political movements emerged on the canvass of Indian social history. The Post emergency Indian Society was passing through tremendous turmoil, which gave rise to various socio-political movements like civil liberties, women's rights groups, labor and environmental organizations. The activists of these social movements came on the streets to fight for their rights. They started using ‘The Public Sphere’ to promote their ideologies. They have used various Visual Forms of Arts such as graphical publicity Posters, Placards, Cartoons, Flash cards, handy Information Booklets with Pictures and Photographs, Slogans, Songs, and most prominently Street Theatre and Documentary films.
Most of the Visual techniques used by social movements were slightly cheaper and simpler to handle, compared to the Documentary films. After 1985, the use of Video technology made its way into the arena of Mass Media, which brought the significant change in Publicity Campaigns of both, Social movements and Government agencies. Thus with the advent of easy accessible audio visual technology, most of the social movements started using Video Documentary as an effective method to promote their point of views. After 1985 these Social movements slowly got converted into nationally and internationally funded NGOs and have started producing Issue based Documentaries.

The issue based documentary films have potential to motivate people and have forceful power of persuasion compared to print and radio. The people who make documentary film based on ‘Issues of the masses’, produce different kind of genre by experimenting with form and content. Unlike other media, this kind of film has the ability to enforce change and power to conscientize and provoke people to take action.

For many organizations and individuals involved in spheres of social-political awareness and actions, video has served an important function of recording their endeavors and achievements over the period, with its directness and intimacy. It has provided the space and appropriated a medium for those whose voices -whether inspirationally collective or painstakingly individual. (Poromita Vorha, 1998) I have discussed the role of NGOs, CENDIT from Delhi, SEWA from Ahmedabad, JANA DARSHAN from Jharkhand, two other women’s collectives from Bangalore and Pastapur [Andhra Pradesh]. They worked to empower people in mass
movements using visual techniques, video trainings workshops. The products of these have 'Voiced the Voiceless.'

Marginally literate activists have attempted to represent their burning issues and their struggles against the state and capitalist repression. They have also represented issues of water pollution caused by developmental projects, land rights, women's empowerment while organizing micro-credit groups.

CHAPTER 8:- CONTENT ANALYSIS

Based on the discussion of theories and perspectives in previous chapters, I have set following Parameters to analyze the content of selected documentary films

[1] Frame of Reference
[2] The Ideological Standpoint or Perspective of Filmmaker
[4] Qualitative mapping of Gender
[5] Time and Space inhabited by the subjects
[7] Enhancement devices such as music, sound, symbols and metaphors. Effect as a Spectator and Researcher.

I have selected ten prominent documentary films depicting burning social issues, to investigate the nature of 'Gender Perspective' expressed directly or indirectly.

(1) Something Like a War by Deepa Dhanraj depicts the issue of 'Forcible Implementation of family Planning Program.' While representing this issue
filmmaker exposes the ‘Oppressive approach’ of State towards women and invasion on the ‘Reproductive Rights of Women in Patriarchal system.

(2) Father Son and Holy War by Anand Patwardhan depicts ‘The Construction of Masculinity and its need to prowess ultimately violent and intolerant communal mindset of people. (3) Lesser Human by K Stalin exposes the issue of Caste Discrimination practiced in form of manual scavenging in Gujarat despite the existence of several preventive laws. (4) Narmada Diary by Simantini Dhuru and Anand Patwardhan depicts the issue of displacement caused by developmental projects. It basically intends to expose the mechanical enforcement of developmental planning which deprives the Fundamental Rights to Livelihood of Tribal People caused by displacements. (5) I Live in Beharampada by Madhushri Dutta depicts the ‘Plight of the people from minority’ and ‘Effects of Communal Violence’ on working class living in Mumbai slums. (6) Tu Zinda Hai by Shabnam Viramani depicts the issue of ‘Women’s Oppression in Patriarchal System’ and ‘Stories of Uprising and their Empowerment.’ (7) Budhha Weeps in Jadugoda’ depicts the issue of Hazardous effects of radioactive material, Uranium Mining. It sensitively explores the horrifying effects of radioactivity on women and children. At the same time, filmmaker exposes the relentless, insensitive attitude of government and capitalist system towards the tribal treating them as animals and not the human beings.

(8) Hamar Gaon Mein Hamar Raj by Bijju Toppo depicts the women’s struggle and fight for the democratic rights to participate in Panchayat Raj.

(9) Skin Deep by Reena Mohan depicts the construction of ‘Gender Identity’ and its relation with socio cultural concepts of beauty, sexual taboos and so on. (10) Moksha by Punkaj Butalia deals with the issue of ‘Homeless
Widows,’ living in Varanasi. It subtly exposes the oppression of widows by customary restrictions imposed by patriarchal system.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

Despite many hurdles of modern world, we can see the rise of strong and powerful political content represented in ‘Reflexive’ style of documentary filmmaking. This reflexive mode involves formal strategies that question the traditional notion of ‘Objective portrayal of social reality’. The modern style of documentary genre of camera, ‘fly over the wall’ or ‘Cinema verite’ where the camera records whatever appears in frame without much mediation of filmmaker the subject itself narrates itself.

In this new form of socio-political documentary ‘Personal becomes Political’ in which filmmakers perception of self in relation to totality and society becomes the subject of the narrative structure of the film which creates intimate dialogue with the audience which they have never seen or experienced. Thus it has reduced the gap between the audience and a filmmaker.

The study reveals that the issue based documentary films by exposing the established system, have generated the strength in viewers to challenge patriarchal system and oppression implied therein. It has also challenged the norms of sexuality imposed by heterosexual monoculture.

The struggles of people depicted in films in general reveal the 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 Male Filmmakers noted are Anand Patwardhan, K.Stalin and Pankaj Butalia who demonstrated sharp gender sensitivity. They have also attempted to explore the development of masculine mind set structured for tyrannical control over the weaker sex.

The filmmakers have widely used various visual textual strategies comprising of interviews and personal testimonies, framing of suggestive images in symbolic or metaphoric codification of gender roles. They have also aptly adapted the various technical strategies such as camera movements, editing techniques or meaningful use of enhancement devices such as music, lights and sound. The synthesis of all these strategies weaves together the complete structure that ultimately sends across the intended social message.

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.
MY OWN CONTRIBUTION*

[1] Internationally many authors have separately contributed to the disciplines of ‘Film Studies’, ‘Visual Sociology’, and ‘Feminist Film Criticism’. With the exception of Diane Waldman and Janet Walker (2005, USA) nobody else has focused on the ‘Documentary Films Studies with Feminist Perspective.’ In India also there has been no comprehensive attempt to study ‘Gender Perspective’ in Indian documentary films. In this context this research is unique of its kind.

[2] In India, the documentary study has been confined into framework of ethnographic representation which basically intended to glorify Indian heritage. The domain of Issue based documentaries produced by independent filmmakers outside government network, basically challenged the established system and remained neglected. I am contributing to this area through the present research.

[3] The discipline of ‘Visual Sociology is completely ignored by Indian Film Critics. They have done prominently Fiction Film Study only in direction of Aesthetic Criticism. While considering Documentary as a potentially propaganda medium they ignored the ‘Sociological and Anthropological Importance’ of documentary
form. Thus present research is contributing to the new area of Visual Sociology.

[4] This study contributes to sociological understanding of people’s movements that prominently fought key issues of ‘Gender’, such as reproductive rights of women, 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. The Feminist Film Criticism confined itself within critique of ‘Fictional narratives’

[5] The imposition of ‘Emergency’ in 1975, forced the production of ‘Committed documentary films’ and digital and satellite media revolution (1985 to 2000) democratized the documentary film medium. As a result ‘Participatory Filmmaking’ or ‘Shared Goal Film making’ opened up fresh avenues for illiterate oppressed people to use documentary film medium as a ‘Protest Weapon’. These observations of my study are unique outcome and contribution.

[6] Linking of Gender Perspectives in Documentary Form and Theoretical Perspective on Visual Sociology is my own unique contribution.

*Vide University of Mumbai Ordinance No. 0771 for PhD degree.*
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