CHAPTER 5

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

While exploring Gender Perspective of the filmmaker as well as the subjects, I am basically referring to ‘gender sensitive approach’ towards every thing that is depicted in documentary film. ‘Gender’ is being referred here in a broader sense. ‘Gender’ is a concept rather than the term that refers to the identification of role played by ‘either sex.’ It refers to the role assumed or played by an individual within various social structures, interactions and relationships. Most of the time, Gender relations are not relations between equals because being structured in relationship of ‘dominance,’ they create hierarchy. In order to understand how ‘gender’ relations affect family, economic and social relations; it is important to analyze the social structures of power and hierarchy. Subordination of women is consequence of power structures within society therefore while studying films, gender role has to be investigated in text rather than assumed. Gender relations are manifested through various forms of cultural expressions that largely depend upon signification of various cross sections of social structures based on religion, class, caste, race and demographic spaces. Therefore, major part of the discussion in present research mainly refers to conventional social set up of filmmaker and subjects which are constructed during the social process, defines the Gender sensitivity reflected in documentary films. This research is trying to decode gender perspective fabricated in visual images of documentary films.
There is an outstanding report presented by a committee chaired by P.C. Joshi of Working Group on Software development for Doordarshan, which was set up in 1982 to evaluate Public service broadcasting; the committee noted very important observations about status of women depicted in all the digital mass media, especially Television. It observed that 'middle class ideologies of women's roles as wives and mother provide the underlying basis for most of the Doordarshan programs. In a country where 36 percent of the agricultural workforce is female, television programs continued to project middle class house hold women who are predominantly portrayed as non-producers and play limited role outside the home. Women in television programs basically seem to be performing decorative function and marginally contributing to national growth and development in general. Joshi committee report recommended that the television producers while portraying women must take note of all facets of their lives as workers and significant contributors to family survival and the national economy. The general guiding principles laid down by Joshi committee, in their report seem to be relevant and applicable to all the forms of mass communications. The report suggested that every television program should integrate women from all the sectors of national life so that development process will automatically achieve equality for them. In the present day globalization process and in the given plural nature of Indian culture, women play diverse roles in development process of a nation. However, these vital observations about the reality sketched by Joshi committee are neither fully acknowledged nor communicated by mass media. Although these observations and guidelines were laid down for television programming; they seem to be equally applicable to medium of Fiction and Non-fiction Films.
Joshi committee report was not a sole example discussing ‘Gender Representation’ in media but at the turn of decade after international women’s year in 1975, geared up many debates and reports on status of women in various walks of life. It has challenged the stereo typical depiction of women in all the forms of mass media including fiction and non-fiction films. The status of ‘representation of women in media’ has been well documented in the report on ‘Status of Women in Media’, published in 1975 by United Nations Commission on Women. It noted that in all its efforts to promote the advancement of women, it had encountered a serious obstacle in the deep rooted attitudes of men and women which tended to perpetuate the status quo. The commission also observed that those attitudes were due to cultural patterns which to great extent, determined thoughts and feelings about women and men. These in turn were being disseminated on a vast scale as a result of technical advances in mass communication media. Therefore UN report has marked few guidelines for ‘Representation of Women in Media.’

Nevertheless, in case of all non-fiction or ‘Information Programs,’ it was largely noted that the guidelines on ‘Representation of Women,’ were marginally implemented by merely adding a ‘Woman Component’ to all the media works. The increasing number of Cookery shows, Health, Fitness, Beauty programs and women oriented career guidance programs reinforced traditional gender stereotypes instead of challenging patriarchal value system that largely determined ‘Gender Roles.’ In fact, by merely adding a ‘woman dimension’ to any program will not bring fundamental change in fair understanding about Non Hierarchical Human Relations but a sensitive
gender perspective which is political in characteristics should be applied to all communication programs.

In case of Fiction and Non-fiction Films medium, situation is not much different. More than twenty-five years have passed after publication of Joshi committee report and a Charter published by United Nations Commission on Women; the basic approach remains the same, except some overt changes in cosmetic values brought by globalization. It is evident through most of the informative television news channels programs, that news makers have constantly made fun of illiterate women as ‘Rubber Stamp Politicians’ who emerged as political leaders as result of 30% reservation policy in local governance. It results in reinforcing new stereotype role specifications for women by projecting single dimension of their reality. This approach to role modeling is exemplified by projecting police commissioner Kiran Bedi and astronaut Kalpana Chawla as ideal, able and competent women and Rabri Devi or Golma Devi as illiterate Rubber Stamp Politicians who are always subject to criticism.

Similarly, if we look at Films Division’s documentary films, which primarily intended developmental communication, we can evidently notice that many documentaries made on the topic of ‘Women & Family Welfare,’ typical social message was didactically added to documentary films. It will not be surprising to note that several films made by Films Division on various social topics predominantly focused and targeted female audience and administered them overdose of ‘how to become wiser’ on issues of ‘family planning’, ‘women literacy,’ ‘female infanticide’ and so on. A social message in Hindi constantly prompted women that “Do Bachhon Mein
Antar Rakhna Essi Mein Apki Samzdaari Hain” as if women are responsible for population growth. The basic assumption underlined by Films Division’s documentaries was that illiteracy of women is prime cause of the population growth hence ‘Poor Women’ (as characters represented in the films were inevitably of Muslim and Dalit women) are responsible for anarchy and cultural regression in India. The films division’s old films such as ‘mera munna’ and ‘ka kha ga ma’ clearly represent the patriarchal concept of ‘gender’ that directs its message to women as target audience in process of developmental communication.

The slogan that claimed “Personal Is Political” was the new paradigm asserted by radical feminist movement during 80s, who challenged the dominant patriarchal ideology and its divisive values of public sphere and private sphere. Many feminist emerged as independent filmmakers to express their alternative ideology, who constantly exposed dominant patriarchal concepts of ‘Women and Development,’ ‘Women and Literacy’, ‘Women and Family Welfare,’ and so on. Deepa Dhanraj, a documentary film maker and academician, who made explosive documentary on family planning ‘Something like a War,’ exposes very notion of developmental communication in her documentary. Deepa Dhanraj observes in her article ‘Critical focus’ on Media (1998), that various attempts to integrate women into development process have largely failed. The broader meaning of the term ‘development’ in real sense is, ‘a kind of planned process of improvement in various aspects of people’s lives and simultaneous development in economic and civil welfare of their life. If development is seen in its broader sense of the socio-economic transformation, then the notion that ‘women need to be integrated into development process’ is
clearly false. Whenever efforts to increase life options for women and subordinated groups are done the process is resisted by those men and women who feel threatened or feel more secured by maintaining status quo. Therefore all attempts to transform gender relations have a political character and have to be analyzed in terms of politically unequal categories. ‘Politics is not simply about elections, political parties or voting. It is about contests for power, mechanisms of control and battles over policy;’ notes Deepa Dhanraj.

Media has a two way relationship with social reality. On the one hand media holds mirror to reality but on the other, it affects social reality by being selective in what and how it shows and the way it interprets and re-creates its own reality. It is selective reinforcement of values, attitudes and behavior. Thus by perpetuating absence or passive presence of women or by representing stereotypical images of women as mother or housewives or by portraying objects of sexual gratification, leads to devalue woman’s body and their status as respected human being. Such social relations indicate the hierarchy and subordinate status of women automatically defend the superiority of male in the society. This ‘Status of Women’ in patriarchal system has been rigorously discussed and interpreted in many Feminist Discourses. While discussing ‘representation of women in media’ most of the feminist scholars have raised issues of ‘Male Gaze’ and ‘Objectification of women.’ Therefore it is important to take note of prominent feminist discourses discussing gender relations in context of documentary films.
Various Feminist Discourses

There have been several Media and Communication Studies with regard to women in various countries however two very broad approaches to Feminist studies that cover large area of film and communication studies as well as socio-cultural disciplines are Liberal, Radical Feminist discourses on women & media studies. The Liberal feminists do not address the psychological origins of sexual difference. The Liberal feminist approach assumes that rational mental development is the highest human ideal and that the state should act to assure equal opportunities for all. 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 power structure which is hegemonic in itself; hence it has to be criticized and challenged. Radical feminist also believe that the sexual difference between man and woman, the discriminatory social attitudes and value systems have been so deep rooted that they systematically construct the gender roles. These socially constructed conventions operate on subconscious level which very often reflects in media. 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 emphasize upon alternatives in the form of images of ‘rebellious women’ who challenge given patriarchal system. However both the perspectives emphasize the importance of modeling and reinforcement of women’s images in Mass Media.
Both, Liberal and Radical Feminist studies prominently use two methods to analyze gender roles in media and communication fields; first a content analysis and second impact analysis. There has been lot of research carried out by feminist scholars who discussed the impact on women and children, of portrayal of women in stereotypical gender roles and traditional images of women in fictional narratives. The method of Impact analysis uses various tools such as ‘audience surveys’, psycho analytical monitoring methods or process of emotional gratification, the process of socialization and cultivation of specific culture and so on. It prominently studies area of impact on children, women and family relations. It also studies consequences of agenda setting efforts by spearheads of society. The content analysis method on the other hand concentrates on Images of Gender stereotypes in fictional narratives. It also looks forward for research inputs from psychoanalytical, sociological cultural feminist studies to substantiate its research findings. However, both feminist approaches have noted the uniform observation that representation of women in media has been gender biased. The popular commercial media by and large held sexist attitudes and value systems which distorts images of women and advocate gender stereotypes. The traditional roles of men and women are grossly glorified to keep the status quo.

Feminist approach to documentary intends to go beyond feminist film critics semiotic and psychoanalysis of gender ‘stereo type’ portrayed in fictional narratives and draws heavily from feminist cultural and sociological studies. The feminist approach to documentary being empirical in nature informed by feminist sociological discourses has great deal to offer to culturally
focused communication studies. Many areas of study such as women’s cultural experience, their reception of cultural messages and products, cultural images of gender and the potential existence of separate and gendered cultural spheres, have received tremendous inputs from feminist ideologies on ‘culture studies.’ The fields, communication and sociology, have always focused their critical attention on how the social and cultural values are constructed which influence the understanding of gender relations. The feminist enquiry into construction of gender roles ask following questions related to socio-cultural environment while analyzing gender representation in mass media especially fiction and non-fiction films.

1. How, why and which specific socio-cultural values, teachings about gender consciousness are inscribed in social symbols which ultimately reflects in film?

2. How do we use these film texts as tools to socialize and structure our new generation into our cultural value systems?

3. How the text of gender consciousness and conventional socio-cultural set up is resonated through visual images, films, cultural artifacts, symbols and other social cultural manifestations?

4. Do our values simply uphold and reinforce an inherently oppressive class and gender structures in society or do they engage in constructive critical dialogue which possibly may lead to harmonious life?

The terrain of documentary films being socio-cultural representation automatically makes space for ‘plurality’ of expressions by varied social cultural communities and allows co-existence of diverse point of views. The
principle motive of documentary film being ‘public service’, it has to contain the information that will help the development of citizens’ abilities so that they may be aware of their democratic rights and will be in a better position to defend them. However, feminist enquiry probes further into the text of documentary films and investigates how the patriarchal traditions provide basis for hierarchical gender relations and looks for sources, inscription and evidence of resistance of those who are interested in changing the patriarchal value system. It is also important to analyze the text for critical appropriation of those who rebel against the patriarchal system which will stand for alternative gender role modeling against dominant system. However, the process of signification of patriarchal symbols got another momentum in Radical feminist’s discourses on semiotics and psychoanalysis.

(a) The Film Gaze

During late 70’s, the female spectators began accepting the Liberal feminist’s analysis of cinema on inequality within gender representations. But at a theoretical level the perspective on ‘equality’ was soon replaced with French post structural feminist way of thinking. The emphasis was given on ‘sexual difference’ than ‘equality’ between the sexes. The semiotics and psychoanalysis have provided new dimension to the feminist film theory. Feminist film critics have started introducing new concepts through Psychoanalytical feminist perspective. They extensively discussed the concepts such as ‘subjectivity’, ‘desire’, and ‘visual pleasure’ from psychoanalytical feminist perspective. Feminist started to examine the crucial role of film as ‘ideological apparatus’ in oppression of women that
signified women through the perspective of male by using various manipulating techniques. Feminist discourses extensively analyzed the symbolization of 'male fantasy' of woman's image that offered spectator alternative gratification of 'Pleasure.' These patriarchal visual manifestations are manufactured through highly manipulative visual technologies such as camera, lights; make up, plastic surgery on women's body to make them sexually attractive and so on.

The radical feminist perspective on semiotics examined how sexual difference coded through images in a film, produces meanings. The signification of woman in classical cinema is visible in form of 'visually coded social conventions.' 'The signifier woman only represents its ideological meaning defined by men. (Anneke Smelik, 1985), A woman signified as 'object' in relation to men. In fact women are negatively signified as 'non-men.' The Psychoanalytical feminist perspective described this by using the term "Phallocentric Order." The "phallocentric order" is identified with the system premised upon symbol of 'phallus' that is masculine hence the other sex is signified as 'non-man' who lack phallus or seem to be castrated therefore they considered them as weaker sex. (Mulvev, 1975/1989)

According to Berger4 (1972) "Men look at women and women watch themselves being looked at, has specific effects that are not the reflection of a given difference between men and women." Looking contributes to the way in which the hierarchy of gender is fabricated and maintained. The concept of 'being feminine' is socially constructed in relation to repeated experience of being subjects of 'being look at.' Women learn the fact by its
repetition of all forms of visual representations. The symbolic codification of woman’s visual representation is evident through the images of ‘Barbie doll’ or various advertisements of cosmetic products. This concept of production of ‘visual pleasure’ was elaborated further by Laura Mulvey. Mulvey, in her most acclaimed ground breaking article ‘Visual Pleasure in the Narrative cinema’ (1975/1989) points out

“The first blow against the monolithic accumulation of traditional film conventions was to free the look of the camera into its materiality of time and space and look of audience into dialectics and passionate detachment. There is no doubt that this destroys the satisfaction, pleasure and privilege of the ‘invisible guest,’ and highlights the way film has depended on voyeuristic active/passive mechanisms. Women whose image has continually been stolen and used for this end, cannot view the decline of traditional film form with anything much more than sentimental regret”

Mulvey extensively talked about the destruction of ‘visual pleasure’ which should be used as weapon to reject preoccupied obsession of the patriarchal society. Mulvey’s essay is primarily an argument for the use of psychoanalysis to understand the “phallocentric” fascination of fiction cinema. Mulvey argued that by producing alternative experimental avant-grade cinema we must start reacting specifically against these preoccupied obsessions and assumptions formed by patriarchal society. The fascination of fiction cinema has to do with what Freud called as ‘scopophilia,’ and ‘the desire to look at and being looked at.’ The traditional cinema stimulates the desire to look by constructing structures of voyeurism and narcissism in the
images of the film. Narcissistic Pleasure can be understood with concept of identification with mirror image in childhood. Lacan, an early psychoanalyst explained it through the concept of identification process in a child. A child forms his/her ego by identifying with the mirror image. Lacan, has focused on how the acquisition of language and the child’s entry into the ‘symbolic being,’ involves the organization of sexuality around the fact of ‘being and not being the phallus’. It teaches him/her the movement from the world of difference outlined above and to that of sexual difference. (Clair Johnston, 1975) Similarly, a spectator derives pleasure from identification with perfect image of the male film hero. This complex structure of cinematic ways of looking is usually referred by using the term ‘The Gaze’ which necessarily implies ‘male gaze.’

However, these structures of identification, voyeurism, and fetishism seem to be less applicable to the form of documentary film. Many discourses of second wave feminist film studies or radical feminist critics mainly focused its attention on Hollywood fiction films and neglected documentary form except few women film makers who experimented with film medium to create ‘Counter Cinema’ to oppose ‘Male Gaze’ in films. The genre of ‘Counter Cinema’ also emphatically countered the early critique of realism in documentary film. The feminist such as Claire Johnston (1973) claimed that ‘Women’s Cinema is basically a Counter Cinema.’ This position has also challenged the position taken by feminist films studies in relation to aesthetics of film. Johnston argument appears to be more relevant to documentary films studies.
(b) **Women’s Counter Cinema: A Realist Debate**

The Feminist Film Studies in 70’s was largely interested in analysis of aesthetic aspects especially of fictional narratives. There was overall lack of attention of feminists critics to documentary form excluding few attempts to make documentary films as alternative argument to patriarchal fictional narratives. During post 70’s, many women took up documentary in order to create alternative to oppose the ‘Male Gaze’ in established by commercial cinema. The interest in documentary form further got boosted up due to availability of light weight video camera and other film making equipments. Dora Kaplan, a feminist film critic described this phenomenon by using words such as “the documentary which allowed reality to happen on the screen.” “Capturing aspects of women’s lives,” “allowing reality to happen” and so on.

However, the mainstream feminist film critics discarded those attempts and the upsurge in feminist documentary film making as “Post structuralism” genre or “Counter Cinema.” They have taken their aesthetics from television and ‘cinema verite’ techniques which justified mainly non-mediated film structure. These discourses continued to question mainstream film criticism, the issues of ‘realism and ethics’ in documentary as a form. This critique of ‘realism’ and ‘ethical issues’ involved in documentaries relationship with material world was challenged by the feminist scholars such as Clair Johnston. In fact these feminist discourses emphasized the necessity of the documentary form ‘to be constructed’ and ‘mediated.’ Johnston argued that women’s cinema is not neutral record of reality; it is by default a highly mediated medium. She notes,
“Clearly, if we accept that cinema involves the production of signs, the idea of non-intervention is pure mystification... Women’s cinema cannot afford such idealism; the truth of our oppression cannot be ‘captured’ on celluloid with the “innocence” of camera; it has to be constructed or manufactured. New meanings have to be created by disrupting the fabric of the male bourgeois cinema within the text of the film.”

Clair Johnston was concerned about the effects of non-interventionist strategies on the spectator. She warned about the ‘dangers of non-mediated films which promotes ‘passive subjectivity’ at the expense of analysis.’ According to her it is not enough to discuss the oppression of women within the text of film but language of the film and depiction of reality must also be interrogated. Therefore, feminist approach to documentary requires a specific mode of analysis which will deconstruct the mainstream aesthetics and political codes of patriarchal culture. In this sense, Laura Mulvey’s “Destruction of Pleasure as Radical Weapon” could be considered as an important tool for feminist analysis of documentary.

The aesthetic and political ideology of dominant films cannot be countered by abstract concepts of realism using ‘cinema verite’ and ‘direct cinema’ techniques. Abstract analytical tools are inadequate to interpret the ‘representation of brutal actuality.’ In this process there is possibility of loosing educational, social message coming across the film. Moreover, the danger in using such abstract techniques of ‘realism’ in documentary is that
it ignores the need to emotionally identify with the people suffering oppression.

(c) **Politics of difference**

Similarly the issues of ‘image ethics’ raised by Calvin Pryluck, Brian Winston and many other post modernist* film critics within mainstream cinema, were also countered by feminist film critics. They have prominently discussed hegemonic structure of didactic documentaries and ‘documentaries with direct social message.’ The feminist theory has by necessity grappled with these issues of identities and power sharing. In fact feminist were forced to acknowledge the difference and limitations in response to autonomous movements of working class, peasant dalit women and women of various ethnographic and sexual identities. The new feminist movement has developed the politics of solidarity; coalition that has been built upon genuine recognition of this difference. The self reflexive documentary of women and films made with ‘shared goal motives’ are gradually increasing.

In fact, the voices of difference expressed in documentary film from the margins, has potential to mount ‘counter histories’ over mainstream perception of social history. The testimonies of women and men from oppressed classes who carry on varied identities resonate differently when they are brought onto the forefront through the documentary form. The new feminist theoretical as well as historian tradition have started acknowledging this suppressed information, based on experiences of marginalized people. Michel King and Judith Newton, contribute to this task of re-writing the
history. Michel King called it “aesthetics of equal-opportunity” and Judith Newton puts it in words as “changing history from margin.” Both authors are engaged in historiography mediations to retrieve the evidence from margins of history and mount it in mainstream historical order.

The new generation of Indian documentary film makers having higher middle class backgrounds but having sensibility to understand the complex fabric of Indian society, have started addressing these issues of difference. The easy accessibility of digital video camera has empowered the people from margin to represent their issues on their own through documentary films. The technology has overcome ‘Time and Space’ and has brought significance to every common individual’s life. Vegetable vendor women from Ahmadabad who were given training to handle video camera started making documentary films on their issues. Many peasant and farm worker women from Pastapur village, (Andhra Pradesh) made ground breaking documentary films on havoc played by genetically engineered BT Cotton seeds. Young women from Uttar Pradesh and Zarkhand states were taught journalistic skills of ‘on location reportage’ and empowered to operate community radio and video camera operating skills. The people from oppressed class, particularly women have started expressing themselves and pioneered the ‘Era of self-Representation’ or ‘Participatory Documentation of their own Issues.’ Thus, the process of writing own History of the people’s Issues and Struggles have started production of video news magazines local issues and they were broadcasted on cable news channels. This process of empowerment of oppressed and underprivileged people has received support from UNDP project to inform the literate world about their issues.
The process accommodating and empowering self representation has also
grounded up the process of Reflexivity and Subjectivity. The transgression of
oppressed communities like Women Children and Proletariat Class and
Castes from Personal sphere to Public sphere gradually emerged as
‘Alternative Films or Women’s Counter Cinema’ that aimed to write
‘counter History. This phenomenon further gave rise to ‘New subjectivities’
within terrain of feminist documentary films Therefore it is very important
to understand the Reflexivity and New Subjectivities in Films made with
Feminist Perspective

(d) Reflexivity, Subjectivity and Creating Counter History

The Reflexive approach was extensively used by feminist filmmakers while
they were in the process of re-contextualizing the world around them. However, these feminist attempts as reflected in their works of art, seemed
to be purely individualistic or merely domestic experience. Feminist attempted to share personal experiences and tried to relate them in context of
a political collectivity of feminist movements. Best example is Vietnamese
documentary maker Trinh T Minh-h’ s film ‘Surname Viet: Given Name
Nam (1989), (See MIFF 2000 brochure). The film attempts to use ‘Self-
Reflexive’ mode, detailed personal journey, i.e., Trinh’s participation in
revolutionary movements during pre-war period against imperialist forces to
post revolution Vietnam. ‘This theoretically formal, complex work delves
into the themes of dislocation and exile, and critiques traditional society and
life since the war. The text of the film is brought to the viewer through folk
poetry, printed text, and the experiences of North and South Vietnamese
women as well as those living in the USA.' (MIFF 2000 brochure on this film)

The filmmaker at the end reflects that Vietnamese revolution has not led to an improvement in the lives of Vietnamese women. It is also an example of ‘bi-polar strategy’ of reflexive mode that calls attention of viewer from her ‘personal experiences’ and memoirs in her life and gradually leads the viewer to broader ‘other side’ of socio-political collective conscience.

The reflexive approach, used by feminist has provided another dimension that categorically claimed that “Personal Is Political.” This new paradigm has re-conceptualized individual ‘subjectivity’ into ‘Collective Political conscience.’ Thus the realm of feminist discourse to documentary has widened and altered the entire socio-political discourse based on ideology of ‘Realism.’ It has also contributed to ‘realist debate’ generated by ethnographic documentary filmmakers by extending the concept of ‘The Other’ to ‘Gendered Other.’

Women’s movement in 1970s has given prime importance to consciousness raising activism. The movement forced everybody to define and redefine their experiences and extensively elaborated the strategy for making inroads in the ‘Public Sphere.’ In India the (1975-80) violence against women in general, domestic violence in particular were points of difference and challenged the established notions of ‘private’ and ‘public’ sphere. The making of self-reflexive documentary film, was one of the powerful tool to express this new conscience of feminist movement.

Another reason for emergence of ‘Self-Reflexive’ documentary filmmaking was because in documentary film and other creative fields, ‘sentimentality’
was ridiculed as bourgeois prerogative. (Paula Rabinowitz, ed.) Diane Waldman and Janet Walker, (1999) Expression of ‘sentimentality’ was considered to be ‘private affair’ and its expression in public sphere was considered as indecent. The feminist women’s public expression threatened the social order itself. Feminist literary historians like Nancy Armstrong, Cathy Davidson, and Jane Tompkins, argued (Diane Waldman & Janet Walker 1999) that ‘within the culture of middle-class sensibilities, women were to be the repositories of feelings.’ However, the new form of ‘gendered subjectivity’ that was developed within bourgeois culture had demanded ‘women’s sentimentality’ to establish the modernity in subjects. As a result the work of art that was produced appeared drenched in emotions.

In the domain of documentary film and video the scattered framework through which the Social field came to be organized were increasingly determined by the disparate cultural identities of the makers. The documenting stance that had previously been valorized as informed but objective was now being replaced by a more personal perspective in which the maker’s stake and commitment to the subject matter were fore-grounded.

The issues that concerned and mattered most to Indian feminist and scholars and feminist activists working in mix groups consisting of male and female comrades were basically related to interpersonal communications or democratic functioning of team work, Tu Zinda Hai, Shabnam Viramani, 1998) openly accessible structures of decision making; shared responsibility for the domestic and family, suppressed issues of sexualities or sexual orientations (gay or lesbian) and so on. All these issues severely affecting lives women activists in mass movements have received scant attention from
dogmatic left male stall-wards. The lack of pragmatism in Indian left male dominated progressive movements forced Indian feminist movement to the other extreme who took more radical stance on the ‘Issues of Differences’ based on Race, Cast, Sexuality, Ethnic and Religious diversity. Movements of Non-Brahmin rural women, women with various identities of Christen, Muslim and Buddhist feminist movements started asserting the difference to the elite westernized feminist movements. The Reflexive expressions of their groundbreaking experiences of oppression have emerged in forms of Autobiographies of dalit women’s *Naja goes to school* on Shantabai Kamble) or Autobiographical documentaries of Muslim women, (Sabina Gadokh’s film *The Gulmohar house*, single women’s issues *Parenting Alone*, Moumita Daftardar, lesbian issues *Manjuben Truck Driver*, Dastur Sherna) and many more. These intensified movements based on identity politics forced the erosion of coalition, a retreat from meaningful social intervention. The old generation critics have argued loudly and persuasively for the efficacy of collective-mass struggles. Thus the new subjectivities and experimental documentaries were subjected to criticism.

Stanly Aronowitz has suggested that the current emphasis on multiple and fluid identities and the critique of “essentialist” identity underpinning for social collectivities is entirely consistent with Newtonian physics. He explains –

“The sociological theory, according to which individuals are crucially form by fixed cultural system containing universal values that become internalized through the multiplicity of interactions between the person and his/her external environment, now comes under radical revision. We may now regard the individual as process constituted by
its multiple and specific relations, not only to the institutions of socialization such as family, school and law but also to significant other, all of whom are in motions, that is, are constantly changing.”

Thus, it is inevitable that since live in the age of intensified shifting identities, the documentation of this cultural phenomenon either in visual form or any other form of expression is going to take shape of politicization of subjectivities.

(e) **Feminist Sentimental Contracts: A Bourgeois concept**

In modern times the Marxist radical middle class intellectuals have romanticized the image of ‘industrial worker as the authentic vessel of revolution inherently projected as ‘masculine stoned fore-arms’. In contrast to that, the middle class, urban, intellectual female journalist’s reportage of strikes in coal mines, rubber and steel factories, and people’s struggles for human rights were often denounced as “Sentimental trips into workers homes”, or “Melodramatic portrayal of middle class feminine ‘thrill-seeking’ voyeurs.” The feminist journalist or filmmaker’s explorations, their dichotomy between identities and class confusions as well as their gender sensitive vivid portrayal of gender hierarchies were largely dismissed as “Bourgeois sentimentality”. (Paula Robinowitz, 1996) FD. Feminist’s work was always considered as “too much investment in one side of the battle too much details and fetishtic portrayal of the victims of capitalism. Paula Robinowitz obseves –
“Because its strength is that it opens the way for tears reportage treads a \fine political line, locating sentiment in the house of labor.”

…Within the culture of middle class sensibilities women were to be the repositories of feelings. The new form of gendered subjectivity developing within bourgeois culture requires the ‘cultural (research) work of women’s sentimentality to establish the modern subject, a being drenched in emotions and encased in privacy during the age of revolution. After that, sentiment became private because its public expression threatened social order.”

According to Raymond Williams the incursion of the rational state into zones previously cordoned off as civil society. Emotions publicly displayed by citizens of democracy led to the frightening spectacle of mobs and mass in the streets. Bourgeois culture thus contained sentimentality within women’s domain.

The above mentioned argument could be easily observed through everyday experience of television viewing. When we watch our sports starts cry in victory, or sob in defeat; (replicated in Hindi film Lagaan) we cry with them at home, our living rooms linked mysteriously through the flowing tears. The transgression of felling beyond class-caste culture, gender divide, the national pride heightened by these sporting community is linked through the idea of one-world consisting of uniform national sentiments of pride. Similarly the working class struggles or movements of oppressed people are linked together as ‘national class’ fighting against oppressive capitalist state predominantly rely on sentimental appeal and bourgeois on the other hand cordons off the sentiments or put them to its own use. Thus, the rhetoric of
sentimentality becomes so crucial to modern national class formations that it widely circulates through all the Issue based documentary films most prominently made by feminist filmmakers.

Thus, it could be summarized that feminist scholars have discussed various thoughts drawn from different disciplines such as psychoanalysis, especially the perception of Lacan and Freudian thought about sexuality and sexual differences; a sociological analysis of patriarchal relations and aesthetic criticism of all visual arts. They have tried to create counter history, alternative cinema and pursued ‘politics of difference’ through all the visual arts. They have discussed various concepts of power imbalance between ‘gender other’ and various modes of expression like reflexivity, subjectivity, and passivity of women in their art. Feminist scholars attempted to analyze in depth, the Visual Vocabulary of Dominance, Symbolization and Signification process of gender identity. The overview of these feminist perspectives helped the present research to formulate parameters to evaluate ‘Gender Perspective’ expressed in documentary films.

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