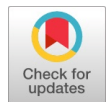


Community Documentary: Move Towards Digital Inclusion

Manaswinee Mahanta



Abstract: This research paper looks at the dynamics of digital divide and the potential of community documentaries to challenge them. Researcher critically reviewed the literatures on community media initiatives and result of such media exposures. This research work considers the Community video works as Cinéma Pur and put forward some theoretical understanding to define the term documentary from the basic idea of visual documentation, with an attempt to establish any kind of community visual documentation as documentary work and thus provides a theoretical reference to such documentation as Community Documentary, nullifying the much used alternative expression of Community Video. Influences of such Community Documentaries and their making process on the women are further elaborated from gender perspective. Researcher looks at the potential of these documentary making procedures taken up for, of and by the community women, with and without technical supports from outside agencies, as a step forward to bridge the digital divide. Ensuring the access and skill to use the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), making process of community documentaries enabled the community women to participate and get benefited from growing knowledge and information society. All the three aspects of digital inequalities, better known as digital divides: 1. Economic divide or infrastructural inequality 2. Usability divide or inequality in digital literacy 3. Empowerment divide or participation inequality, are stressed while examining whether community documentaries can serve as a type of digital inclusion. Theoretical base of the model is being scrutinized by three case studies taken up in the Indian state of Gujarat and Andhra Pradesh: 1. 'Gender Sensitive Governance through ICT' by Mahila Swaraj Manch, Shihore-a project base for 'Making Women's Voice and Votes Count' –a multi-site project funded by UN Women, 2. 'Ek Poltun Bheek Nu' by the community women of Narmadapura, Baroda and 3. 'When Women Unites' by the community women of Nellore.

Keywords: About four key words or phrases in alphabetical order, separated by commas.

I. INTRODUCTION

Introduction of some light, less expensive equipments and the intellectual influence from the Italian Neo Realists and left Nouvelle Vague of France, few classic documentation efforts took place throughout 1950-60s in Europe and USA. Digital revolution has globally enhanced this independent process of documentation with a greater number of films and filmmakers, who can easily access this creative platform today, which is now more user-friendly and less expensive than before. They may tell the stories of their decisions and

reach out to their audiences in a more democratic way, as seen by the viral web distribution of their documentation. This digital up-gradation also influences the working set up of community media as a whole. This article looks at the potentials of this up-gradation that upholds a possible move towards digital inclusion including the social aspect of change in social psyche.

Looking at the films alliance with society, French scholar Annie Goldmann in "Cinema et Societe modern" (1971) [10] observed that films are the link between a certain vision of the world and the characteristics of modern society. Films are always associated to society and any kind of filmic representation always reflects the society. A film, originated from the term 'Photographic film' of camera, technically refers to a series of moving or still images. Also known as 'cinema' or 'movie', films are categorized in forms, styles and genres and there are arguments in support of such classifications.

This study particularly focuses on documentaries, one of the most significant, pioneering and experimented practices of cinema. The documentary's dictionary connotation i.e. "a film or television or radio programme that gives facts and information about a subject" (Cambridge, 2020) exactly refers to the Lumiere experiences of cinema. Lumiere brother's first Cinematographe motion picture system in 1895, ended up being not only the first motion picture experiment; but also happened to be the first visual documentation.

Thereafter, in the early years of cinema, documentary experiments took place in various cinema pockets. Fictions entered the scene quite late. Lumiere brother's 'Arrival of Train at Ciotat Station' (1895), 'Workers Leaving Lumiere Factory' (1895) or Dziga Vertov's Russian avant-garde practice 'The Man With A Movie Camera' (1929), these were some pioneering documentary experiments. While Lumiere experiments followed no visual grammar, camera movement or even single bit of editing, Vertov's reflexive attempt is not only considered to be one of the finest city documentation till date; but also had set some benchmark for film editing.

Robert Flaherty with his ethnographic moves set some other benchmarks in the field of visual documentation. Even after the introduction of fictions, avantgardist attempts of documentary continue to exist. Documentaries' relation with society is more significant and direct. Looking at human relationship with objects, living and lifeless, they exist in multiple layers of visual interactions, deeply and artistically.

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Paco de Onis and Pamela Yates 's observation from *Reflections on Getting Real: Debunking Five Myths That Divide Us*, can best define the relation and purpose of documentaries as well as their makers with society, "We give equal weight to being artists as well as human rights defenders. We know that as we get better and better as artists, we create wider audiences with far greater impact...Our canvas is global; our palette, the human condition." (Yates and Onis, 2015) Dennis De Nitto Classified documentaries of Gierson into three categories based on their social position, i) Social Protest documentaries, ii) Social Criticism Documentaries, iii) Social Description Documentaries. This classification largely embraces all documentaries and their relation with society. This three layer classification establishes that documentaries not only present social reality; but also bring about changes, positive or negative, in social psyche and behaviour. Documentaries always stand on reality. Although going through some stylization, each documentary, whether political propaganda or ethnographic detail, represents the social reality.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A. Challenging existence of the Divide in ICT Use

In many Third World nations, projects such as 'E-Choupal', 'Rural market e-hub', 'ICT for development', or other device and form of E-Governance is challenged by lack of accessibility and therefore existence of usability as well as empowerment divides, alienating a large chunk of population who misses out on the potential of internet. It is the biggest challenge faced by the developing countries of Asia, South America and Africa, showing their interest on using Information Communication Technologies for development purpose. Even in the developed, economically advanced countries of Europe and North America one can feel the existence of Economic or Accessibility divide relatively less, yet technology at times remains so intricate that for many users and potential users, usability divide creates a strong obstruction in the full utilization of internet's potential. Digital divide includes all technological difficulties and usability hindrances associated to new media platforms, technologies and tools associated with those platforms. These technologies changes so often that even those who have accessibility to them also can hardly attain their full benefit as most of these services are very difficult for the users to figure out. Additionally, lack of e-literacy caused by the lack of technological know-how, lower literacy skills also increases difficulty for the accomplishment of e-governance endeavours in developing countries as most of sites, even the ones facilitated by the governments and their agencies, with the illiterate, rural population as their target audience, are written in a not so-easily comprehend way and usually follow a language, universally, which the audience they are targeting is not at home with and considers as foreign, i.e. English. In a report by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) this was mentioned that "Illiteracy further hinders women's and girls' ability to access online services. About 83% of women worldwide are literate, compared to 90% of men (UNESCO, 2017), and illiterate women only

appear to be using online platform services, such as Skype and YouTube, that are more familiar to them or are easier to access and use." (OECD, 2018) [13] Even in cases, when these two challenges are addressed, not everybody makes full utilization of these technologies and platforms. Such sort of participation inequality results in empowerment divide. It has been noted that, during the course of the Internet's development, around 90% of users do not participate, 9% contribute sometimes, and a small percentage of 1% is responsible for the majority of contributions. (Mahanta & Rowmura, 2016) [11] This, at large, is an upshot of the accessibility divide, with users unable to make use of the technologies because of the usability hitches. ICT interfaces can work as empowering platforms leading their users to some beneficial social concurrence, manage and control trade & business and thus administrate finance; but they also can act as an alienating atmosphere for people who are yet to comprehend the usability of these platforms. With many developing countries adopting ICT in development activities and the emergence of concepts like Communication for Development, the existence of a virtual elite class can more be felt, among the users of internet and other ICT interfaces. This section of elites fails to recognize the virtual alienation of the less-skilled users, who are left out of many technological and therefore social developments due to accessibility and empowerment divide. Apart from accessibility divide or the technological dynamics, divide of empowerment also has a socio-political concern with the presence of gender bias within divide notion. The lack of gender balance in the use of ITC can also be witnessed in the apparently developed and liberal societies of west, when it definitely possesses a serious concern for the traditional patriarchal social set up of underdeveloped South American, African, along with Asian nations. Referring the Ugandan attempt to check the lack of balance on ITC use from gender perspective, in 2002, at the conference 'A Safari into the Cross-Cultural World of Women's Knowledge Exchange', Jovia Musubika said "The women wanted to confront a climate in which communication for development had been reduced to technological advancement in sectors dominated by elite men." (Musubika, 2002) Accepting the undeniable power of connectivity and communication, the UN even considers the use of ICT a basic human right. Despite immense significance bestowed by UN and steps taken by government-non government bodies, When Nielsen's worldwide survey is taken into consideration; it is possible to notice the presence of a gender bias in the working of the empowerment divide even among the comparably wealthy urban population. "Globally more men gravitate toward tech-savvy mobile phone attributes like operating system (48% men vs. 41% women), battery life (48% vs. 44%), screen size (38% vs. 34%) and processor speed (41% vs. 31%) when shopping for a new device." (Nielsen, 2014) In contrast to the enormous development potential that the internet possesses, according to a research commissioned by Intel and conducted in collaboration with the U.S.



The presence of a gender difference within the realm of digital divide has been highlighted by the State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues, UN Women, and World Pulse, among other organisations. The research states that women have about 25% less access to the internet than males on a worldwide scale, according to the findings. In Sub-Saharan Africa, this figure can reach up to 40 %. In a Techbridge survey report taken in the Oakland city of America, on girls using technology, published in Huffington Post it has been observed that "unfortunately, the tech workforce here does not reflect this richness of talent" (Cherniss, 2015) [5]. Rapid industrialization and economic growth may challenge Economic divide; but empowerment divide and usability will take much longer to cease.

B. Address the Inequality

Taking in consideration, the socio-technological paradigm of digital divide, governmental as well as non-governmental endeavours have been instigated at national and international level to challenge the aspects associated. Such moves to address the digital inequality are the moves towards digital inclusion. Jane Seale [14], in her research brief '*Digital Inclusion*' describe the digital inclusion, by summing up the definitions given by diverse scholars as, "...digital inclusion happens when all members of society are able to access the affordances offered by technology use." (Seale & Dutton, 2012) [2][3]

Digital inclusion includes every single effort put forth to confront digital divide. At large, digital inclusion covers a few inter-related ideas:

- Access to ICT platforms and tools by challenging economic, therefore accessibility divides [1].
- Enable every user to comprehend the use of these platforms by challenging technological divide or the usability divide [15][16].
- Empower every user and potential ones to take control over ICT to attain every functional benefit of these platforms.
- Purging of Empowerment divide to address the participation inequality based on social biases and stereotypes.

Andrew Skuse [17], Emma Baulch, Kirsty Martin, Jo Tacchi, Joann Fildes, have highlighted the techno-socio dynamics of empowerment divide in the UNESCO publication *Poverty and Digital Inclusion: Preliminary Findings of Finding a Voice Project*. According to the findings of an investigation on fifteen local community media and ICT programmes implemented in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Nepal, and India, that creative engagement with ICT initiatives carry forward some positive social changes among the marginalised communities of these countries and thus contributed to their development. Introduction of these initiatives, however, need to correlate with the established social networks and cultural contexts of the communities. Recognising the significance of socio-cultural dynamics to achieve digital inclusion Van Dijk (2005) [6][7] observes how socio-cultural aspects add to the successful engagement of ICTs in a community. Consideration of these socio-cultural aspects, social assets and social biases like gender, caste and class etc. will also address the working of these assets and biases within the notion of digital divide [8][9]. Community media platforms other community oriented initiatives make an interesting entry here with some successful working model of inclusion witnessed in the

Asian and African countries of India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Uganda, Mali, Limpopo, South Africa etc.

III. COMMUNITY MEDIA AS A METHOD TO ENCOUNTER

A. Eliminating the Divide of Empowerment

Functioning as an unconventional option to public broadcasting as well as to highly industrialized corporate media organisations, community media backs a socio-economic agenda, strengthening its vision, focusing on issues contextualised to the specific community and thus it facilitates debates and discussions within the community. These media organisations create public spheres, free from corporate hegemony and owned as well run by the community. They can be any form and type of media formed, owned and controlled by a community. In this case, the community might be either geographically based or based on shared identity or interest. These small scale media projects aim at bringing diverse views, visions and perspectives set in in the social psyche of the community, into their discussions and broadcasts. Frequently referred as Grass root media, community media focuses on creating and broadcasting contents by the community, for local interest and thus helps in making the debates & discussions narrower and precise. "UNESCO recognizes that the presence of community media is a sign of media pluralism, diversity of content, and the representation of a society's different groups and interests. Community media encourages open dialogue, local transparency and a voice to the voiceless." (UNESCO, 2017) Analysing the bilateral relation between community media and the civil society, in the publication *Community Media: A Good Practice Handbook* of UN, Steve Buckley observes, "The emergence of community media is often associated with wider political change particular the deepening of democracy and the strengthening of civil society." (Buckley, 2011) [4] Buckley has evaluated the community radio boom in Africa following the economic set back by the end of cold war and credited the social mobilization as an agent for democratisation, carrying a suitable political environment with a more pluralistic and democratic media landscape by demolishing the structural status quo of urban elites [18]. Mali and South Africa played a pioneering role in bringing about this change. Community broadcasting has opened up in Mali post to the revolution of 1991. More than a hundred small rural community radio broadcasters are active in Mali today, according to the UN Development Programme. In South Africa, community radio is being used as a vehicle for empowerment among the indigenous rural population, who has been now excluded from all forms of media. Its origins may be traced back to community radio stations in Bolivia's tin mining towns, educational radio stations run by the Colombian Catholic Church, and non-commercial FM radio stations in the USA, all of which began operating in the 1940s. America has been flourished with educational radio stations over the last few decades.



In Canada, where community media starts with the glorious legacy of community video projects, country's community radio activities also date back to 1906 with the amateur radio broadcasters. Despite having a strong cultural heritage of traditional platforms like folk theatres; in most of the Asian, African and South American countries where community media initiatives have flourished in recent time, community radio projects have taken the centre stage as the pre-dominant form of community media. Quoting IBID, Jovia Musubika in *Community media and the empowerment of rural women in Uganda: a study of Mama Fm Radio* has said, "A number of papers presented during that conference revealed how African women were - carefully scrutinising patriarchal media institutions, challenging the widely-disseminated stereotypes that degrade women, and developing new strategies for circulating transformative and progressive knowledge." (Musubika, 2008) [12]

Observing community radio ventures running in the developing nations of Asia, precisely in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal, UN report has suggested that such community oriented media initiatives do not only assure the accessibility to ICT and confront the usability dynamics of digital divide; but also ensure empowerment by eradicating gender disparity as most of these radio stations are run and owned by the women of communities. Endeavours like *Radio Nari Awaj* of Nepal, *Kutch Mahila Vikas Samiti* and *Deccan Development Society* in India enabled the marginalised community women to address all aspects of divide by the technical trainings they are provided with both at governmental and non-governmental level, which helps in challenging the usability and empowerment divides at large. At these stations, community women arrange their programmes, focusing on education where literacy levels are low. As most of these are operated by Dalit women, the programme line-ups also have their focus on socio-economic empowerment and caste issues. The whole process of program planning, recording, editing, line-up and broadcasting, enables such community women to get equipped with technical knowledge and thus empowers them to make their own choices. Community radio projects have been playing a significant role in the development scenario of Bangladesh, much like India and Nepal. In the compilation, *Our Voice Our Power*, by Fahmida Akhtar along with Protiva Banerjee recorded 12 cases of digital inclusion including social aspects, where community radio has played a game changing role. Jannat, station manager in the Community radio station of Satkhira, Bangladesh acknowledges community media's role in challenging socio-technical aspects of divide from the contexts of women and other suppressed classes, when she mentions, "My values and ideology has been changed completely while working on field under the fellowship for deprived and neglected populace, the condition of women and children and their rights, problems and prospects. While working with sex workers and transsexuals, I realized how much our society has advanced." (Jannat, Satkhira)

Because of the power of the media, marginalised voices are made heard in patriarchal social environments where, otherwise, their views would be disregarded and finally silenced. Because of their newly acquired technological prowess and identity as a social organiser, they gained a well-respected position in their own cultures.

Community media projects are designed and expected to serve as a vital tool to achieve Millennium Development Goals. UNESCO handbook 'Community Radio in India: A Guide for Civil Society' has referred Community Radio, the widest used Community media, "as an important tool for the UN system-wide approach to C4D in accelerating progress towards Millennium Development Goals." Access to ICT is not an end itself; however is a means to attain the objective of digital inclusion including the social facets, assuring in general development. Community media helps out the remotest communities to get included in the knowledge-economy. Challenging every aspects of digital divide, Community media initiatives not only include and facilitate the techno-economic paradigm of digital inclusion; but also the socio-cultural aspects associated to the notion. These platforms initiate dialogues at grass root levels. Such dialogues help the community to find and reinforce their own vision and voice contextually to the socio-political, economic, cultural and environmental issues of the concerned community.

B. Community Documentary: A New Approach

In recent years, Community radio programmes are often referred to as "Community media initiatives" and are used interchangeably with them, yet potential of other practices like traditional theatre and community video can't be ignored totally. Indeed, in the state of Canada, legacy of community media traced its legacy back to the community video projects of 1960s with National Film Board of Canada's community venture *Challenge for Change*, where documentary films series were made focusing on socio-economic issues locally. In 1960s, with Sony introducing their relatively small and user-friendly Porta-Pak cameras, revolutionary changes initiated in outdoor shooting scenario. One can observe many documentaries of that time to use 'Fly on the Wall' and 'Fly in the Soup' filming approaches. In the year 1968, while American legendary filmmaker Frederick Wiseman peeped inside the Philadelphia's North East High School in 'High School' with this Direct cinema filming technique; Canadian filmmakers Bonny Klein and Dorothy Henautrely used the same for dealing with local community issues. A few St. Jacques Citizens' Committee members received video production instruction from Klein and Henautrely last year. This community team went on to capture footages of the Montreal slums and also have taken interviews of their inhabitants. Later these videos were used for public discussions on development issues. Montreal's St. Jacques Citizen Committee of Canada, with its participatory video effort, established the groundwork for community video experiments, which have grown rapidly in the previous two decades with the advent of digital recording tools. Community video initiatives, despite the widespread debates and discussions globally, are yet to get the status of real cinema or documentary. These projects often lack in continuity and other visual grammars of cinema.



The equal status and collective decision of the collaborators also may harm the artistic aspects of these videos. Most of the time, collective action and decision of the collaborators lead to the absence of an aesthetic coherence caused by directional incompetency. All these reasons, may contribute to the inadequacy of the community videos to be called as 'Documentaries' or 'Cinema Pur'. As a significant category of cinema, documentary is given the credit for initiating the journey of cinema. As we have discussed earlier, a documentary can be any sort of visual documentation of reality, often get scripted post filming. John Grierson, who coined the term documentary, considered it to be a "Creative treatment of actuality." Famed Soviet documentary Filmmaker Dziga Vertov defined documentary as to be, presenting "Life as it is" or "Life caught unaware". Pare Lorentz opted for "a factual film which is dramatic." None of such definitions holds community visual documentations to be counted as documentaries. Most of community works can be studied as "return the medium to its elemental origins", following the Dadaist School of cinema- Cinema Pur of France. Although documentations may lack the deep aesthetic senses, possessed and showcased by the Cinema Pur of Dadaist Avant Garde; but the pure visual element's philosophy against a structured story line was echoed in both the practices.

Skill of filmmaking and visual grammar in these community documentations may not be technically right; but lack of similar technical incompetence can be observed in several film endeavours that we consider today as the earliest documentary experiments. Many of those early filmmaking initiatives even lack primary editing. Beside much like video documentations, community radio projects also lack technical competence if compared to professional, corporate media houses. Yet that does not hold them from being radio stations. When referred to documentary categorization of Denish De Nitto, i) Social Description Documentaries, ii) Social Protest documentaries, and iii) Social Criticism Documentaries, We can see that Nitto's classifications include community documentation projects. Social uplift or drive for the initiating one is typically captured in these documents. Thus these projects also qualify Nitto's frame to be considered as documentary. The researcher proposes the name Community Documentary in place of the more commonly used Community Video, taking into consideration all of these theoretical connections to documentary. Community documentaries will be used to refer to all visual documentation created by and involving the community in the future. Community documentaries, such as any other type of community media, have the ability to catalyse a transformation toward socio-digital inclusion in the same way that other forms of community media do. Making of a film requires certain technical as well as technological competency. It also requires close insight to the incidences and happenings in the community. The technological competency to make a film also ensures the access and the ability to use ICT tools as well as platforms. The social observation ensures social empowerment and demands the socio-cultural cognition. As a result, the method of creating a community film ensures that the participants have access to a camera, a computer, audio recorder, as well as the internet during the production

process. It directly accounts the technological divide at surface and beneath that it also addresses other aspects of inclusion, primarily social. These film projects ensures social inclusion by virtue of the newly constructed social identity of the filmmakers within their communities and also by the self satisfaction achieved by the makers, confronting the technical divide which otherwise they considered as something impossible. It also ensures a social recognition of the community at the global sphere when their films reach out a global audience with the help of internet.

IV. THEIR DOCUMENTARY: LET THEIR VOICES COUNT

UN Women had started *Making Women's Voices and Votes Count: An ICT Based Intervention in India* in the year 2013, covering three districts of Gujrat and Karnataka. The project was initiated and financially sustained by UN women's Fund for Gender equity and locally supervised by ANANDI (Area Network and Development Initiative), Kutch MahilaBikash Samiti in Gujrat and ITC for Change in Karnataka. The project is designed in local governance to implement ICT as a catalyst to organise a critical mass of women, with special focus on *Panchayati Raj Institutes*. ICT intervention to empower the community women was planned and executed through community radio, cloud bursting of voice messages with government information, GPS mapping of potential beneficiaries and small video units arranging visual trainings for the rural women to express their stories. ANANDI had proposed for a documentary as part of the project, designed and made by their members in Bhavnagar with limited technical help from participatory media organisation, Drishti, Ahmedabad.

The researcher had witnessed the impact of the project and ANANDI's initiative of the documentary, in the interior villages of Bhavnagar district of Gujrat "to strengthen a network among women in local *panchayats* (primary unit of rural governance) to create a support group focusing on a peer to peer pedagogy that offers a completely new point of departure for capacity building of women in local governance" (Project profile, MWVVC, 2014) [19]. While the whole project of MWVVC, could be mentioned as a success story of ICT intervention for challenging digital divide, the documentary proposed by ANANDI helped in creating an identity for the rural community women associated with. The rural women didn't waste any time getting acquainted with the technicalities of cameras and audio recorders at home. They were able for lining up the story for their film and with certain amount of technological guidance from Drishti, they also completed the editing of the film. In the whole production as well as post production process, community women of Bhavnagar district, irrespective of their age, caste and economic barrier, were keen for gathering technical knowledge of visual documentation. Therefore, these women challenged usability divide while accessibility divide has been taken care of by Drishti and ANANDI.



Continuous trainings as well as motivation from ANANDI facilitated the community women for confronting empowerment divide, ensuring active participation in production process. Participants of this project had changed their success as well as grievance stories into a film by taking the camera as a window to the world, allowing their stories to reach many. With the completion of the documentation, when the researcher approached the rural women, they not only got empowered socially as well as technologically; but also were in a position to articulate the whole process of media intervention on issues of development as, “News paper or television (mainstream media) hardly reaches our places. So our stories hardly reach authority; but now we can raise our voices to reach the government. We had a fear for camera and computers; but now we can operate them. Our voices not only reach leaders; but also thousand others like us who still get afraid of technology and are not allowed by their family heads, usually male, to not use these interfaces.” (Jashuben, ANANDI) While Bhavnagar filmmakers documented their stories as it unfolded before them, two other instances under this study were not taken up not solely by rural women; but their active participation enabled them to challenge technological and empowerment divide. These two documentaries were recreation of reality and their narratives empowered the participants politically and economically. The Indian state of Andhra Pradesh had witnessed one of the country’s biggest ‘anti-arack’ (state supplied distilled liquor) movements in 1993. This eventually led to the prohibition of arack sale in the state from 1995. The movement began with a group of women who were engaging in literacy programme and who began to question their subjugated situation at home and in society as a result of their participation. This grass-roots movement was documented in the film. The narrative follows the incredible bravery of such community women, their socio-political conscious as well as steady realization of controlling their own destiny, socially and politically, through the course of struggle and social rebellion. The movie was a performative documentary, where the story of these incredible women was told through an artistic recreation of reality. Filmmaker Shabnam Virmani was influenced by the neo-realists and she used to work with amateur, rural community women of Andhra Pradesh, especially of Nellore district. With her motivation and training, community women of Nellore got accustomed with the camera and other technical aspects of filmmaking. With the film’s release and journey across the film circuits, it had gathered critical acclaims at international forums. The film also serves as a perfect example of community documentation to attain the deep aesthetics of filmmaking and thus qualified to be a *cinema pur* even within the dominant arena of structured documentaries. Community women who were involved in the film as crew members or as actors not only challenged the technological divide and the accessibility of ICT tools, but they also achieved political realisation of rights, which enabled several of them for participating actively in local self governance, as recommended in the film’s final few frames. The third case that the researcher studied has been ‘*EkPoltun Beek Nu*’ (Not A Little Bit of Fear). It also was a recreation by the community women of Narmadapura, Gujrat, of imprecise

reality under the guidance of Shabnam Virmani. The film dealt with the issues of constitutionally entitled political rights of women, with particular focus on the right of representation in PRIs.

It was not just the production process that posed a challenge to the digital divide from the viewpoints of usability and accessibility; however it also enabled illiterate, rural community women to understand that technology, with all its associated benefits, is not only meant for man as well as urban elites, rather this is a right equally entitled to them and useful to express themselves.

The community women also recognised their political as well as economic entitlements as determined by the constitution and get hold over them. The impact of this empowerment may be seen in the development of the film’s narrative, which was overseen by Shabnam Virmani at the time. Not very surprisingly, after ‘*EkPoltun Beek Nu*’, with their newly found social and technological empowerment, community women taking part in the production of film, went on to take next documentary projects on their own, without any outside guidance. With the technological empowerment of using camera, computer and also internet, such community women successfully have challenged the divide, which is technological as well as social in nature. They also have challenged the gender bias that exists within the social spectrum of divide. These three documentaries were not some individual success stories; rather they enabled the community filmmakers to put forth few cooperative efforts for challenging gender bias by virtue of media and ICT intervention.

These three documentaries documented the transformations in social psychology which not only enable, but also value, the women who are in charge of digital operations, despite the fact that they were previously illiterate. The model, therefore, may serve not only as a move to digital inclusion and empowerment by challenging e-literacy; but also can serve beneficial to challenge the illiteracy among rural communities. Those who are the protagonists of such films might be intriguing instances to research and comprehend the complicated dynamics of inclusion, both socially and digitally, with special focus on gender perspective.

V. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The researcher has taken these community documentary films under this study as convenient sample cases; but the model is equally applicable and may be expanded to similar instances with grass root participation. These films documented not only a move from digital illiteracy and exclusion to e-literacy and digital inclusion, which is followed by a change in social psyche; however they are acclaimed for their structured cinematic grammar. However, when this comes to broad appeal, visual documentation may be more affecting as well as can reach a wider audience, despite the fact that radio remains the most popular community media in the field of community communication.



As a side benefit to this, the production of such films as well as their global release on the internet facilitates networking and communication amongst groups working in similar fields around the world, allowing them to come together on a platform supported by the ICT & New Media apparatus, thereby contributing to a more effective movement toward media convergence.

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