

**TECHNIQUES OF ETHNOGRAPHIC
FILM MAKING**

**School of Social Sciences
Indira Gandhi National Open University**

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TECHNIQUES OF ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM MAKING

The Course: Techniques of Ethnographic Film Making is a part of the Skill Enhancement Courses offered by IGNOU for Bachelor Degree Programme. Ethnographic Film Making is a research technique that is used by the researcher. In order for Ethnographic film making to be fully utilized as a research technique, it is important to place it in the larger context of Visual Anthropology. Through the medium of films the researcher is able to capture the visual in the field. The visual that is depicted by the researcher is a part of the culture being studied. All cultures have visual aspects and visuals are diverse. They vary from the visuals that we see on media-television, print media or even social media including zines. The earliest anthropologists faced the problem of how to handle the visual. The earliest anthropologists used pictures of the tribes that they studied and put them in their monographs. The depiction in photographs was unrealistic and the people portrayed in the photographs were removed from their surroundings and were generally stylised unnatural photographs. As MacDougall writes "...there was something disquieting about it. They appeared to show everything yet, like the physical body, remained annoyingly mute. Visual objects having exerted great fascination as the products and indicators of culture, but failing as expositors of it, began to acquire a new function (in museums) as metaphors for anthropology. And as metaphor, the visual flourished"(MacDougall, 1999, p. 277). In order to understand the visual it is important to understand how the visual is constructed. The visual is often taken at its face value and is considered to be truthful and factual. The seen is often accepted as the truthful portrayal of the object that is being depicted. The construction of the visual and its understanding has become an important part of cultural and media studies. Vision is a cultural activity not just limited to cinema but also to the everyday of acts of seeing and showing. What we see and how we see are a very important part of our lives. Visual culture is the visual construction of the social not just the social construction of vision. We see what we see because of the structures with which we see and think. Visuality is also linked with visualization of history. It tells us about how things are visualised structurally and historically. It's so entrenched into a culture that people believe it to be a given, to be "normal," to be inevitable. They are the ideas that we might think are "just the way things are" when they are really culturally constructed. It deals with naming, categorizing defining people. In fact, these ideas are so parts of the culture's fabric that they can go unnoticed unless we truly look at our surroundings carefully. The course aims to expose the students to some aspects of these discussions.

Objectives:

The topics deal in the course are:

Anthropology and Filmmaking: The Text and the Image: These topics deal with the relationship between the text and the image, in terms of how the anthropological understanding of the visual vis-a-vis the text has changed over the course of development of anthropological and sociological theories.

Different Modes of Filmmaking: The different modes of filmmaking deal with the different kinds of ethnographic films that can possibly be made by the anthropologists. The explanations will be illustrated with the help of examples of all types of films.

The Filmmaker and the Filmed: Relationship and understanding ‘ethics’: While making a film the filmmaker faces ethical challenges in terms of filmmaking. This unit analyses the relationship between the filmmaker and the researched subject. It also deliberates on the various ethical issues in filmmaking and describes the ethical responsibilities of the filmmaker to the subjects and to the viewers. The ethical challenges faced by the filmmaker too are discussed.

Editing and Construction of Meaning: The topic discusses about editing as a technique and as a process. It describes and explains the construction of meaning in a cultural context with specific focus on gender and ideology through editing. Editing helps in sequencing and systematic arrangement of a film or program in a logical or defined manner. It helps to streamline the narrative or the vision objective with which the film is made.

Understanding the use of Camera in Anthropology: The topic is about understanding the different types of shots used in film and video production. It also discusses the various camera movements and explains the purposes of different types of shots and camera movements. It also deliberates on how the researcher can select a suitable shot or camera movement for a film or video production.

Understanding multiple shots and camera movement: In this unit, we will understand the different types of shots used in film and video production and also describe the various camera movements. It will also describe the purposes of different types of shots and camera movements. The discussion will also be on understanding the process of selection of a suitable shot or camera movement for your film or video production.

Filming Oral testimonies, Interviews and Interaction:

Case Studies: We will be we are going to take this discussion further and will be discussing Final Film Projects.

Final Film Projects: We will be discussing how film projects are conceptualised. It will also describe the process from story to a finished product. In terms of filmmaking the role of the state will also be discussed. The illustrations will be through a discussion of some famous film projects and their the scenes story behind them. The process of film making, will also be looking at how the progression happens from an idea to story and then culminates into a finished product which is then brought in front of the world as a ‘film’.

References

MacDougall, D. (1999). ‘The visual in Anthropology’. In M. B. Murphy, *Rethinking Visual Anthropology* (pp. 276-295). New Haven and London: Yale: Yale University Press.

UNIT 1 ANTHROPOLOGY AND FILMMAKING: THE TEXT AND THE IMAGE*

Structure

1.0 Objectives

1.1 Introduction: Sociology, Anthropology and Filmmaking: The Text and the Image

1.1.1 Why Ethnography?

1.1.2 Production of a Film and an Ethnographical Text

1.2 Development of Ethnography and the Visual Anthropology: Films and photographs

1.2.1 Written Ethnographies

1.2.2 Photographs

1.2.3 Ethnographic Films

1.2.4 Ethnographic Films in India

1.3 The Anthropological Journey of the Text and the Image

1.3.1 The Relationship Between the Film Maker and the Filmed

1.4 Let Us Sum Up

1.5 Key words

1.6 References

1.7 Further Readings

1.8 Answers to check Your Progress Exercises

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to understand

- The relationship between the text and the image in the context of ethnography.
- The process of production of an ethnographic film.

1.1 INTRODUCTION: SOCIOLOGY, ANTHROPOLOGY AND FILMMAKING: THE TEXT AND THE IMAGE

The visual whether a photographic image or a film is an important way of understanding culture and society. An image records our everyday lives. They offer us a language that transcends cultural, racial, social and linguistic barriers. A film could be a popular mainstream cinema or a documentary or an ethnographic film. All genres of films help us understand society and culture. For the purpose of the discussion here we will be referring to ethnographic films. As a preliminary way to understand an ethnographic film we can say that it is a non-fiction film. Ethnographic films are the dominant practice amongst visual anthropologists and sociologists. It is supposed to be an authentic account of societies.

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In the following sections we will discuss the relationship between the text i.e. written ethnography and the image i.e. photographs and films. In order to understand the relationship between the two it is important to first know how ethnography as a research tool is developed. We will then discuss the relationship between them.

1.1.1 Why Ethnography?

Ethnography in sociology and anthropology is a research technique that makes a detailed description and analysis of human behavior over a long period of time. The ethnographic method is based on field work. It is a sociological method that explores how people live and make sense of their lives with one another in particular places. The focus is on understanding the lives of people through their everyday interactions, their social organization and other things like the social structuring of the physical spaces. In order to gather data the researcher uses various techniques like the interview method, participant observation, non-participant observation, questionnaires and so on.

The debate between whether the visual or the text is better or are they at par, with one complementing and supplementing the other has been an ongoing one. In order to understand society and culture both the text and the image are important. A common sense understanding of the image is one where it is assumed that seeing is believing. As sociologists we have to examine the proposition that does an image whether a film or a photograph portray the ultimate truth or aversion of the truth. We need to understand that visual ethnography is a means of producing knowledge and of understanding the world. We also need to understand the relationship of the text and the image in understanding society and culture. Is the relationship hierarchical one in which one is considered superior to the other or are the text and the image in a relationship based on equality? We cannot assume that the visual has no subtext and that it represents reality as it is. We have to understand the way in which what we read and what we see gets produced.

In order to understand the relationship between the text and the visual medium, it is important to understand the various aspects of development of ethnographic films. The development of ethnographic films is also dependent on the development of ethnographic research. The development of ethnography has an impact on the way the films are shot. Ethnographic techniques influence the way in which we do research.

1.1.2 Production of a Film and an Ethnographical Text

Traditionally, sociology and anthropology have relied on the written word to tell us about societies and social life. Sociology and anthropology follow certain techniques in order to investigate societies. These techniques are varied and include techniques like observation-participant and non-participant, focus group discussions etc. When we gather data it is in a rough format and is often referred to field notes, the collection of data is dependent on our interest and the research problem at hand. The researcher may spend a few months or a year writing down observations in a notebook. The ethnographer may also record interviews using an audio device. The researcher then goes the field notes and transcribes the interviews. Once that is done then the researcher analyses the data and starts to put it in a structured format depending on the research problem. There is a lot of

writing and rewriting of the data. Each time the researcher writes she will refer to her field notes and write and rewrite the data.

The rough notes get translated into sentences and paragraphs. The researcher has to work with the data that she has. The only way that she can get new data revisiting the field and gathers fresh data. What we finally read i.e. what is available to the public is the final edited version in the form of a book or an article. What we read is a smooth finished narrative which is not patchy but finished product..

The written texts like the Nuer by E. E. Evans Pritchard (Pritchard, 1940) tell us about the Nuers of Southern Sudan or the Argonauts of the Western Pacific by B. Malinowski (Malinowski, 1922) about the Trobriand Islanders of the Western Pacific Ocean are ethnographies that have been written in the above manner. The monographs that we read are based on field notes of the researcher. Let us try and understand this through an example. For instance, if the research problem was analysis of social interaction between individuals on the basis of the caste system in a village in India then how would we go about it. The researcher would spend several months in the field observing social interactions and the impact of the caste system on these interactions. All observations would be recorded in a notebook. As would be analysed from the perspective of caste based social interaction. If interviews have been recorded, they too would be transcribed. The final written monograph that we produce will be based on observations carried out over a period of time. The researcher collects data from the point of view of the research problem. However the most important data is data that is gathered from the fringes. This data is often gathered through research techniques that are not pre-established. For example one could be relying on the memory of the researcher or the memories of the informant. Heider (Heider, 2006) refers to it as the peripheral vision of the researcher. Writing cultures mean that ethnographers construct narratives. We select some material and leave out the rest.

For instance if we have to illustrate any instance of caste based interaction then the incident that we narrate as if it were a 'true' incident would not be based on but one incident. It would be based on our observations carried out over a period of time and the final incident that we narrate would be based on our observations over a period of time. Often the reconstruction would be based on the peripheral vision of the researcher. This reconstruction is an accepted practice in written ethnographic accounts. In the Argonauts of the Western Pacific Malinowski describes a long trading expedition carried out by the Trobriand Islanders from Sinaketa to Dobu. (Malinowski, 1922), Malinowski had not participated in any such expedition. The account is constructed based on his observations of similar events and also based on the observation of his informants. Such a general reconstruction is accepted practice in ethnography.

Thus when we talk about a written ethnographic text we collect data by a number of techniques. This data is also often peripheral data i.e. data that we have gathered along the course of the fieldwork. The raw data that is gathered is then selectively presented and analysed.

Films too are a way of understanding society. The category of films that we will be referring here are called ethnographic films. The term ethnographic film is difficult to define. The reason is that all films reflect social life. At the outset we have to be very clear that we are not talking about films from a technical

cinematographic angle rather our focus is on understanding how films help us to understand society and culture. It is difficult to have a set criteria to define the ethnographies of a film.

In a film the ethnographer may begin with an idea and a script. He then shoots a footage, edits a footage and finally produces a film. The film that we see is again a reconstructed version of the raw footage. A film is a final product like the written text that is made public by the ethnographer in the form of a book or an article. In a film too the production of a film too involves shooting of a film which we call footage. This footage is then edited and re-edited much like the writing and rewriting of a text. The final story that the film tells us is a finished smooth portrayal like a book. Much of the construction of the film takes place on the editing table and footage shot at different points of time is put together and presented along a continuum.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What is ethnography?

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2) How is an ethnographic text produced for public consumption?

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3) What is the similarity between the production of a text and a film?

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Activity:
What is an ethnographic film? Can you distinguish between different genres of films?

1.2 DEVELOPMENT OF ETHNOGRAPHY AND THE VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY: FILMS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

1.2.1 Written Ethnographies

In the 1920s and 1930s a number of monographs were produced. These were based on fieldwork and were of two kinds. On one hand there were serious monographs produced for the academia. On the other hand ethnographies were also written for the general public. Malinowski wrote *The Sexual Life of the Savages* (Malinowski B., 1932) based on his fieldwork amongst the Trobriand Islanders. Margaret Mead along with the serious academic monograph *Social Organization of the Manua* written in 1930 (Mead, 1969) based on her research on the Samoa in 1925-26, also wrote more popular ethnographies on child rearing, education and sex roles. Some of these books also included photographs. However these were not given any importance as a research tool for understanding societies. There were a few exceptions like Bateson and Mead and Gardner and Heider.

1.2.2 Photographs

In the late 19th century and early 20th century photographs were seen as an objective and scientific documentation. Early anthropologists like Franz Boas in the US, Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen in Australia and Bronislaw Malinowski in 1915-1918 used photographs as a part of fieldwork. Photographs were considered to be simply truth revealing meaning that seeing is believing. For example, Malinowski in his book *The Argonauts of the Western Pacific* does not say anything in terms of analyzing the photographs. Photographs are considered to be an aid to the memory much like the field notes. Some images are used as an illustration or slides and for exhibitions. Once the fieldwork are made public, the photographs are either put in a museum or are forgotten. Some images or slides were used as illustrations and for exhibitions.



https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/37/Three_Horses_by_Edward_S._Curtis%2C_1905.jpg

The above image of the Indian is a photograph by Edward Curtis who took around 2000 photographs of the Red Indians between 1896 and 1930. This style of photography is an illustration of how the researcher influences the

image. In “The Vanishing Race” Christopher Lyman argues that Curtis’s work was influenced by a romanticised view of the native Indian. Curtis according to Lyman did not take into account the impact of Western white culture on the Indians. All his photographs depict the Indian as being savages and completely unaffected by the White man’s culture. The photographs depict Curtis ‘view of the “primitive Indian”. Curtis also made a film on the Kwakiutl Indian. The film has been recently been restored under the title In the ‘Land of the War Canoes’.

The earliest approach to visual anthropology was a positivist approach. It was assumed that the camera portrayed reality as it is. The audio visual technique was considered to be objective, neutral and transparent. It was almost as if reality was captured on the reel without any kind of human intervention or consciousness. A picture was considered to be a worthy portrayal of reality it was an objective data that recorded reality without any kind of biases.

In the mid-20th century Bateson and Mead in 1942 turned to photography after they had written on Balinese culture for a decade. They produced close to 25000 photographs over a two year field work. Bateson and Mead’s book *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis* published in 1942 (Mead G. B., 1942) and Robert Gardner and Karl Heider’s *Gardens of War: Life and Death in The New Guinea Stone Age* in 1968 (Heider R. G., 1969) on the Dugum Dani tribe were early attempts at publishing ethnographic photography. They continue to be exceptional pieces of work.

What’s also interesting is the fact that Bateson had done fieldwork among the Iatuml of the Sepik River in New Guinea and written a monograph *Naven* in 1936. However ,the work was hardly read.

The positivist approach to film making has been critiqued by contemporary theorists. They believe that the camera and what it records is influenced by the researcher. Films and photographs are not just about the people being recorded, it is also about the person recording the event. Photographs are seen as socially constructed artefacts – constructed by the researcher as he or she deemed fit. It’s important to understand that a photograph or a film is constructed by the researcher as per a certain paradigm. This social approach to the study of photographs focused on the social context in which the image was constructed and not on the image itself for analysis.

For Mead, the photographs were to be supplemented by the written word. Each frame and each photograph had to be contextualized. In 1942, when Mead and Bateson collaborated they used the photographs to supplement their written work. The photographs were used to fill in the gaps and to address criticisms of their written work. As technology advanced Mead advocated the use of the film camera to record events as we will discuss in the next section. Photographs by themselves were not considered anthropological they had to be supplemented by the written word. By 1970s and end of the 20th century visual sociology as it developed had not focused on the implications of how a photograph could be used for a better anthropological understanding.

1.2.3 Ethnographic Films

Production of ethnographic films for the public was started in 1920s. These films were educational films and of exotic people and were sometimes shot with the help of anthropologists. For example, the Pathe brothers in 1920 with the help of the department of Anthropology in Harvard University produced Edward Curtis' *In the Land of the Head Hunters* (Curtis, 1914). Some of these films were also shot as per scripts. One such film was *Chang* (Cooper, 1927) shot on the lives of people in Thailand, made by Cooper and Schoedsack. The interest of the commercial players led to the production of films that were of the 'natives'. These films were ethnographically considered to be ethnocentric. These films were criticized by anthropologists as being ethnocentric and following a colonialist approach. That means the films were shot just as earlier with the belief that the White man was superior to the natives. The film *Gods Must Be Crazy* (Uys, 1980) based on the Ju/'hoansi of the Kalahari by Jamie Uys was an international hit but was criticized for being ethnocentric and racist. These kind of films were considered to be naïve depictions of culture. They were not considered to be serious ethnography.

In the 1920s and perhaps till 1960s anthropology did not contribute to the development of films. There were a few exceptions like the film by Martin and Osa Johnson *Among the Cannibal Isles of the South Seas* in 1919 (Johnson, 1918) and *Head Hunters of the South Seas* in 1922 (Johnson M., 1922). In 1922, Robert Flaherty, a mining engineer and an explorer produced *Nanook of the North* (Flaherty, 1922) on the Inuit (Eskimo) family of the Hudson Bay. The film was shot in an artificially constructed igloo that was portrayed as a real igloo. Flaherty's second film *Moana: A Romance of the Golden Age* in 1926 (Flaherty R., 1926), was financed by Paramount pictures. *Moana* was on the Savaiim in Western Samoa. These films were not considered to be serious ethnography by anthropologists. *Moana* was shot less than 300 miles from Mead's fieldwork area in Samoa. *Nanook of the North* was made close to the area where Franz an American anthropologist Boas, had done fieldwork. Both Boas and Mead even if they heard of the films they did not give the films any ethnographic importance. They did not attach any significance to the films at all even though they themselves had worked in areas close to where Flaherty shot the films. Flaherty's films were too ethnographic for the world of popular commercial films. His films were not considered significant from a serious ethnographic angle.

Bateson and Mead were the first to use ethnographic films to integrate with and to supplement their written work. The work done by Bateson and Mead was path breaking in several ways however they did not lead to an increasing use of ethnographic films by researchers. Ethnographers still did not consider films and photographs as a serious research tool.

As discussed in the earlier section Mead and Bateson used photographs for their ethnographic work. In addition to the numerous photographs Bateson also shot 22000 feet of 16 mm film footage. His raw footage much like the written field notes of a researcher and was used to produce six films in 1950. Some of these included the films like *Childhood Rivalry in Bali* and *New Guinea*.

After World War II by 1950s anthropological film making gained impetus. In 1952, the International Committee on Ethnographic and Sociological Films

associated with United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) was formed. It organized many events including the Margaret Mead Film Festival in New York and the Royal Anthropological Institutes Ethnographic Film Festival in Manchester in 1960s. 1970s and 1980s saw a systematic approach to Visual Anthropology. Three journals- *Studies in Visual Communication* (1974-1985), *Visual Anthropology* (1987) and *Visual Anthropology Review* (1986) were launched.

Apart from institutional efforts film makers like Jean Rouch in France, John Marshall, Robert Gardner and Timothy Asch in America contributed greatly to ethnographic film making. All four of them were trained in anthropology. Some significant films that were made in the 1950s were *The Hunters* (1958) on the hunters and gatherers of the Kalahari Desert by John Marshall; *Dead Birds* (1964) by Robert Gardner about warfare amongst the Dani of New Guinea. Timothy Asch along with anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon made a number of films like *The Feast* (1968) and *Ax Fight* (1971) on the Yanomamo of Venezuela. These filmmakers supported the idea that films were an important anthropological tool and were important in recording data.

The development of technology and synchronised sound also meant that the films could be shot using long shots and entire bodies could be shot. They believed that this footage shot with accompanying written material made the film anthropologically sound. Such films used the observational style of filming. In this style the filmmaker adopts an approach in which there is a belief that the presence of the camera has no impact on the subjects. Such an approach was also called the 'fly on the wall' approach. It was a 'scientific' objective approach. In which the truth was portrayed as it is in sharp contrast to earlier films like those made by Flaherty.

The cinéma-vérité movement believed that they could film the truth without influencing the outcome. Jean Rouch believed that the presence of a camera induced *cine trance* i.e. those being filmed after a while forgot about the camera. The use of portable synchronous sound recording equipment added to the illusion that the film maker was not influencing the outcome of the film. Rouch's idea was to see the world as the natives see it. This led to a participatory style of film making. The cinema and the cinéma-vérité movements or truthful cinema adopted this style of film making. This style of filmmaking is attributed to Jean Rouch and inspired by Dziga Vertov and Robert Flaherty. The filmmaker can be present in front of the camera and can even provoke the subject in terms of a stylized interaction. The role of the camera is always acknowledged. This attempt was to engage with individuals more directly while not reverting to classic exposition interview styles. It allows filmmaker to account for past events via witnesses and experts whom viewer can also see. Sometimes archival footage was also used to reinforce the truth of what was being filmed.

This mode of filmmaking led to the desire to make the conventions of representation themselves more apparent. It wanted to convey the impression that reality is not unproblematic and the reality that we see is only one version of reality. It is the most self-aware mode - its reflexivity makes audience aware of how other modes claim to construct "truth". The idea of a reflexive anthropology openly acknowledged the role of the film maker in influencing the film making process. Reflexivity in ethnographic film making was critical of the portrayal of the disempowered native. It was critical of the representation of the otherness.

David and Judith MacDougall and Melissa Llewelyn-Davies in the 21st century have influenced film making. They have developed a reflexive filming style. The reflexive style of film making was very conscious much like reflexivity in the written word that the researcher has the power to depict and portray the researched in a particular manner. Film makers today are very conscious of the way the films are being depicted. They follow a style of filming in which the film maker does not have complete authority. He will share the space with the filmed and will decide with them the way the film is to be shot and also which shots are to be used. Film makers like Vincente Carelli in Brazil, Eric Michaels in Australia have also made efforts to help the natives produce their own films.

1.2.4 Ethnographic Films in India

Post-Independence the earliest ethnographic films that were made were commissioned by the Information Films of India and later the Films Division. Some of these films were on tribes.

- *Oraons of Bihar* 1955 and *The Martial Dances of Malabar* in 1958, by Paul Zils, a German, was the first to make ethnographic films in India. He was the head of the Information Films of India in British India.
- *The Flute and the Arrow* 1957, by Roman Karmen, a Russian filmmaker and a Swede Aren Sucksdorff. The film was on the Murias of Bastar and was based on fieldwork by Sucksdorff.
- *The Vanishing Tribe*, 1959, by Paul Zils, on the Todas of the Nilgiris.
- *Tree of Wealth*, between 1943 and 1956 under the aegis of Information Films of India, directed by Bhaskar Rao. This was based on the importance of the coconut in the life of the people of Kerala. This film was awarded at the Edinburgh Festival.
- *Close to Nature*, 1967, by Shyam Benegal. It was on tribals in Madhya Pradesh including the Ghotuls.

We see a shift in the themes of films being made in the films of Mani Kaul. He made films on the vanishing folk arts and artistes. In 1953, he made *The Puppeteers*. The film was on the vanishing art of puppeteering and was based on the puppeteers of Rajasthan. In 1977, he made *Chitrakathi*, on the folk artistes of western India.

From 1990s, the ethnographic filmmaking has gathered momentum. These films are on a variety of themes.

- *Main-Taris of Assam*, by Charu Kamal Hazarikais on the tribes of Assam.
- *Gothrasmruti*, by M.A. Rahman, is on the Thaiyyam rituals of the Thaiyya community of North Malabar in Kerala. It is based on an anthropological interpretation.
- *Mithak Bhan (The Disappearing Poem)*, by Sudhanshu Misra is on the lifestyles of the Agarias tribals living in the forests around the Kanha National Park in Madhya Pradesh.
- *Lyrics of Life*, 1995, by Alok Das on Calcutta from the perspective of the slum dwellers.

- *Buddha Weeps*, 1999, directed by Sri Prakash is on the impact of exposure to Uranium on the health of the people and environment in Jadugoda, located in East Singhbhum district of Jharkhand.
- *Colours Black*, 2001, by Mata Murthy on child abuse.
- *In the Land of Hidden Treasure*, 1999, directed by Nilanjan Bhattacharya. The film is on the monastery craft and arts in Sikkim and was commissioned by The Anthropological Survey of India.
- *Bottle Masala in Moile*, 2013, by Vaidehi Chitre is on the ethnic community of East Indians based in Mumbai. It traces the impact of development on their lifestyle and culture. The 38 minute documentary won the Best Documentary Award at the Jeevika Asia Livelihood Documentary Film Festival in 2013. The Bronze Remi award at the Houston International Film Festival in 2013 and several other awards.

Khepar Mon Brindabon, 2014, produced and directed by Ladly Mukhopadhyay. The film traces the journey of a Baul, Gour Khepa, over 35 years. It traces the history of the Bauls of Bengal through Gour Khepa. You can watch a small part of the film on the following link: [linkhttps://youtu.be/ZaP1iJT4SUI](https://youtu.be/ZaP1iJT4SUI).

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) How were photographs seen in early anthropology? Illustrate with the help of examples.
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- 2) Write an essay on Margaret Mead’s contribution to visual anthropology.
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- 3) Why the ethnographic films of the 1920s were not considered a serious ethnographic works?
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4) What was significant about the films made in the 1950s?

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5) What does the term cinema – verite mean?

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6) Write a note on reflexivity in film making.

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Exercise: Do research on Jean Rouch and Margaret Mead. Watch their films and interviews online.

Watch ethnographic films made in India. Some of the names of the films are mentioned in the preceding section. You could also watch other films.

1.3 THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL JOURNEY OF THE TEXT AND THE IMAGE

Ethnographic filmmaking much like the written ethnographies has evolved from a colonial positivist perspective. The period between 1913-1920 was a significant period in anthropology as it was moving from a positivist natural science framework to a more fieldwork based humanist science in the 20th century. The time at which Malinowski was writing his monograph was also the time that Flaherty made the film on the Eskimos. Flaherty was very much in the tradition of ethnographers like Malinowski. Just like Malinowski stayed with the Trobriand Islanders for his fieldwork, Flaherty stayed with the Inuit and made his film. Malinowski thus established the fieldwork tradition in anthropology and Flaherty did the same for ethnographic films. The tradition of staying with the subject to establish a rapport and to be scientific became prevalent in traditional anthropologists and ethnographic filmmakers.

The 1960s and 70s saw the emergence of the structural functional approach in anthropology. This approach believed that by observing discrete everyday events one could make sense of them in the larger anthropological structural context. For example, Gluckman 1958 followed the principle that by focusing on the everyday interactions. One is able to understand the underlying normative structural principles. Film makers like Asch too followed the same principle and filmed events as it happened. This kind of a filming was an observational style of filming in which the assumption was that the filmmaker did not influence the outcome of the film.

The issue that faced the written text and the films was the same. The filming of events as they happened were one part of the story but in order to give it structure it had to be constructed so as to fit into an anthropological model. Hastrup Kirsten uses the concept of thick and thin description put forth by Clifford Geertz to explain that how what is seen in photographs and films i.e. a thin description needs to be supplemented by a thick description i.e. it needs to be culturally contextualised. (Hastrup, 1993) This could be with the help of a spoken or written narrative in the film. In a text behaviour that we observe has to be explained in the context of anthropological concepts.

The filmmaker in order to be taken seriously by the anthropologists started following the norms of anthropology. They developed an observational style of film making very much along the lines of the tradition of observational fieldwork. Just like the text is constructed according to certain principles of structural anthropology films too were constructed in a similar manner. The dilemmas faced by anthropologists of that time were also faced by the filmmakers. It was like a Catch 22 situation. If one is observing the social world out there then either one can portray it as seen by the native that is as if the anthropologist and the filmmaker are within that world. As if they are participating in it. Clifford Geertz refers to it as 'emic'. If he is not in it then he is outside it i.e. 'etic'. The dialectic between the emic and the etic was faced equally by filmmakers and anthropologist. The struggle to be in yet be outside in the larger Western theoretical social framework.

This style of filmmaking and writing was replaced by a more participatory and reflexive style. The reader and the audience are made to understand that the reality as it is portrayed is just one version of the truth. The ethnographer-the filmmaker and the researcher are no longer articulating from a position of power. They also try to articulate the truth as is experienced by the subjects.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Compare the approaches to anthropology and filmmaking in the 1920s-30s. Illustrate your answer with examples.

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- 2) Examine the impact of the structural functional approach on anthropology and film making.

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- 3) What were the dilemmas faced by the anthropologists and filmmakers in the 1970s?

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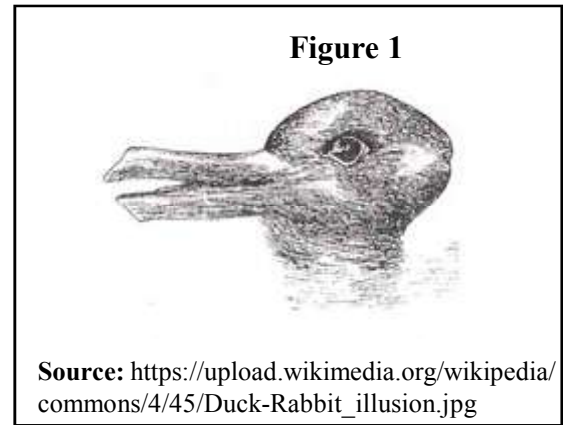
1.3.1 The Relationship Between the Film Maker and the Filmed

In section 1.2.3 and 1.3 we have discussed the evolution of ethnographic filmmaking. Interwoven in this is also the changes in the way that the relationship between the filmmaker and the filmed has evolved.

In the 1920s we saw that the filmmakers had a colonialist approach. Films like *Gods Must Be Crazy* assumed that the presence of the filmmaker had no impact on the filmed. The voice of the film was the voice of the filmmaker. The filmmaker acted like a non-participant observer. In the 1950s we see films like *Dead Birds* and *The Hunters* adopting a fly on the wall approach. The filmmaker assumes that his presence has not influenced the final outcome. This approach was a ‘scientific’ and a positivist approach.

The cinéma-vérité movement followed the approach of truthful cinema. Here the filmmakers like Jean Rouch, Dziga Vertov and Robert Flaherty believed that their task was to depict the ‘truth’. This also meant that the filmmaker was often in front of the camera and the role of the camera was acknowledged. Spiegel points out that the role of the film maker is like that of a ‘well-mannered guest’ (Spiegel, April 1984) The analogy of a well-mannered guest points out that the filmmaker like the guest tries to become one with the host i.e. the filmed and that his presence is non-intrusive. He interacts and participates in their day to day interaction. The rapport is built to such an extent that it is assumed that after a while the filmed forget the presence of a camera. The filmmaker sees the world as the filmed see it. The method of participant observation is followed in which the filmmaker becomes one with the filmed and may indulge in a stylized interaction. This would involve the filmmaker participating and may be even living with the filmed. The filmmaker may be seen in front of the camera or his voice may be heard. The filmmaker may also stylize an interaction. This was also seen in MacDougall’s film *New Boys* (2003). The belief is that the final outcome is not influenced by the presence of a filmmaker.

This kind of a participant observation is approach to filmmaking led to the one in which the filmmaking has become reflexive. This means that one realizes that there are multiple versions of the truth. As MacDougall (MacDougall, September, 1991) puts it ‘Whose story is it?’ The film maker always faces the dilemma about how to narrate the story.



Whose voice should dominate? Is the story to be narrated from the perspective of the ethnographic film maker or from the perspective of those being filmed? MacDougall (MacDougall, September, 1991) uses the picture in Figure 1 to drive home the point that a film could have several interpretations. Figure 1 could be a duck or a rabbit. A film like the figure could be interpreted in any way that the viewer likes. It all depends on the spatial location-social and physical of the viewer.

1.4 LET US SUM UP

The relationship between the text and the image is a close one. The development of anthropological approaches and the approaches to ethnographic film making have been influenced by theoretical developments in anthropology. We have seen a progress of the text and the films from the positivist approach to the observational, participatory and finally the reflexive mode. The collaboration between the two leads to a much richer anthropology.

1.5 KEY WORDS

- 1) **Bauls:** Ethnic sect of wandering minstrels who spread their message on celestial love through song and music. It's a part of the cultural oral tradition of Bengal.
- 2) **Cine trance:** Those being filmed after a while forgot about the camera. Jean Rouch believed a special creative possession-like state induced through the lens of the camera, involving the filmmaker, her subjects, and her audience.
- 3) **Cinéma-vérité:** A style of film-making characterized by realistic, typically documentary films which avoid artificiality and artistic effect and are generally made with simple equipment.
- 4) **Emic and Etic:** Refer to two kinds of field research done and viewpoints obtained: **emic**, from within the social group (from the perspective of the subject) and **etic**, from outside (from the perspective of the observer).
- 5) **Ethnocentrism:** Ethnocentrism is judging another culture solely by the values and standards of one's own culture.
- 6) **Ethnography:** In sociology and anthropology it is a research technique that makes a detailed description and analysis of human behavior over a long period of time.

- 7) **'Fly on the wall' Approach:** Fly-on-the-wall documentary-making, the camera crew works as unobtrusively as possible.
- 8) **Peripheral data:** Data that we have gathered along the course of the fieldwork.
- 9) **Positivist Approach:** The earliest approach to visual anthropology was a positivist approach. It was assumed that the camera portrayed reality as it is.
- 10) **Structural Anthropology:** A school of **anthropology** based on Claude Lévi-Strauss' idea that immutable deep **structures** exist in all cultures, and consequently, that all cultural practices have homologous counterparts in other cultures, essentially that all cultures are equitable.
- 11) **Thick and thin description:** Clifford Geertz described the practice of **thick description** as a way of providing cultural context and meaning that people place on actions, words, things, etc ... **Thin description** by contrast, is stating facts without such meaning or significance.

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1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Ethnography in sociology and anthropology is a research technique that makes a detailed description and analysis of human behavior over a long period of time. The ethnographic method is based on field work. It is a sociological method that explores how people live and make sense of their lives with one another in particular places. The focus is on understanding the lives of people through their everyday interactions, their social organization and other things like the social structuring of the physical spaces. In order to gather data the researcher uses various techniques like the interview method, participant observation, non-participant observation, questionnaires and so on.
- 2) Traditionally, sociology and anthropology have relied on the written word to tell us about societies and social life. Sociology and anthropology follow certain techniques in order to investigate societies. These techniques are varied and include techniques like observation-participant and non-participant, focus group discussions etc. When we gather data it is in a rough format and is often referred to field notes. The ethnographer may also may record interviews using an audio device. The researcher then goes through the field notes and transcribes the interviews. Once that is done then the researcher analyses the data and starts to put it in a structured format depending on the research problem. There is a lot of writing and rewriting of the data. Each time the researcher writes she will refer to her field notes and write and rewrite the data. The rough notes get translated into sentences and paragraphs. What we finally read i.e. what is available to the public is the final edited version in the form of a book or an article. What we read is a smooth finished narrative which is not patchy but is smooth. In a film the ethnographer may begin with an idea and a script. He then shoots a footage, edits the footage and finally produces a film. The film that we see is again a reconstructed version of the raw footage. A film is a final product like the written text that is made public by the ethnographer

in the form of a book or an article.

- 3) In a film the ethnographer may begin with an idea and a script. He then shoots a footage, edits a footage and finally produces a film. The film that we see is again a reconstructed version of the raw footage. A film is a final product like the written text that is made public by the ethnographer in the form of a book or an article. In a film too the production of a film too involves shooting of a film which we call footage. This footage is then edited and re-edited much like the writing and rewriting of a text. The final story that the film tells us is a finished smooth portrayal like a book. Much of the construction of the film takes place on the editing table and footage shot at different points of time is put together and presented along a continuum.

Check Your Progress 2

- 4) In the late 19th century and early 20th century photographs were seen as an objective and scientific documentation. Early anthropologists like Franz Boas in the US, Baldwin Spencer and Frank Gillen in Australia and Bronislaw Malinowski in 1915-1918 used photographs as a part of fieldwork. Photographs were considered to be simply truth revealing meaning that seeing is believing. For example, Malinowski in his book *The Argonauts of the Western Pacific* does not say anything in terms of analyzing the photographs. Photographs were considered to be an aid to the memory much like the field notes. Some images were used as an illustration or slides and for exhibitions. Once the fieldwork was made available to the public the photographs were either put in a museum or were forgotten.
- 5) In the mid-20th century Bateson and Mead in 1942 turned to photography after they had written on Balinese culture for a decade. They produced close to 25000 photographs over a two year field work. Bateson and Mead's book *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis* published in 1942 and Robert Gardner and Karl Heider's *Gardens of War: Life and Death in The New Guinea Stone Age* in 1968 on the Dugum Dani tribe were early attempts at publishing ethnographic photography. They continue to be exceptional pieces of work. For Mead, the photographs were to be supplemented by the written word. Each frame and each photograph had to be contextualized.

In 1942 when Mead and Bateson collaborated they used the photographs to supplement their written work. The photographs were used to fill in the gaps and to address criticisms of their written work. As technology advanced Mead advocated the use of the film camera to record events.

- 6) Ethnographic films of the 1920s were educational films and of exotic people and were sometimes shot with the help of anthropologists. They were sometimes shot according to a script. These films were ethnographically considered to be ethnocentric. These films were criticized by anthropologists as being ethnocentric and following a colonialist approach. That means the films were shot just as earlier with the belief that the White man was superior to the natives. The film *Gods Must Be Crazy* based on the Ju/'hoansi of the Kalahari by Jamie Uys was an international hit but was criticized for being ethnocentric and racist. These kind of films were considered to be naïve depictions of culture. They were not considered to be serious ethnography.

- 7) In the 1950s the filmmakers like Jean Rouch in France, John Marshall and Robert Gardner and Timothy Asch in America supported the idea that films were an important anthropological tool and were important in recording data. The development of technology and synchronised sound also meant that the films could be shot using long shots and entire bodies could be shot. They believed that this footage shot with accompanying written material made the film anthropologically sound. Such films used the observational style of filming. In this style the filmmaker adopts an approach in which there is a belief that the presence of the camera has no impact on the subjects. Such an approach was also called the 'fly on the wall' approach. It was a 'scientific' objective approach. In which the truth was portrayed as it is in sharp contrast to earlier films like those made by Flaherty.
- 8) The cinéma-vérité movement believed that they could film the truth without influencing the outcome. Jean Rouch believed that the presence of a camera induced *cine trance* i.e. those being filmed after a while forgot about the camera. The use of portable synchronous sound recording equipment added to the illusion that the film maker was not influencing the outcome of the film. Rouch's idea was to see the world as the natives see it. This led to a participatory style of film making. The cinema and the cinéma-vérité movements or truthful cinema adopted this style of film making. This style of filmmaking is attributed to Jean Rouch and inspired by Dziga Vertov and Robert Flaherty. The filmmaker can be present in front of the camera and can even provoke the subject in terms of a stylised interaction. The role of the camera is always acknowledged. This attempt was to engage with individuals more directly while not reverting to classic exposition interview styles. It allows filmmaker to account for past events via witnesses and experts whom viewer can also see. Sometimes archival footage was also used to reinforce the truth of what was being filmed.
- 9) The idea of a reflexive anthropology openly acknowledged the role of the film maker in influencing the film making process. Reflexivity in ethnographic film making was critical of the portrayal of the disempowered native. It was critical of the representation of the otherness. David and Judith MacDougall and Melissa Llewelyn-Davies in the 21st century have influenced film making. Reflexive filming style. The reflexive style of film making was very conscious much like reflexivity in the written word that the researcher has the power to depict and portray the researched in a particular manner. Film makers today are very conscious of the way the filmed are being depicted. They follow a style of filming in which the film maker does not have complete authority. He will share the space with the filmed and will decide with them the way the film is to be shot and also which shots are to be used. Film makers like Vincente Carelli in Brazil, Eric Michaels in Australia have also made efforts to help the natives produce their own films.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Ethnographic filmmaking much like the written ethnographies has evolved from a colonial positivist perspective. The period between 1913-1920 was a significant period in anthropology as it was moving from a positivist natural science framework to a more fieldwork based humanist science in the 20th century. The time at which Malinowski was writing his monograph

was also the time that Flaherty made the film on the Eskimos. Flaherty very much in the tradition of ethnographers like Malinowski. Just like Malinowski stayed with the Trobriand Islanders for his fieldwork Flaherty stayed with the Inuit and made his film. Malinowski thus established the fieldwork tradition in anthropology and Flaherty did the same for ethnographic films. The tradition of staying with the subject to establish a rapport and to be scientific became prevalent in traditional anthropologists and ethnographic filmmakers.

- 2) The 1960s and 70s saw the emergence of the structural functional approach in anthropology. This approach believed that by observing discrete everyday events one could make sense of them in the larger anthropological structural context. For example, Gluckman 1958 followed the principle that by focusing on the everyday interactions one is able to understand the underlying normative structural principles. Film makers like Asch too followed the same principle and filmed events as it happened. This kind of a filming was an observational style of filming in which the assumption was that the filmmaker did not influence the outcome of the film.
- 3) The filmmaker in order to be taken seriously by the anthropologists started following the norms of anthropology. They developed an observational style of film making very much along the lines of the tradition of observational fieldwork. Just like the text is constructed according to certain principles of structural anthropology films too were constructed in a similar manner. The dilemmas faced by anthropologists of that time were also faced by the filmmakers. It was like a Catch 22 situation. If one is observing the social world out there then either one can portray it as seen by the native that is as if the anthropologist and the filmmaker are within that world. As if they are participating in it. Clifford Geertz refers to it as 'emic'. If he is not in it then he is outside it i.e. 'etic'. The dialectic between the emic and the etic was faced equally by filmmakers and anthropologist. The struggle to be in yet be outside in the larger Western theoretical social framework.

UNIT 2 DIFFERENT MODES OF FILMMAKING*

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Different Modes of Filmmaking
- 2.3 Poetic Documentary
- 2.4 Expository Documentary
- 2.5 Observational Documentary
- 2.6 Participatory Documentary
- 2.7 Reflexive Documentary
- 2.8 Performative Mode
- 2.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.10 Key words
- 2.11 Further Reading & Viewing
- 2.12 References
- 2.13 Answers to your Progress Exercise

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to understand

- Different modes of filmmaking
- Poetic documentary
- Expository documentary
- Observational documentary
- Participatory documentary
- Reflexive documentary
- Performative mode

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, we will discuss the different modes of film making which will provide an indepth understanding of film making. These Various modes includes poetic documentry expository documentary, observational documentary, participatory documentary, reflexive documentry and performative mode. These different modes are widely used in filmmaking.

2.2 DIFFERENT MODES OF FILMMAKING

There are different styles of filmmaking. According to Bill Nichols we can identify six different modes of film making. These modes of filmmaking give us a loose framework to understand how films are made. Each filmmaker has a distinct style of film making. Each of the different types of films that will be discussed in

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the following sections are actually discussed in a chronological manner. They are discussed in the context of their emergence. Each mode has grown out of the other mode and has emerged as a result of dissatisfaction of the filmmakers with the earlier modes.

The modes are not discussed in an evolutionary manner nor are they indicative of one mode being superior to another. The modes of filmmaking do however give us a sense of history of the emergence of different styles of film making. It's not necessary that a film maker adheres to only one mode of film making. The emergence of these modes of filmmaking are also associated with the emergence of technology. They can use a combination of several modes of filmmaking. Nor is it necessary that recent films have to necessarily follow a mode of filmmaking that is more recent. A filmmaker today could decide to use a mode of filmmaking that may not be the most recent.

Bill Nichols identifies six modes of filmmaking. These are in order of their emergence and progress as follows:

- i) Poetic documentary
- ii) Expository documentary
- iii) Observational documentary
- iv) Participatory documentary
- v) Reflexive documentary
- vi) Performative mode

Each of these modes does not exist as mutually exclusive categories. A poetic mode could include the performative mode. The reflexive mode could have participatory and observational footage. Observational mode was limited to the present. The emergence of the participatory and reflexive mode arose with the realisation by the filmmaker that there is no need to mask the close relationship with those being filmed.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Complete the sentence
 - a) There are _____ modes of filmmaking.
 - b) These modes of filmmaking have been given by_____.
- 2) What is the significance of the different modes of filmmaking?

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2.3 POETIC DOCUMENTARY

The poetic mode was introduced in the 1920s. Such a mode is not a linear mode of filming. The filming style moves away from the simple factual telling of a story. The actors are not cast as full bodied characters. The poetic mode gives us alternative forms of reality. For example, if you have to show an actor crying then in the poetic mode the filmmaker could just show rainfall. If you have to show a person running then again you could just show the beauty of a horse

racing. In order to highlight the importance of a game for the nation one could just show the game with patriotic music playing in the background. It gives us an alternative form of reality instead of just telling us about the reality in a straightforward manner.

They are abstract and loose in genre just like a poem. Imagine a film with water flowing or falling and just focus on the way the film is shot. For instance watch this video on you tube. T, He of the vedioes <https://youtu.be/dEBN8zly5N4>. Bill Haanstra's 1958 documentary *Glas* is another such poetic mode documentary available on <https://youtu.be/aLS7—ZLCoI>. It focuses on the glass blowers and the beauty of their work.

The film could be on a city and it may just give us a sense of the city by showing famous landmarks like India Gate, Lotus Temple, Qutub Minar, Connaught Place, Metro and a huge statue of the God Hanuman. The moment one sees these landmarks perhaps interspersed with shots of pigeons flying, traffic jams and corn sellers with just music in the background you get a sense of Delhi the capital of India and the filmmaker may also show shots of these places from the past marking the passage of time. Francis Thompson's *N.Y., N.Y. (1957)*

The poetic mode may also use historical footage, freeze frames, slow motion, tinted images, and occasional titles to identify places, some narratives and also music to build the mood.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What are the characteristics of the poetic mode of filmmaking?

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- 2) After watching the film *Glas* do an analysis of the film in the context of the poetic mode.

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2.4 EXPOSITORY DOCUMENTARY

Arose in the 1920s and is still very popular. It is used in television news and reality television shows. Nature and science documentaries too use this mode extensively. Biographies too are largely shot in this mode. This mode is also often referred to as the *Voice of God* commentary mode in which the speaker is heard but not seen for example think of several films in which there is a voiceover. Examples include *Happy* by Morgan Lewis, available at https://youtu.be/5RFuzk_-qqc; *The Origins of Man* narrated by Morgan Freeman available at

https://youtu.be/bJ_utURBEdY; *Penguin- a Love Story* dubbed in Hindi by Amitabh Bachchan available at <https://youtu.be/pnPyRHG05e8>.

As we can see from the examples of the voice of God commentaries given above that the expository mode was dominated by professionally trained male voices. These commentaries could also be voice overs by less professional voices like Ernest Hemmingway’s commentary for one version of *The Spanish Earth* (1937) is in a matter of fact voice. The other two versions with the same footage have different voices – Jean Renoir for the French version and Orson Welles and Ernest Hemmingway for the English version. Hemmingway’s commentary was more convincing and in a more matter of fact voice.

Expository mode relies heavily on logic and the voice dominates. The images are subordinate and are edited in a way so as to maintain a continuity with the narration. The voice over appears as the dominant mode and as the voice of authority. It speaks in a voice and tone of logic and authority. Think of any of the short documentaries by the government of India watch the documentary on family planning at the URL <https://youtu.be/mrsrz-izfxI>.

Expository documentaries facilitate generalization and large scale dissemination of information. For instance the film on family planning mentioned above relies on common sense and supports a common sense understanding of family planning from different parts of India in a logical and coherent manner. As sociologists we understand that common sense is limited by time and place thus the common sense which the expository mode relies on is also limited by time and place. It loses its relevance once the context in terms of time changes.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) What are the features of the expository mode?

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- 2) What is meant by the *voice of God*?

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2.5 OBSERVATIONAL DOCUMENTARY

This mode arose from the availability of 16 mm cameras and magnetic tape recorders in 1960s. The observational mode found the poetic mode too abstract and the expository mode too moralizing. The observational mode relies on facts and often has no voiceovers and music. The actors behave as if no film maker was there. The development of the 16 mm camera and light weight sound recorders such as the Nagra aided the development of the observational mode since it also meant that the filmmaker could move around freely without being intrusive. The people were observed as it is in their natural surroundings behaving spontaneously. David MacDougall's *New Boys* a part of the Doon School Chronicles shot in 1997 is an example, Other examples include *Hospital (1970)*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_jZRh5QTc.

The film maker adopts a fly on the wall approach assuming that his presence because of the lightweight camera and synchronous sounds is almost non-intrusive. But it raises the ethical question of indirect intrusion. The mere presence of a film maker may have an effect on the behaviour of the participants. The observational documentary also faces the issue of seeking the consent of the people being filmed. The question is also of whether the consent is written or verbal. The consent also varies from situation to situation.

Observational films give the sense of real time. The filmmaker shoots in a manner in which the experience is lived. For example David MacDougall's film *New Boys* shows the silences, the pauses and the empty spaces almost as if we were living the experience. The filmmaker needs to have disciplined detachment it allowed filmmaker to record unobtrusively what folks did when not explicitly addressing the camera. It stresses the non-intervention of filmmaker. The control is with the participants. Editing doesn't construct time frame or rhythm, but enhances impression of lived or real time. This mode limit filmmaker to present moment and require disciplined detachment from events themselves. It uses indirect address, speech overheard, synchronous sound, relatively long takes.

Its sense of observation comes from

- The ability of filmmaker to include representative revealing moments ;
- Sounds and images recorded at moment of observational filming in contrast to voice-over of expository mode
- Illustrations do not serve generalizations but a specific slice of reality
- The presence of camera on scene
- Use of synchronous sound
- Long takes

Some of the film makers associated with this style are Michel Brault, Robert Drew, Robert Flaherty, Richard Leacock, Jean Rouch and Dziga Vertov. Some films using this style of film making are *After Life (1999)*, *Bad Boys (1961)* and *Children of Hiroshima (1952)*.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) What are the characteristics of the observational mode of filmmaking?

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- 2) How is it different from the Expository mode?

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2.6 PARTICIPATORY DOCUMENTARY

Anthropology and Sociology have advocated the use of participant observation for observing the lives of people. Participant observation involves the filmmaker being in the field for long periods of time and becoming one with the subjects being observed. The researcher is also expected to be able to maintain a sense of objectivity and distance from those being observed. In the observational mode we saw that the presence of the filmmaker is almost discounted and the assumption is that the filmmaker does not in any way impact or influence the interaction amongst people. In the Participatory mode the filmmaker is there in the front of the camera and becomes one with the people being observed. The filmmaker is in no way masked as he is in the poetic mode by abstractions; as he is in the expository mode by voice overs and as he is in the observational mode by adopting a fly on the wall approach. This mode became popular in the 1960s when synchronous sound recording became possible. This mode is often seen in the cases where the filmmaker is interviewing the subjects. It gives a sense to the audience about what it means to be involved with the process of filmmaking. The film *Photographic Memory*, 2011 by Ross McElwee is an example of this kind of film. The director is shown interacting with his son and the film shows the trails and tribulations of a child growing up into an argumentative teenager. The trailer of the film is available at the URL <https://youtu.be/HcAjO5G3kTc>.

Other examples include *Chronicles of Summer* by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin; *Portrait of Jason*. Dziga Vertov's *The Man with a Movie Camera*.

The cinema and the cinéma-vérité movements or truthful cinema adopted this style of film making. This style of filmmaking is attributed to Jean Rouch and inspired by Dziga Vertov and Robert Flaherty. The filmmaker can be present in front of the camera and can even provoke the subject in terms of a stylised interaction. The role of the camera is always acknowledged. The audience gets a

sense of what it means to negotiate the relationship between the filmmaker and the subject. We get a sense of who controls.

The filmmakers may also engineer a scene. In *Chronicles of A Summer*, 1961 for example Rouch narrates an incident where a Jewish deportee from France who has spent time in a German Concentration camp during world war II narrates her experiences using a lightweight portable sound recorder. The camera follows her at a distance and Rouch comments that it is almost as if the camera is absent.

The other styles of filming could be one in which the filmmaker's voice could give the main perspective for example as seen in the film *Sorrow and Pity*, 1970. The filmmaker could also be like an investigative reporter or he could even be in a reflective and responsive mode. The filmmaker in a reflective mode could also move towards a diary and apersonal testimonial mode. The participatory mode could also involve interviews. The filmmaker could use several interviews and put them together in the form of a single story. Examples include *Eyes on The Prize*, on the history of civil rights movement; Hina Khwaja's interviews of those who left India for Pakistan during Partition available at the URL <https://youtu.be/yY40sosTzk>.

In the participatory mode thus we are able to cover a diverse range of topics that could vary from giving us a sense of history or perhaps the interviewer own attempt to give us a sense of history or as sense of their encounters with their surrounding world.

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) What are the characteristics of the Participatory mode of film making?

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- 2) Watch any of the two films listed in the above section and compare them.

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2.7 REFLEXIVE DOCUMENTARY

This style of filmmaking calls attention to the process of filmmaking. It draws the viewers' attention to how a particular representation gets constructed. In the participatory mode we saw process of negotiation between the filmmaker and the subject. In the reflexive mode the focus is on the negotiation between the

filmmaker and the audience. The filmmaker asks the audience to view the film as a construct, as a version that has been constructed by the filmmaker. It draws our attention to the audience's assumptions and expectations from the documentary films. For instance the audience assumes that in a documentary make up and costume are not important. But that is not really the case. They are of importance in the process of filmmaking. We, as an audience, are forced to think about how we view the world around us, what our expectations are from the world around us. The Reflexive style jars us out of complacency as an audience and forces us to think about the films as a construct. It forces us to question the 'truth' as we see it. Dziga Vertov's films *The Man with the Movie Camera* conveys the impression of how a film is constructed by showing us the camera man and how he is filming a particular scene. Vertov also shows us how in the process of editing the filmmaker constructs a story. The film may also rely on trained actors to tell us a story which is 'true'.

The feminist documentaries of the 1970s are examples of the reflexive mode of filmmaking where the audience becomes conscious of the various forms of discrimination against women. They challenge our perception of the world around us by questioning the dominant ideas of masculinity and femininity.

Check Your Progress 6

- 1) What is the reflexive mode of film making?

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- 2) Write an essay comparing it to any of the earlier modes of film making.

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2.8 PERFORMATIVE MODE

This mode of filmmaking raises the question of what knowledge is and how it gets constructed. Performative mode stresses on how our understanding of the world around us stems from our personal experiences. The way that we view the world stems from our subjectivity. The meaning that is attached to the process of knowledge construction clearly stems from the experience and memory of an individual. The performative mode helps us understand how the world around us is constructed through our emotions and affections. The emotional complexity of experience influences the filmmaker's perspective. An autobiographical note

may also enter these kinds of documentaries. The filmmaker himself is the subject of the film he is making. He is not invisible. Nick Broomfield's style of filmmaking is an example of this kind of filmmaking. Broomfield in his films also includes with Aileen Wuornos in Aileen Wuornos: The Selling of a Serial Killer, Broomfield's films are as much about the making of a documentary as they are the main story, offering an onscreen reality that is small-scale and seemingly honest, but always entertaining. It could be argued that on-screen Broomfield portrays a naivety and innocence that often diverts the interview subject from his true intentions. He plays a part, acting for the sake for the audience, drawing a side from his subjects that might not be entirely natural.

Check Your Progress 7

1) What is the participatory mode of film making?

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2) How does it compare to the earlier modes?

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2.9 LET US SUM UP

In this section, you have learnt about the different modes of film making.

These different modes are:

- Poetic documentary
- Expository documentary
- Observational documentary
- Participatory documentary
- Reflexive documentary
- Performative mode

2.10 KEY WORDS

Expository documentary: Based on the ‘Voice of God’ phenomenon

Observational documentary: It allowed filmmaker to record unobtrusively what folks did when not explicitly addressing the camera. It stresses the non-intervention of filmmaker.

Participatory documentary: In the Participatory mode the filmmaker is there in the front of the camera and becomes one with the people being observed.

Performative mode: Endorses definition of knowledge that emphasizes personal experience (in tradition of poetry, literature)

Poetic documentary: Explores associations and patterns that involve temporal rhythms and spatial juxtapositions

Reflexive documentary: It is the most self-aware mode - its reflexivity makes audience aware of how other modes claim to construct “truth” through documentary practice.

2.11 FURTHER READING

MacDougall, ‘Whose Story is it?’ In *Visual Anthropology Review*, Volume 7, Issue 2, Pp. 2-10, September 1991

Nichols, Bill. ‘What types of Documentary are there?’ In *Introduction to Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001. Pp- 99 137

Watch *The Six Modes of Documentary* at <https://youtu.be/I7MhOghI4u8>

Watch *6 Types of Documentary* at <https://youtu.be/3Pp4ldOgKNI>

Watch *The Evolution of Documentary and Its Modes* at https://youtu.be/BmKU9_V0SXg

2.12 REFERENCES

Nichols, Bill. ‘What types of Documentary are there?’ In *Introduction to Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001. Pp. 99- 137

2.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1)
 - a) There are six modes of filmmaking.
 - b) These modes of filmmaking have been given by Bill Nichols.
- 2) The modes of filmmaking do however give us a sense of history of the emergence of different styles of film making. It’s not necessary that a film maker adheres to only one mode of film making. The emergence of these modes of filmmaking are also associated with the emergence of technology. They can use a combination of several modes of filmmaking. Nor is it necessary that recent films have to necessarily follow a mode of filmmaking

that is more recent. A filmmaker today could decide to use a mode of filmmaking that may not be the most recent.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1)
 - i) Does not use continuity editing, sacrifices sense of the very specific location and place that continuity creates.
 - ii) Explores associations and patterns that involve temporal rhythms and spatial juxtapositions.
 - iii) Social Actors rarely become fully-fledged characters.
 - iv) Opens up possibility of alternative forms of knowledge to straightforward transfer of knowledge.
- 2) The movie *Glass* uses music of different kinds to show the making of glass. There are no words used. The camera too rarely focuses on the actors. It is more focused on the hands and the process of glass making. When shots from the factory where glass is made by machines is used we find that the music is different and the position of the camera also changes.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1)
 - i) Arose from dissatisfaction with distracting entertainment qualities of the fiction film.
 - ii) 'Voice of god' commentary, poetic perspectives sought to disclose information about historical world & see that world afresh, even if ideas seem romantic or didactic.
 - iii) Addresses viewer directly, without titles or voices.
 - iv) Advances argument about historical world.
 - v) It takes shape around commentary directed toward the viewer; images illustrate the verbal commentary builds sense of dramatic involvement around need for solution to a problem.
 - vi) Nonsynchronous sound prevails (historical circumstances).
 - vii) Editing generally establishes/maintains rhetorical continuity more than spatial/temporal.
- 2) 'Voice of God' commentary mode in which the speaker is heard but not seen for example *Happy* by Morgan Lewis,; *The Origins of Man* narrated by Morgan Freeman and *Penguin: a Love Story* dubbed in Hindi by Amitabh Bachchan. As we can see from the examples of the 'Voice of God' commentaries given above that the expository mode was dominated by professionally trained male voices. These commentaries could also be voice overs by less professional voices like Ernest Hemmingway's commentary for one version of *The Spanish Earth* (1937) is in a matter of fact voice.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1)
 - i) It is characterised by Paradigm: depiction of everyday life.
 - ii) Often described as either direct cinema or cinema verite.

- iii) Arose from available lightweight portable synchronous recording equipment & dissatisfaction with moralizing quality of expository documentary.
 - iv) It allowed filmmaker to record unobtrusively what folks did when not explicitly addressing the camera.
 - v) It stresses the non-intervention of filmmaker.
 - vi) Filmmaker cedes control of events more than any other mode.
 - vii) Editing doesn't construct time frame or rhythm, but enhances impression of lived or real time.
 - viii) This mode limited filmmaker to present moment and required disciplined detachment from events themselves.
 - ix) It uses indirect address, speech overheard, synchronous sound, relatively long takes.
 - x) Its sense of observation comes from
 - a) Ability of filmmaker to include representative & revealing moments
 - b) Sounds and images recorded at moment of observational filming in contrast to voice-over of expository mode
 - c) Illustrations do not serve generalizations but a specific slice of reality.
 - d) Presence of camera on scene
- 2) Refer to Check Your Progress 3 Question 1 and Check Your Progress 4 Question 1.

Check Your Progress 5

- 1) In the Participatory mode the filmmaker is there in the front of the camera and becomes one with the people being observed. The filmmaker is in no way masked as he is in the poetic mode by abstractions; as he is in the expository mode by voice overs and as he is in the observational mode by adopting a fly on the wall approach. This mode became popular in the 1960s when synchronous sound recording became possible. This mode is often seen in the cases where the filmmaker is interviewing the subjects. It gives a sense to the audience about what it means to be involved with the process of filmmaking.

The filmmaker can be present in front of the camera and can even provoke the subject in terms of a stylised interaction. The role of the camera is always acknowledged. The audience gets a sense of what it means to negotiate the relationship between the filmmaker and the subject. We get a sense of who controls. The filmmakers may also engineer a scene. The participatory mode could also involve interviews. The filmmaker could use several interviews and put them together in the form of a single story.

- 2) The student should watch the films listed and compare them using the features of the various modes of documentaries.

Check Your Progress 6

- 3)
 - i) Reflexive mode of filmmaking arose from a desire to make the conventions of representation themselves more apparent & to challenge the impression of reality which other three modes normally conveyed unproblematically.
 - ii) It is the most self-aware mode - its reflexivity makes audience aware of how other modes claim to construct "truth" through documentary practice.
 - iii) It uses many of devices of other modes but sets them on edge so viewer attends to device as well as the effect.
 - iv) It tears away veil of filmmakers illusory absence
 - v) Becomes technologically viable with emergence of portable synchronous sound equipment which makes interaction more feasible
- 4) For comparison with other modes refer to the earlier sections.

Check Your Progress 7

- 1)
 - i) Like Reflexive Documentary, it raises questions about knowledge.
 - ii) Endorses definition of knowledge that emphasizes personal experience (in tradition of poetry, literature).
 - iii) Tries to demonstrate how understanding such personal knowledge can help us understand more general processes of society.
 - iv) May "mix" elements of various documentary modes to achieve link between subjective knowledge/understanding of the world, and more general understandings, i.e. historical ones.
- 2) For comparison with other modes refer to the earlier sections.

UNIT 3 FILMMAKER AND THE FILMED: RELATIONSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING ‘ETHICS’*

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Film & the Filmmaker
 - 3.2.1 Film is Director’s Medium
 - 3.2.2 Documentary Film: Is it Journalistic?
 - 3.2.3 Filmmakers: Are they Gatekeepers?
- 3.3 Ethics of Documentary Film Making
 - 3.3.1 Relationship Between Filmmaker and Subject
 - 3.3.2 Code of Ethics in Documentry Filmmaking
 - 3.3.3 Filmmakers: Their Role in addressing the Imbalance of Power
- 3.4 Documentry Filmmaking: Its Various Ethical Issues and Responsibility
 - 3.4.1 Various Ethical Issues in Filmmaking
 - 3.4.2 Ethical Responsibility to Subjects and Viewers
 - 3.4.3 Ethics in Indian Social Documentary
- 3.5 Ethical Challenges for the Filmmakers
 - 3.5.1 Documentary Filmmakers & Ethical Challenges
 - 3.5.2 Ethical Challenges During Filming and Editing
 - 3.5.3 Decision-making Process
- 3.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.7 Further Readings
- 3.8 References
- 3.9 Unit End Exercises
- 3.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercise

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to;

- Analyse the Relationship Between Filmmaker And Subject;
- Understand Various Ethical Issues in Filmmaking;
- Describe Ethical Responsibilities to Subjects And Viewers;
- Describe Ethical Challenges for the Filmmakers.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

‘Relationship’ and ‘Morality’ are two key aspects of our day to day life. In order to keep a proper relationship with anybody, we need to follow some principles. One of them could be the principles of morality. Isn’t it? You may make a list of a number of situations in the past, when you were in a dilemma what to do, which course of action you need to follow etc. In the context of documentary filmmaking, particularly in case of ethnographic documentary, scholars have

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started showing their keen interest to study on the relationship of the filmmaker–filmed.

In this unit, we will discuss at length, how the relationship between filmmaker and subjects occupies the central place in making the documentary film. In addition to this, we would analyse many ethical questions raised by the documentarians during the course of making documentary film. As listed by *Olga Khrustaleva*, another research scholar on Ethics of Documentary Filmmaker, such ethical questions are (Khrustaleva, 2014) –”is it possible to document the reality without intervening, and without expressing a certain viewpoint? Does establishing friendly relationships with the subject benefit the story or not? Are filmmakers exploiting people by documenting their lives? How truthful are stories of people in a documentary if only a small percentage of footage is used in the final film?”

The unit would focus on various debates on the ethics of documentary filmmaking by including filmmakers’ experiences and opinions so that you would understand what ethics truly mean in the field of documentary filmmaking.

3.2 FILM & THE FILMMAKER

Who is a Filmmaker? The term “filmmaker” is usually referred to as the ‘Director’ or ‘Producer’ of a movie. With regard to the specific job of a ‘Filmmaker’, it varies from film to film. But it is true that they are responsible for taking the film from the basic idea to the finished product. Filmmakers may delegate various jobs to others depending on the situations. Those job duties may include Scripting, Budgeting, Casting, Hiring, Producing (Pre-production, Production & Post-production) and finally, Releasing the movie.

As far as Scripting for the movie is concerned, a script may be obtained through a number of ways. Filmmakers may write the script themselves based on an original idea, it may be purchased from a screenwriter, a writer may be commissioned to flash out an idea. However, irrespective of the methods adopted by the filmmaker for getting the script, they have the final say on how best a story or idea should be conveyed to the target audience through this particular ‘film’ medium. You must have heard that ‘Budgeting’ is the most important aspect of filmmaking. It is true that without a ‘profit’ (or we may call it a ‘success’), no film project is usually conceived. Filmmakers must come up with an estimated budget for the film based on the realistic assessment of the story line and the script decided by them. The assessment may be with regard to anything and everything related to filmmaking starting from the requirement for hiring the equipment, booking studio space to paying talents and crews. Once a detailed budget is made, filmmakers may look for the financiers. After the budget is in place, filmmakers begin the process of making the film, that is, casting for the movie by putting out advertisements or contacting actors, holding auditions and selecting the actors. Next important step for filmmakers includes hiring a camera crew, art director, music director, choreographer, stunt people, editors, film scorers and anyone/anything required for making of the film.

The production activities of a film are broadly broken-up in three stages: Pre-production, Production & Post-production. The purpose of Pre-production stage

is to coordinate and plan meticulously for the actual shooting of the movie. At this stage, shooting locations are selected, rehearsals are held, props are purchased, and the shooting schedule is finalised. The production phase closely deals with directing and coordinating the actors and the crew so that everything is done according to budget, time line and the intended story-telling pattern/treatment of the film. During the Post-production stage, filmmakers put all their concentrations on the process of editing the raw footage/shooting material into a meaningful picture with the help of editors and other technical experts. The process of editing deals with visual editing, dubbing, laying background music and other special effects.

Finally, the film sees the day of light after coming out of the dark room i.e. after the development of the final print of the film from the 'Film Lab'. Filmmakers also are responsible for managing the release of the finished product. With the advancement of technology, a film is being released in different theatres simultaneously through satellite using digital cinema distribution network like UFO. Satellite release does not use the conventional reel to project the movie in order to avoid the piracy and delays due to traffic. It simply allows the movie to be screened to be hands-free, as the signal is transmitted through satellite. It is the crucial moment for a filmmaker who would be eager to see the reactions of the audience. Before releasing a film, filmmakers do coordinate the advertising as well as the public relation campaign, fix a release date. A screening schedule is finalised once the film is released to the general public. Sometimes special screenings are planned for a specific limited audience. Isn't interesting to know: How does the making of a film follow so many steps systematically? You must have watched lot of films. But, have you ever thought that a Filmmaker has to handle every department of filmmaking with utmost care?

3.2.1 Film is Director's Medium

When a celebrity director of Bollywood, Mr. Shoojit Sircar, was asked to comment on what guarantees a great film, to which he said, "A great script alone can't guarantee a good film. A film is ultimately a director's medium." (Boxoffice, 2015). Rakeysh Omprakash Mehra, another famous Director of Bollywood has said that cinema is a director's medium and not that of an actor's (News18, 2015). According to him, there is no formula for a director to make a film. There should be a reason to tell the story. "I don't make movies for business. I chase passion. I want to tell stories. If I do it with true heart the films do well," Mehra says. Just like a 'Painter' needs colour to draw his/her thoughts on canvass, a Director needs a medium (Film) to tell his/her story.

3.2.2 Documentary Film: Is it Journalistic?

What is a documentary film? Is it the film like 'Jurassic Park' in English or non-fiction film like '*Bharat Ek Khoj*' in Hindi? From the beginning of the 20th century, there has been a constant effort towards defining documentary film since its genesis as a genre. At a time, when cinema in general was only emerging, documentary film was treated as a form or art (Khrustaleva, 2014). In an attempt to explain documentary, John Grierson developed three main principles of documentary in his book 'First Principles of Documentary' (Grierson, 1996) and he had given his reasons why it "has [a] big future" (Khrustaleva, 2014) as a genre of cinema.

Grierson believes that cinema has the “capacity for getting around, for observing and selecting from life itself, [and] can be exploited in a new and vital art form” and he also believes that documentary captures “the living scene and the living story” (Khrustaleva, 2014). As Khrustaleva raises a very pertinent question (Khrustaleva, 2014): “Are documentary filmmakers and journalists just observing reality or does the presence of the camera, or even a stranger with a notebook, alter the reality that they are supposedly observing?”

The second issue, as raised by Grierson, refers to the relationships with subjects or subjects. Grierson refers to subjects or subjects as ‘actors’. He strongly believes that “the original (or native) actor, and the original (or native) scene, are better guides to a screen interpretation of the modern world”- which he termed it as the “multifaceted interpretation of reality”. The philosophical question, as raised by Khrustaleva, at this juncture is (Khrustaleva, 2014): “how much reality there is left in documentary film”. As she writes further: “it is reality seen through a double prism– first through the prism of subjects, and then through the prism of a filmmaker”.

David MacDougall, a renowned filmmaker, comments on the reality of films, “An axe-head to you may be merely a paper-weight to me” (MacDougall, 1998). MacDougall considers films as objects and having multiple identities. He writes that just like the films are inwardly dialogic and juxtaposing the voices of author and subject, they seem to be outwardly so and appear as something quite different to each other.

The third thing that Grierson refers to the principles which emphasize the fact that the sense of reality and truth is greater in documentaries compared to fiction films. Grierson refers documentaries as “stories from the raw” and believes that it can achieve the “intimacy of knowledge” and consequently, it can be more effective than the fiction or ‘the acted story’ (Khrustaleva, 2014).

American documentary theorist Bill Nichols (Nichols, 2010) said that documentary film had no precise definition. However, he observes that “documentary has become the flagship for a cinema of social engagement and distinctive vision”. However, Nichols feels that “situations and events, actions and issues may be represented in a variety of ways.” (Nichols, n.d) and “modes of representation are basic ways of organizing texts in relation to certain recurrent features or conventions”. As Nichols writes further: “In documentary film, four modes of representation stand out as the dominant organizational patterns around which most texts are structured: **expository, observational, interactive, and reflexive**”. We have read about this in the Unit on Different Modes of Filmmaking.

Is documentary film journalistic? In order to answer this question, *Olga Khrustaleva* (Khrustaleva, 2014), writes, “Observational and interactive documentaries from Nichols’ classification seem to be the more ‘journalistic’ in a sense than expository and reflexive, though they also do not completely renounce the presence of the filmmaker.”

3.2.3 Filmmakers: Are they Gatekeepers?

After knowing various features, principles and modes of documentary, you may like to believe that filmmakers can play a very crucial role in disseminating the reality of a situation or event. Can filmmakers be considered as ‘Gatekeepers’?

It is true that the relationship between filmmakers and subjects is one of the key issues in the ethics of documentary film. But according to Khrustaleva (Khrustaleva, 2014), there are at least two aspects to it—the interaction that happens during the process of filming and the way a filmmaker chooses to represent them in the film.

Gatekeepers are people who “regulate the flow of information, language and knowledge” (Storm, 2007) and “determine what becomes a person’s social reality, a particular view of the world” (Shoemaker & Vos, 2009). As we all know, journalists have been traditionally considered gatekeepers as they decide which stories to cover and what information should be included in the story. We may consider “documentary filmmakers as gatekeepers too for several reasons including that only a small per cent of the footage is actually used in a film” (Khrustaleva, 2014).

With regard to the filmmaker’s role, or obligations, and to the question of whether or not a filmmaker can intervene in certain situations, Maccarone writes that the main reason for a journalists or a documentary filmmaker’s non-intervention is that the action “violates their subject’s autonomy”. (Maccarone, 2010) Since the presence of the camera already violates this autonomy in a way, it is almost difficult to act as an indifferent observer, especially when a filmmaker becomes part of the reality rather than just observing it.

While addressing various aspects of subjects’ representation including disclosure (how much information is used), exploitation (the difference in authority and control of a filmmaker and people filmed), victimizing subjects, privacy, participants’ consent, consequences participants face after a film is released, and the rights and responsibilities of a filmmaker, Pryluck writes about “collaborative editing as a way to involve the subjects more in the process and avoid exploitation” (Pryluck, 1976). However, many other researchers (Sanders, 2010; Nash, 2011) and Pryluck himself admit that it can have both positive and negative consequences on the documentary film.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) How do you like to define a ‘Filmmaker’?

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- 2) How many modes of representation can be considered as the dominant organizational patterns in Documentary Film? Write features of each mode.

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- 3) Film is the Director's Medium. Do you agree with this? Is Documentary Film journalistic in nature? Justify your answer with suitable examples.

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- 4) Can we consider documentary filmmakers as 'Gatekeepers'? Justify your answer with suitable examples.

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3.3 ETHICS OF DOCUMENTARY FILM MAKING

By now, you must have understood the vital role of a filmmaker towards projecting the reality related to the subject of the documentary film. But at the same time, while making a documentary film we need to understand its potential impact on the actual lives of people as it features human beings as subjects. As the researchers understand that not only the viewer, but also the individuals and the communities are being affected by the film whose images are used by the film makers to make their points clear. Since the documentary film holds a tremendous power to change the lives of people, we must expect a great responsibility from the filmmakers towards using these images in an ethical way (Hartzell, 2003).

Ethics play a big role in the life of filmmakers to be truthful and honest to their subject. But it is not that easy to know that what kind of effect the actions of a filmmaker will have on individuals and cultures particularly when they are not known to him/her. Therefore, one cannot always be confident that he or she is acting in an ethical way (Hartzell, 2003).

However, first of all, we need to know what the real definition of ethics is. You may consider this standard dictionary entry: “Ethics: A theory or system dealing with values relating to human conduct, with respect to the rightness and wrongness of certain actions and to the goodness and badness of the motives and ends of such actions” (Fieser, 2008).

Ethics may be defined in numerous ways depending on which ethical theory is applied. We may consider four main ethical considerations as proposed by Lea Claire Hartzell, a research scholar and which can be classified into four major categories (Hartzell, 2003): (1) The intention of the Filmmaker, (2) the Filmmaker’s relationship with his/her subjects (3) the various responsibilities of the Filmmaker, and (4) how the filmmaker presents himself/herself, his/her work, and the subjects to an audience. With regard to intentions of a filmmaker, Hartzell questions: “do the means justify the ends?” (Hartzell, 2003). It is true that intentions of a filmmaker for a particular film ultimately affect the final product. But is it essential for a filmmaker to have ethical motivations for that project to be considered ethical? Is the vice-versa true? If the outcome of the film is beneficial to the subjects of the study then “does it matter if the filmmaker had ethical intentions?” (Hartzell, 2003).

With the changes in the film industry, concerns with regard to the ethics in documentary filmmaking intensified. In the late 1990s, U.S. documentary filmmakers were widely respected as media makers as well as recognized as independent voices at a time when the public lost their confidence in mainstream media and in the integrity of the political process. The interference and influence of politicians in media had an impact on the perception of documentary films as neutral and objective (Aufderheide, Jaszsi & Chandra, n.d.). Consequently, documentary filmmakers came under scrutiny for the ethics of their practices. As Larry Chonko writes, “In order to understand ethical decision making, it is important for students to realize that not everyone makes decisions in the same way, using the same information, employing the same decision rules” (Chonko, 2012).

With regard to moral principles Khrustaleva contends, “Aristotelian ethics, or virtue ethics, focuses on the inner qualities of a person (or in this context, a filmmaker) that determine the way him or her deals with ethical dilemmas” (Khrustaleva, 2014). According to German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), an honest and truthful process is the most important aspect of ethical considerations. As far as Consequentialist theory is concerned, it emphasizes the final product (film). According to this perspective, it would be justified if by compromising on some ethical issues, the final product benefits the audience.

The more recent theories of ethics include libertarian theory and social responsibility theory. Whereas libertarian theory emphasizes the role of markets and economy in the media, social responsibility theory argues that audience is a key factor in ethical decision-making process (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1963).

3.3.1 Relationship Between Filmmaker and Subject

It has been widely accepted among the Filmmakers that “Film is the Director’s Medium”. According to Kevin Spacey (HT, 2014), a Hollywood Actor and Filmmaker, “film is the director’s and editor’s medium while theatre is the actor’s

medium. One can be better in theatre in two weeks while for films, once it is released then you can see and get the response and accordingly improve.” We may substitute the word ‘Director’ with another word like ‘Filmmaker’ in order to have an easy impression about the job of a Director. But by doing so, we cannot simplify the Filmmaker’s work, particularly when a filmmaker sets out to make a documentary. The life of a filmmaker does not seem to be very easy as multiple challenges including a set of ethical issues are inherently entangled in the process of making a documentary. As identified by Wanda Bershen (Bershen, n.d.), a consultant on fundraising, festivals and distribution, the obvious challenges which are faced by a documentary filmmaker are: “How to portray the subjects of the film? What to shoot and what not to shoot? How to edit so that the film is true to its topic and subjects, yet also works as a compelling story for the audiences?” She also feels that whenever a filmmaker is working in a foreign country or culture (or subculture), it is quite challenging how to represent people with dignity and sensitivity to that place, time and experience etc. As aptly pointed out by Wanda (Bershen, n.d.), “at the heart of documentary production is the relationship between filmmaker and subjects—not often an equal balance of power.” And it is true that mostly, it is the filmmaker who determines how to maintain the balance.

With regard to the individual experience of several documentarians worldwide about handling of a variety of ethical issues while making the documentaries, many Directors/Filmmakers have expressed that while following the soldiers into many battles and recording the terrible fear and tension, never knowing what would happen next. While directors are wounded while covering the battles, there are certain restrictions placed on the filmmakers like for instance the military poses restrictions on the filming of wounded soldiers (Bershen, n.d.). As Wanda (Bershen, n.d.), further writes that the filmmakers deliberately avoid any graphic representations of violence, thinking that it would be a distraction from what they want to show. Although some documentarians consider their work on the film as of journalistic in nature; their primary concern is to counter many representations of war on film that are “limited and can’t quite reveal the humour, boredom and confusion inherent in combat.”

In United States, while the topics, ranging from major ethnic groups to the most exotic members of the sub-cultures, differ, most of these filmmakers are concerned with the relationship between filmmaker and the subject. Documentary film makers do not always stress interacting with their subjects. On the other hand, there was a time, the documentary “filmmaker’s ideal was a detached and exclusively observational attitude, expressed by the saying “fly on the wall (Spiegel, 1984)”.

Juxtaposition to this scenario of the detachment attitude of the filmmakers in the past, one may notice the sense of relationship of the filmmakers with their subjects going even deeper. Pauline Spiegel, an independent filmmaker and freelance writer, quotes the filmmaker Tony de Nonno saying (Spiegel, 1984): “I felt like a member of the family.” in the context of de Nonno’s relationship to a family of Sicilian Puppeteers living in New York those who were a part of de Nonno’s film “*It’s One Family, Knock on Wood*” (deals with the continuity and cooperation between generations in preserving a valuable craft tradition). She writes further, “The same thoughts are echoed by many other filmmakers (Spiegel, 1984)”.

3.3.2 Code of Ethics in Documentary Filmmaking

As Nichols raises a very vital question: “Can we establish standards for an ethical documentary practice?” (Nichols,). You would also agree with him on this point. This is not a purely rhetorical question. Do documentaries breach an ethical standard? Nichols puts several questions in series: “What might such a standard be and who might enforce it? What obligation does the filmmaker have to avoid distortion, misrepresentation, coercion or betrayal, be it overt or extremely subtle, even if such acts appear to serve a higher goal such as “getting the story told” or “exposing injustice”? What responsibility does the filmmaker have for ensuring that persuasive techniques do not distort established facts, rules of evidence and the principles of sound debate?”

Should a filmmaker act as a “Polite Guest” (Spiegel, 1984), as the term coined by Pauline Spiegel in her article ‘The Case of the Well-Mannered Guest’, published in 1984. As Spiegel feels that there are films like Tony de Nonno’s “*It’s One Family*” which are serious, effective and affecting but limited in their impact as something is missing, more could be said and shown to the audience. A sense of politeness, of silence towards their subject is observed to be the characteristics of these films. Many filmmakers including Tony de Nonno feels that challenging their subjects is like betraying the intimacy they have granted to them as outsiders. However, considering the filmmaker as stranger is the key since it sets the terms of the relationships, it determines the process of filmmaking, and it influences the nature the finished film.

As discussed earlier, the difference in the power of filmmakers and their subjects can often be best measured by their relative access to the means of representation. But it depends on few related questions: Do subjects have the means to represent themselves? Do they have alternative access to the media apart from that provided by a given filmmaker? If the answer is no, the filmmaker’s ethical obligation to avoid misrepresentation, exploitation and abuse rises correspondingly. In fact, the subjects who are dependent on the filmmaker to have their story told are the most vulnerable to misrepresentation and abuse.

3.3.3 Filmmakers: Their Role in addressing the Imbalance of Power

An ethical code allows the filmmakers to address the “imbalance of power that often arises between filmmakers and both their subjects and their audience” (Nichols, 2006). It confirms, among other things, the principle of informed consent for subjects, inflected to acknowledge that documentary filmmaking is more of an artistic practice than a scientific experiment.

As Pryluck suggests that when ethics is applied to documentary film it is not about morality, but more about aesthetics. “Ethical assumptions have aesthetic consequences, and aesthetic assumptions have ethical consequences” (Pryluck, 1973). It is evident that ‘ethics’ and ‘aesthetics’ intertwine in documentary film and filmmaker’s decision-making process and obligations should address both these aspects of documentary filmmaking.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Define Ethics. What is the role of ethics in Documentary Filmmaking?

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2) What do you mean by Code of Ethics in Documentary Filmmaking? What is the need for this code ? Explain.

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3) According to you, what should be the role of a documentary filmmaker towards maintaining the balance of power between the filmmaker and both their subjects and their audience

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3.4 DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING: ITS VARIOUS ETHICAL ISSUES AND RESPONSIBILITY

Whenever the filmmakers plan to record a true story, they should be asking few questions of themselves: “To film or not to film? How close to a subject is too close? How far is too far?” (Cipriani, 2014). It is true that sometimes lines are crossed, sometimes boundaries are set beforehand and sometimes the filmmaker and the audience disagree on where the line is, and a divide is created between them. But the filmmakers should try to judge that ‘thin line’ and maintain a balance between “do” or “not to do”.

3.4.1 Various Ethical Issues in Filmmaking

With regard to the ethical approaches and morally ambiguous boundaries, Gordon Quinn, an American documentary filmmaker, feels that filmmakers “need to have a sense of the ethical questions or concerns that will affect their work (Cipriani, 2014)”. “We as documentary filmmakers, I feel, have a responsibility towards ethics,” says Quinn. Quinn further adds, “You owe your audience to tell the truth, to get to the bottom of the story, to be accurate in what you’re presenting.” While citing an instance, Quinn recalled that while making one of his films, a particular subject no longer wanted to be involved. He along with his team held a meeting with the woman and convinced that she could watch the film before it was completed and express her concerns, if any. As Quinn feels that all the filmmakers say this to their subjects at the beginning that they are going to see the film before it’s done and they can see it when it can still be changed. It is true that all the filmmakers should try to convince the subjects that they are very much essential for the documentary; they are important for the story that it’s good for society in general to tell this story. Quinn suggests that at the end of the day, if a filmmaker can’t convince his/her subject then they should take them out of the movie. But Quinn admits that “the rules that apply to an average person, might not apply to someone who is already famous (Cipriani, 2014)”. Quinn further suggests that if the subjects are already famous, the filmmakers must ensure that if it’s really something that bothers them or that they are not happy with what they are going to be listened to. He asserts that at the end of the day it has to be the decision of the filmmaker.

Therefore, with all sense of responsibility, the required rules must be set by the documentarians themselves and should be maintained by them by respecting their conscientiously established boundaries without crossing lines set by both themselves and their subjects (Cipriani, 2014).

3.4.2 Ethical Responsibility to Subjects and Viewers

Aufderheide, Jaszi & Chandra write,

“At a time when there is unprecedented financial pressure on filmmakers to lower costs and increase productivity, they reported that they routinely found themselves in situations where they needed to balance ethical responsibilities against practical considerations (Aufderheide, Jaszi & Chandra, n.d.)”.

A study, conducted by Aufderheide, Jaszi & Chandra on ethical challenges as identified by the documentary filmmakers-directors and producer-directors-in the United States, was summarised: All the respondents commonly shared such principles as, in relation to subjects, “Do no harm” and “Protect the vulnerable,” and, in relation to viewers, “Honour the viewer’s trust.”

The first problem filmmakers confronts: how to cross these lines of privacy and the second problem refers to: how to understand the unfamiliar events which confront them in a strange environment. A process called “participant observation”, a kind of dedicated, alert hanging-out is the answer to both these questions (Spiegel, 1984). The method involves talking to subjects and observing events in the hope of gaining admission to more sensitive areas and more intimate

(and reliable) information. For filmmakers it is especially important that subjects feel at ease with all the bits and pieces of filming. The filmmaker's claim, like Tony de Nonno's, to be "a member of the family" is not only a comfortable fact, it's a claim to legitimacy. The trust of the subject implies a responsibility, an ethical imperative not to betray. The responsibility could be including "the choice of whom to film". However, the ethnographic filmmakers tend to focus on marginal peoples who are relatively powerless and voiceless.

As Pauline Spiegel believes that "some filmmakers feel that this responsibility can be fulfilled by a kind of contractual quid pro quo" (Spiegel, 1984). Filmmaker George Stoney said: "When I go to somebody with camera and microphone and I say, 'Look, give me your soul,' I've got to be able to say 'Look, it is going to help you, not hurt you.'" It is not the case with all filmmakers like Stoney, who made a concentrated effort to use his films to promote dialogue between under represented groups and government bureaucracy. What this quid pro quo implies is "an agreement, stated or unstated, with the subjects to produce a film that shows the subjects the way they see themselves" (Spiegel, 1984). Spiegel opines that in an anthropological context rather than an investigative one, it would be not just impolite but pointless to challenge what people say about themselves.

3.4.3 Ethics in Indian Social Documentary

Anand Patwardhan, an Indian documentary filmmaker known for his socio-political, human rights-oriented films for over four decades, writes in his article, *Ethics is the answer*: "We need liberation theologians, like Ambedkar and Gandhi, who can help people discard the worst features of their inherited religious culture and replace them with ethical interpretations (Patwardhan, 2017)". Some of his films explore the rise of religious fundamentalism, sectarianism and casteism in India, while others investigate nuclear nationalism and unsustainable development. Notable films include *Bombay: Our City (Hamara Shahar)* (1985), *In Memory of Friends* (1990), *In the Name of God (Ram ke Nam)* (1992), *Father, Son, and Holy War* (1995), *A Narmada Diary* (1995), *War and Peace* (2002) and *Jai Bhim Comrade* (2011), which have won national and international awards. You may see these documentaries made by Anand Patwardhan to judge yourself as a viewer whether he has crossed the ethical lines while handling various sensitive issues which have influenced Indian society to greater extent.

Patwardhan strongly believes that "Ethics is the answer" to all the dilemmas with regard to issues related to religion, culture etc. In order to argue on this issue, he writes that Gandhi's *Sarva Dharma Samabhava* (all religions are equal) cannot take the place of Ambedkar's constitutionally guaranteed democratic rights and we need the Constitution much more than we need holy books. As he writes, "Small wonder that Ambedkar and Gandhi, each in turn arrived at individual definitions of *Ahimsa*". It is equally applicable to all the documentary filmmakers while they are at a cross road of taking ethical decisions with regard to the involvement of their subjects in the film as well as interpretation of values, beliefs etc. for the viewers.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Please mention five ethical issues affecting the work of filmmakers?

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2) Describe various ethical responsibilities to subjects and viewers of the Documentary Films.

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3) Watch a documentary film on any social issue (s) of India and mention regarding if at any point of time the filmmaker has crossed the ethical lines with regard to subjects as well as viewers.

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3.5 ETHICAL CHALLENGES FOR THE FILMMAKERS

As discussed in the preceding sections the filmmaker faces a number of ethical challenges. *As Aufderheide, Jaszi & Chandra writes*, “Documentary filmmakers identify themselves as creative artists for whom ethical behaviour is at the core of their projects” (*Aufderheide, Jaszi & Chandra, n.d.*). In relation to subjects the filmmakers, often do not feel obliged to protect subjects because of two reasons: First, they believe that the subjects have themselves done harm. Secondly, some of them have independent access to media, such as celebrities or corporate executives with their own public relations arms. At the same time, in relation to viewers, filmmakers often justify the manipulation of individual facts, sequences, and meanings of images as they strongly feel that it helps tell a story more effectively so that viewers would grasp the main themes of a story as truthful as

they are. However, it has been noted during a survey that filmmakers generally expressed frustration in two areas (*Aufderheide, Jaszi & Chandra, n.d.*). Firstly, they are lack of clarity and standards in ethical practice. Secondly, filmmakers generally are intensely aware of moral dimensions of their craft, and of the economic and social pressures that affect them.

3.5.1 Documentary Filmmakers & Ethical Challenges

Unlike journalism, documentary filmmaking has largely been considered as an individual and freelance effort (*Aufderheide, Jaszi & Chandra, n.d.*). While working for large outlets, such as Discovery, National Geographic, and PBS (The Public Broadcasting Service Inc.), some of these outlets may ask filmmakers to observe standards and practices, and/or ethics codes derived from print journalism and broadcast news. But on the contrary, with regard to the observation of standards and ethics (and even independent fact checking), “documentary filmmakers have largely depended on individual judgment, guidance from executives, and occasional conversations at film festivals (*Aufderheide, Jaszi & Chandra, n.d.*)”.

3.5.2 Ethical Challenges During Filming and Editing

During a survey (*Aufderheide, Jaszi & Chandra, n.d.*), many of the filmmakers have confessed that due to commercial pressures, particularly in the cable business, they have made decisions which they consider them as ‘unethical’. It becomes challenging to “filmmakers’ understanding of their obligations to subjects in particular” due to the growing trend towards faster and cheaper documentaries. Many researchers believe that since budgets demand efficiencies that may be ethically troubling.

It may be very disturbing for you to read something narrated below but for your clarity, one instance is being cited here. While a filmmaker was on location shooting a wildlife film, trying to capture one animal hunting another, recalled (*Aufderheide, Jaszi & Chandra, n.d.*):

We tried to shoot a few, and missed both of them. Unbeknownst to me, the [animal wrangler] broke the next rabbit’s leg, so it couldn’t run. So we got one. On the next take, they then asked, “Should we break its leg again?” . . . the DP [director of photography] was sitting there, saying “No, I’m sure you wouldn’t want to do it,” but nodding his head yes. I made the decision, let them break it. I regret it. It eats me up every day. I can sort of rationalize this, that it might be killed by a natural predator. But for us to inflict pain to get a better shot was the wrong thing to do.”

As far as the “integrity of agreements made between producers and their subjects as a condition of filming” is concerned, it is also threatened due to the assembly-line nature of the production. At the time of editing and post-production, the producer who lines up subjects or oversees production is often separated from this process. Filmmaker feels frustrated as the stations do not always honour the agreements they have made with their subjects. In one example, as a filmmaker expressed during a survey (*Aufderheide, Jaszi & Chandra, n.d.*), “interviews were given and releases were signed on condition that they garble their voice and obscure their face . . . They didn’t garble the voice but did obscure the face.

That makes me uncomfortable; it puts them at risk.”

As the author (filmmaker) of this unit recalls his days in 1999 during a shoot of a documentary on Street Children entitled “Bringing into Focus” for IGNOU: “I could more often watch many children on the street of Delhi selling books, magazines, flowers at the traffic red light. One forenoon, I came on the streets of Delhi with my shooting crew so that I could talk to those children on camera & find out the reason behind they were on the street. Were they earning their livelihoods by choice or by compulsion? But, while a boy was talking to me on camera, an elderly man appeared like a ghost on the scene & whispered him to demand for money from us as he was obliging us by giving the interview. Although, I didn’t pay for his bite on camera, I gave him a ten rupees note in token of my appreciation for his cooperation as he didn’t leave the location despite being prompted for money.” However, demanding money for giving a bite on camera does not come automatically from the subject. It is due to many Documentary Filmmakers’ unethical decisions of offering money to the subjects to act in the documentary according to their wish (or like a fiction).

With regard to staying close versus staying distant with subjects, most filmmakers don’t try to stay distant from their subjects or “collaborators” (as termed by Ross Kauffman), as they feel that people who are being filmed are active participants and without their contribution a film wouldn’t be possible. As far as the issue of involvement versus non-involvement is concerned, *Aufderheide, Jaszi & Chandra* have reported in their survey that several filmmakers recalled many ethically challenging situations where they chose to directly intervene in a situation. To cite one, during filming, it was found out that a night watchman at the house for runaway kids was beating children. The filmmakers reported to the concerned authority and the guard was fired.

3.5.3 Decision-making Process

It is felt that ethical decision-making should be based on “rational justification” (Plaisance, 2008). Plaisance defines ethics as a “form of inquiry concerned with the process of finding rational justifications of our actions when the values that we hold come into conflict”. Patterson and Wilkins argued that “ethics begins where elements of a moral system conflict” (Patterson & Wilkins, 2008). Both the terms “moral systems” and “rational justification” create ambiguity as they often vary from country to country or journalist to journalist because some things that are considered the norm in some countries are considered deviant in others. This difference is largely due to the cultural, political and social background of a filmmaker.

Many filmmakers are motivated by their own reasons to impose upon themselves a series of rules governing style as well as content. It implies a set of limitations. Implicitly, it could be a contract between the filmmaker and the subject which leads to self-censorship (Spiegel, 1984). According to Spiegel, many filmmakers simply refuse to include anything which may make subject look bad as it is unethical. With regard to rationalisation of the issue of censorship, filmmakers claim that they only work on subjects about which they have positive feelings. They also claim that they have no wish or reason to show negative material. But on the contrary, it is felt that such films can be viewed with intellectually cautious as subjects speak entirely for themselves and the filmmaker speaks little.

Whenever the filmmaker intervenes, it is not to analyse them but to provide a context for the events on the screen. Despite these films tell us about other people's values and world views, it remains silent about the how and why of cultural process. It is left to the audience to draw the conclusion on its own. As Spiegel suggests, "it demands an extraordinary alert, educated and thoughtful audience- or else a class of social science students (Spiegel, 1984)".

After going through a detailed discussions on ethical issues and challenges, you might have realised that that everyone involved in filmmaking-subject and filmmaker-brings his or her own hopes, fears and expectations to a film. But the challenges for both, outsiders (filmmakers) looking in and insiders (subjects) looking in, lie with the balancing the responsibility of sympathy with the responsibility of honest interpretation (Spiegel, 1984).

Hope, as a filmmaker one can understand it better. But the audience is intelligent; it will understand and interpret the film it in its own way.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

- 1) What are the ethical challenges faced by the Documentary Filmmakers?
Please write about some ethical challenges faced by any famous Indian Documentary Filmmaker.

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- 2) What kind of Ethical Challenges are faced by the documentary filmmakers during filming and editing process ?

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- 3) What are the factors which influence the ethical decision-making process?

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3.6 LET US SUM UP

After watching a documentary film, the audience may ask: “Whose story is it?” Is the film our story or Director’s story or subject’s story? David MacDougall has raised various questions in this regard (MacDougall, 1998):

“(i) By what means can we distinguish the structures we believe are in our films from the structures that are discerned in them, often without our knowing, by their subjects? And

(ii) is a film in any sense the same object for those who made it, for whom it may have the status of disclosure, and for those who in passing have left their physical traces upon it?”

MacDougall opines that the question of “whose story?” thus has both the dimensions: ontological and moral. According to him, it is considered to be a rare book or film that emerges at the end of the process as the author pre-conceived it. Film itself as a channel of communication and if we ask, “Whose story is it?” in Aboriginal terms, we may have to broaden our conception of “what is narrative”.

It is evident that ‘Documentary Film’ plays a crucial role towards maintaining the balance in the relation between people and the government and between various segments of the society by showing them the ‘mirror’ by reflecting the unethical actions taken by them from time to time. On the contrary, a documentary ethics must approach a foundational level while addressing the need to respect the dignity and person of subjects and viewers alike. It is felt that instead of producing a set of dogma, “do this, do that”, the approach should acknowledge that questions of ethics which remain situated in an evolving historical context. Documentary filmmakers should use basic guidelines rather than rules, as “Art recoils from rules and a documentary ethics will do so, too. (*Aufderheide, Jaszi & Chandra, n.d.*)”

3.7 FURTHER READINGS

- i) **Media Ethics: Cases and Moral Reasoning.** Clifford G. Christians, Kim B. Rotzali & Mark Frackler (Longman)
- ii) **Media Ethics: Key Principles for Responsible Practice.** Patrick Lee & Plaisance (Ch-1: Ethics Theory. Ethics Theory: Application to Media)
- iii) **Transcultural Cinema.** David MacDougall. Edited and with an Introduction

- iv) *Documentary filmmaker Sanjay Kak's three films which are often known as the "Series on Indian Democracy"*

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3.9 UNIT END EXERCISES

- 1) What do you mean by a 'Filmmaker' Discuss all modes of representation which can be considered as the dominant organizational patterns in Documentary Film? Please watch Television for a week and try to identify some documentaries having each of these modes of representation. Justify your answer.

- 2) Is Documentary Film journalistic in nature? Justify your answer in the context of ethical issues.
- 3) Can we consider documentary filmmakers as ‘Gatekeepers’? Justify your answer with suitable examples.
- 4) Define Ethics. What is the role of ethics in Documentary Filmmaking?
- 5) What do you mean by Code of Ethics in Documentary Filmmaking? What is the need for this code? Explain with suitable examples.
- 6) Discuss the role of a documentary filmmaker towards maintaining the balance of power between the filmmaker and both their subjects and their audience.
- 7) Discuss ethical issues affecting the work of filmmakers? Describe various ethical responsibilities to subjects and viewers of the Documentary Films.
- 8) What are the ethical challenges faced by the Documentary Filmmakers? Please read a book on any famous Indian Documentary Filmmaker (preferably a Biography or an ‘Auto-biography’) and write about some ethical challenges faced by the filmmaker during filming/editing process?

3.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISE

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Try to define ‘Filmmaker’ in today’s scenario e.g. you may call either ‘Producer’ or ‘Director’ as a ‘Filmmaker’ with regard to the specific job of a ‘Filmmaker’ which varies from film to film which fulfils all the conditions to be called so.
- 2) Four modes of representation can be considered as the dominant organizational patterns in Documentary Film: expository, observational, interactive, and reflexive.
- 3) Try to read the reviews on films with regard to the comments of the director of the films published on Newspapers on print/on-line.
- 4) Gatekeepers are people who regulate the flow of information, language and knowledge and determine what becomes a person’s social reality, a particular view of the world.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Ethics: A theory or system dealing with values relating to human conduct, with respect to the rightness and wrongness of certain actions and to the goodness and badness of the motives and ends of such actions.
- 2) Code of Ethics in Documentary Filmmaking– To establish standards for an ethical documentary practice.
- 3) Imbalance of power that often arises between filmmakers and both their subjects and their audience.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Filmmakers need to have a sense of the ethical question or concerns that affect their work.
- 2) Due to the unprecedented financial pressure on makers to lower costs and increase productivity, filmmakers find themselves in situations where they need to balance ethical responsibilities against practical considerations.
- 3) Patwardhan strongly believes that “Ethics is the answer” to all the dilemmas with regard to issues related to religion, culture etc.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Documentary filmmakers largely depend on individual judgment, guidance from executives, and occasional conversations at film festivals.
- 2) At the time of editing and post-production, the producer who lines up subjects or oversees production is often separated from this process. Filmmaker feels frustrated as the stations do not always honour the agreements they have made with their subjects.
- 3) Ethical decision-making should be based on rational justification.



UNIT 4 EDITING AND CONSTRUCTION OF MEANING*

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Editing
 - 4.2.1 Construction of Meaning
 - 4.2.2 Construction of Meaning and Culture
 - 4.2.3 Meaning Construction and Gender
 - 4.2.4 Media, Meaning and Ideology
- 4.3 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.4 Key Words
- 4.5 Further Readings and References
- 4.6 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercise

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you would be able to:

- Discuss editing as a technique and process,
- Describe how editing is related with construction of meaning,
- Explain construction of meaning in a cultural context with regard to gender and ideology, and
- Describe how ‘meaning’ and ideology are interlinked.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Unit, we observed the relationship between ‘the film-maker and the filmed’ and the ethics involved in it. In the present unit, we are going to take this discussion further and will be discussing the aspect of Editing and the construction of meaning. In the process of film making, post-shooting of the film, the next process is of editing. Editing helps in sequencing and systematic arrangement of a film or program in a logical or defined manner. It helps to streamline the narrative or the vision objective with which the film was made. Editing is related with the construction of meaning of the narrative which we will be now reading in detail.

4.2 EDITING

We will now look at editing as a technique and a process and how it leads to construction of meaningful stories. Editing is about the selection, arrangement and timing of visual shots together. The shot is the most basic unit on which a film is made. Films before editing were single, stationary shots of daily events.

It is through editing that the process of selection of shots takes place. The film needs to be shot well for the shots to be strung together meaningfully to create a beautiful visual story. An editor is then supposed to:

*Dr. Uzma Azhar

- a) Select a shot;
- b) Display in an order all the shots and arrange them one after the other; and
- c) Choose the length of time single shot will be shown for.

In 1889, film/motion picture was born and continued with single shot representations till 1903 when ability to cut from one shot to another was developed. It was around 1915 that we see the emergence of the term ‘editors’ (in English) for people who put the images together emphasizing on the important evaluative part of the work. But in other places different terms were used, like in France “monteurs”, in Spain “montadores” and Italy “montatori” all signifying the aspect of rearrangement of images.

For example, in the 1950s Akira Kurosawa’s *Rashomon* where same story with four different versions were shown and Kurosawa used editing technique of pacing the story differently to show each one’s perspective. Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* in 1960 showed how pace in editing could be used to take the story forward and create suspense. In India, Renu Saluja in films like *Jaane bhi do Yaaron* (1983), *Parinda* (1989) or Ram Gopal Verma’s *Satya* (1998) heralded a new era of slick editing in Hindi cinema.

For fiction films the story is written in advance of the shooting. In documentary films, story emerges in editing of the film. Filming or shooting accumulates scenes from which a film can be edited. Horror requires great deal of knowledge about editing as suspense is created through fast pace changing of shots.

Process:

- a) Synchronization of shot visuals and sound;
- b) A log is organized which puts together details of the shots, summarizing and classifying each shot;
- c) Evaluation of all the shot material (many shots get rejected at this stage);
- d) Selected shots are then put together;
- e) How long a shot will be shown for (seconds/minutes) is decided and extra parts are deleted;
- f) If required, extra music and visuals are added to enhance the story’s narrative;
- g) Final selection happens;
- h) Movie post-selection of shots is screened for the production team.

Re-Editing in Soviet Cinema in the 1920s

The relationship between editing and culture has been explored in various researches. Yuri Tsivian (1996) in his essay ‘The Wise and the Wicked Game: Re-Editing and Soviet Film Culture of the 1920s in Film History’ explains about the term “re-editing” (peremontazh) as used in the Soviet film industry of the 1920s meaning: the reworking of a film to suit it to a country other than that of its origin. Apart from the ‘re-editing’ in the proper sense of the word, this term also referred to re-titling, altering the main title, changing character names and adding new scenes to pre-existing footage. Generally, re-editing is associated with censorship, and is regarded as part of the political history of film. Tsivian looks at it through the lens of film style and culture, and discusses two activities:

- 1) The reworking of foreign films for Soviet screens
- 2) The reworking of Soviet films for export.

In fact similar practices served different sections of the film industry (re-editing for export was part of production-or, rather, post production-performed, as a rule, at the studio where the prototype print had been made, whereas incoming films were re-edited by their distributors). Each practice was motivated by its own policy and by its own aesthetic logic. He explains in his article how the process of re-editing afforded early Soviet filmmakers and editors an opportunity to test ideas of foreignness and to articulate (as well as play with) the ways in which Soviet identities ‘should be portrayed’.

Even in present times, films are re-edited to suit the tastes’ of varied audiences worldwide. American films have to go through Censor board certification (based on ‘Indian sensibilities’) before they are screened in India and some Hollywood films are even re-edited for Asian audiences.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What is editing?

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4.2.1 Construction of Meaning

Let us now see how meaning is constructed in cinema. Watching a film seems simple-everybody looks at the image and the image leads to meaning. Film spectatorship builds on the connection between chosen features of the cinematic display like framing of the shot, its composition, background, lighting, colour, focus, costume, movement, etc. leading to the real world visual and social experience of the viewer. The viewer creates meaning only from what the framework of the film is offering and guiding him to create meaning for himself from the image.

Film viewing can be seen through three perspectives:

- a) Straight forward story telling where the film leads the viewer through the story;
- b) Consistency of the story is there but its treatment can bring out certain meanings, e.g. Fargo (1996) by Coen brothers or Kundan Shah’s *Jaane bhi do Yaaron* (1983) as satire is still considered a classic.
- c) Domination of style but coherence and realism in the post-modern narrative leave a lot of interpretation to the viewer. Wachowkis’ *Matrix* (1999) or Christopher Nolan’s *Inception* (2010).

Burton (2005) states, “film viewing is a reflective process in which the spectator identifies not only with elements such as characters within the film, but also

with the process of looking that the film carries out through the camera. ... There is what is called 'subjectivity', in which the spectator appears to be the subject of the film's discourse, in which we inhabit the cinematic world – talking of both realism and narrative – as if by magic. We identify with the screen image and the screen world, although it is an illusion, a construction is socially produced, and is a manifestation of ideology." (pg. 189)

The psycho-analysis of viewing of films employs Freud's theory on fetishism, i.e. substitution of a specific object with the object of our desire. In early Western films simple symbolism was followed. The cowboys were given white and black hats which used to signify their characters as good (white) or bad (black). In the era of 1950s and 1960s in Hindi movies one can see the gender specific characterization of desirable traits of male and female characters. It could be a portrayal of their on-screen persona of ultimate beauty for men and women. It could also embody the ethical and morally correct behavior of the main protagonist. The viewer as a subject looks at the image as 'self' and embodies the main character of hero in the movie-romancing the pretty heroine, fighting the bad guys, upholding the morals or '*dharma*'. Cinema is often viewed as extension of our personalities mostly in ideal terms. For instance, in the Hindi film industry in Bombay, the Barjatya production house is known for idealistic portrayals and simple narratives. They made films like *Nadiya ke Paar* (1982), *Hum aapke hain Kaun* (1994), *Vivaah* (2006). These were mostly domestic family dramas around a love relationship and all characters portraying negative and positive roles were easily identifiable; there were no grey characters. These movies have a simple storyline narrated in a straight forward manner. Hindi movies like *Rockstar*, *Tamasha*, *Haider* and *Kabir Singh* have characters with shades of grey. The treatment of the films is post-modernist and leaves a lot to the interpretation by the viewer.

4.2.2 Construction of Meaning and Culture

In this section, we will look at the relationship between constructions of meaning in films with culture. The construction of meaning in a film is dependent on its cultural context. The cultural context could varied- rural or urban; gender based; class, caste and race as systems of stratification or any other. The cultural context plays a part in how a viewer as a subject creates meaning for himself in the process of viewing.

Content creators like actors, writers, producers and directors and other production personnel are located within a particular economic and organizational system. This system forms a part of their personal and professional lives. The social, legal, political and economic constraints within which they are live and function influence the narratives that they portray in cinema. Both producers and consumers are influenced by their spatial locations. Rockeach and Cantor (1986) observe, content is created within a social system. They contend that all over the world the power to create content for the mass media rests with a select few. These are generally people who usually occupy formal roles in bureaucratic structures. These 'communicators' are the most concrete controllers of media information resources- creating, gathering, processing and disseminating resources that have become fundamental to the conduct of societal, cultural, organizational and personal life' (pg. 15). As far as media consumers are concerned they are 'active individuals and members of social groupings who consume media products in

the context of their personal and social goals. And it is the media which connects audience to its various institutions' (pg. 17). For instance, in order to gain social and cultural acceptability and to create a balance the producers often add a positive character to the story if a character is shown as negative.

According to Booth (2000), Hindi film cinema is more dependent on social, historical and aesthetic context than most other commercial films. This is mostly owing to its audience. Hindi film audience is still quite conservative when it comes to themes and stories. Since the majority of the population is still living in villages they generally prefer simple stories. There has been some change in the recent times as seen in the works of a few young directors. These include directors like Anurag Kashyap (*Gangs of Wasseypur* in 2012) and Zoya Akhtar (*Gully Boy* in 2019). But their audience base is still small and is very niche and urban.

4.2.3 Meaning Construction and Gender

In this section we will examine the portrayal of gender and the gendered construction of meaning in cinema. Most films and television serials discourse on 'appropriate' behavior for women. The depiction of 'appropriate' behavior is generally patriarchal. For example, adultery by women is punished or is considered negative. Men on the other hand are given more leeway in terms of their behavior. Homosexuality is often made fun of in the narrative. The asymmetry of power between men and women in society is represented in cinema and television. The depiction of women in terms of their behavior and otherwise is derived from a patriarchal construction. The depiction of men too is derived from the heteronormative thus homosexual men are portrayed as deviants and are made fun of. The social construction of meaning in society in the context of gender is portrayed in cinema and television (Mulvey, 1975).

Stereotypes can also be seen as ways of referring to complex social relationships and portray power equations in the society. In the West the 'dumb blonde' stereotype portrayed in many Hollywood films refers to the subordinate position of women in western society. In *Feminine Mystique* (1964) Betty Friedan had criticized the ideological messages in American culture mostly conveyed through popular media images. The messages that they conveyed was one wherein women were fulfilled through housework, marriage, sexual lives, and children. An ideal woman must not aspire for a career, education or have political aspirations. She challenged the widely held belief that "fulfillment as a woman had only one definition for American women after 1949— the housewife-mother." (Page ix-xx).

Laura Mulvey gave the Male Gaze theory (Mulvey, 1975) women in the media are viewed from the eyes of a heterosexual man. Women are represented as passive objects of desire for men. In her analysis of the cinema's system of representation sees it as offering men the dominant spectator position, the implied viewer who is seen as the 'bearer of the look' while women are enclosed within their sphere, as they are given the position of identifying with objectified and passive images of themselves. This theory can be viewed in three ways:

- How men look at women
- How women look at themselves
- How women look at other women.

Typical examples of the male gaze include close-up shots of women from over a man's shoulder. Such shots are fixated on a woman's body. These scenes that occur frequently in a movie for example show a man actively observing a passive woman. The Male Gaze implies that the female viewer must experience the narrative secondarily, by identification with the male. It is the duty of the man to 'act' while woman just appears/exists. The dominant-male and dominated-female are depicted by representing the female as a passive object for the male gaze. The social depiction of the dominant male and the dominated female is accepted by the viewer as it is a part of patriarchal gendered norms. The mainstream cinema reinforces these stereotypes. The female gaze directed at themselves and at other women are also influenced by these stereotypes. The movies that feature the male gaze are considered to be more important from the point of view of audience-male and female- acceptability. This also translates into commercial success. The same is true for the telecast and depiction of sports. Only some sports are viewed as entertainment. Women athletes who participate in traditionally unacceptable sports like rugby, softball, volleyball, hockey, basketball are neglected. While 'socially acceptable' sports are sports like swimming, tennis, gymnastics, golf, figure skating. The former involve power and aggression and are thus ignored and neglected by the media. The latter are considered to be more acceptable and are telecast more often. The guiding principle is one of highest return on one's investment or the TRPs (television rating points). The male dominated institutions like the movies, advertising and television thus influence and determine what is "natural and normal" in society (Mulvey, 1975).

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Explain the Male gaze theory.

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4.2.4 Media, Meaning and Ideology

As we have discussed in the preceding section media depicts the cultural model. It upholds the patriarchal norms. In this section we will discuss the role of ideology in the construction of meaning in media and films. Media organizations are varied and complex. Media upholds a cultural model, essentially a Durkheimian model in which the normative integration of a society is important. Anomie endangers this integration. For Durkheim, religion and the state act as symbols of the collectivity. They reinforce a collective consciousness and a solidarity. They create a shared identity that reinforces and reproduces the normative integration. The media helps in promoting this solidarity amongst diverse regional and cultural groups in various ways. It could be through the use of language or cultural symbolism (Mc Cormac 1986). For example, the telecast of the Independence Day speech on 15 August by the Indian Prime Minister or the 4 July fireworks in the United States of America or the Olympic ceremony help reinforce a common identity through the use of rhetoric.

According to Burton the relationship between the media and society and the construction of meaning is through various means. These are (Burton, 2005, pg. 6):

- a) Media institutions and the production of cultural goods
- b) Regulations by the government and those institutions themselves,
- c) The relationship between representations and conditions of production and consumption with reference to media texts, and
- d) The consumption of culture with regard to social and cultural inequalities.

Schudson observes from 1972 to 1985 media sociology has developed in three directions. It has been neo-Weberian, with an emphasis on concepts of organization, profession or occupation, production and market; neo-Marxist, with attention to the concept of hegemony and ideology and neo-Durkheimian with a focus on concepts of ritual and culture. Neo-Weberian examine the producers of culture, from the point of view of the market. Content which sells is produced. The neo-Marxists control the symbolic content of culture. Journalists share the world view of the owners and use gatekeeping and agenda setting to keep items which are harmful to elites out of the media agenda and thus voluntarily spread the dominant ideology. This perspective is also known as the Dominant Ideology, or Hegemonic perspective on the media. Neo-Durkheimian position holds that the experience of audiences with the mass media provides people a sense of connection to the collective whole that few other institutions today can rival. (p.46) Media events also create a sense of 'community' (e.g. Olympics ceremony, funeral of Mahatma Gandhi/Nehru, oath taking ceremonies, etc.).

Critical approach in media views the effects of mass media on society. They argue that competing points of view provide an illusion of openness. In actuality it is confined or limited to an agenda or 'overall discourse'. This sets the limits to what shall or what shall not, be discussed by society. The term 'agenda setting' is often used to refer to a process where the terms of reference for the debate are fixed to suit the interests of the powerful. For example, media is often accused of showing urban stories from Delhi and Mumbai. As in 2017, according to the World Bank collection of development indicators, 66.46 % of the population in India is rural. Control for the content rests with organizations responsible for manufacturing and transmitting cultural products. They are obviously urban elite and dominate the bureaucratic structures of the media organizations.

Frankfurt School critical approach theorist Stuart Hall has talked about how the ruling class retains its control over other groups' and creates' consensus within society. Media often becomes a tool which helps in reproducing dominant ideology. The dominant ideology which they express through images and words in popular mass media, is a dominant way by which the powerful secure their position. Horkheimer and Adorno in their work *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) talk about how art and culture forms become increasingly standardized and commodified as films, TV and radio. They do not challenge an individual's fantasies or intelligence. They presuppose and foster the lack of imagination and spontaneity of the passive spectator and induce conformity. The culture industry is suspicious of the new does not want to experiment. The culture industry converts individuals into consumers. It systematically conveys the message that the consumers cannot conceive of themselves in any other way. As Adorno states it

impedes the development of autonomous, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves. (Larrain, 1994).

Horkheimer and Adorno, fresh from the political and economic totalitarianism of Nazi Germany, discovered a new form of tyranny in the United States in the form of Hollywood and the cultural industry. The cultural industry produces a standardised, homogenised mass culture in which the market, like a lava flow, consumes everything of value in its path. Citizens are turned into consumers. Culture and entertainment are fused. Consumers are classified and labelled in the same way as commodities are. The media, and especially the new medium of television (they were writing originally on these matters in 1944) provide a constant and de-differentiating flow: of repetitive, predictable, smug and superficial programming. Real life is becoming indistinguishable from its mediation in film and television. All is false: pleasure, happiness, spectacle, laughter, sexuality, individuality. Amusement is structured according to the rhythms demanded by the entertainment factory- the media.

Kapsis (1986, p. 162) quotes Gans (1957):

“The making of a picture itself can be viewed as a decision making process. As each creator applies his audience image in the decisions that have to be made, he is “representing” some of the publics who will eventually see the movie. The completed picture is a combination of the decisions made by its creators, and also a compromise or perhaps more correctly, a ‘negotiated synthesis,’ of their individual audience images. However, this synthesis takes place within a power structure, and the final decisions are often made by studio executives who point the compromise in a direction that seems to assure the largest box office (p.318).

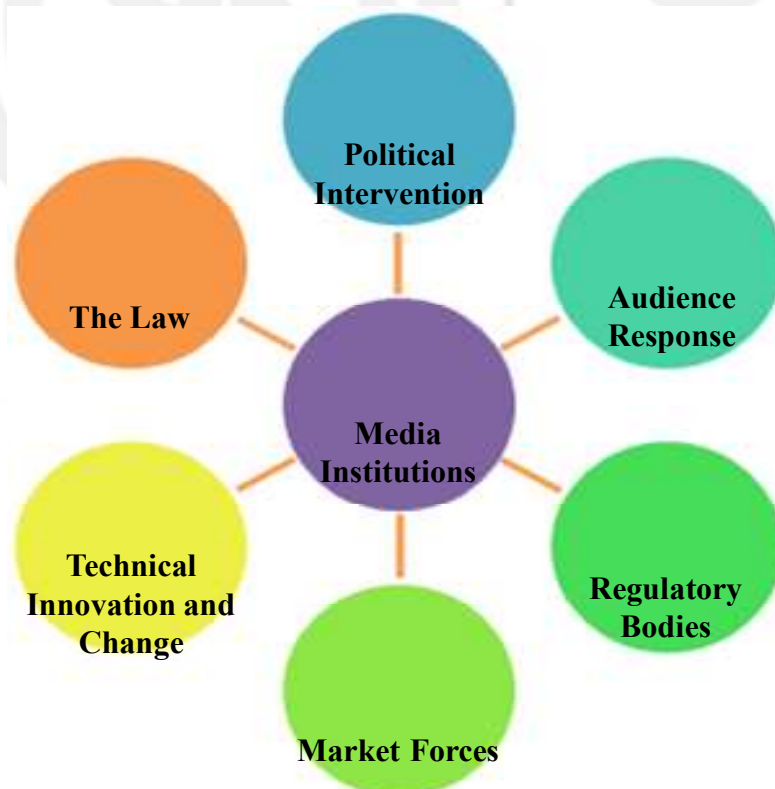


Figure 4.1: Dependency and Pressures over media (Burton, 2005)

The film industry is now composed of corporate firms and trade associations. Firms are of two types, Major corporations which control a large part of the market, generally produce, distribute and exhibit their own films. Independents are smaller companies that limit themselves to only one or two of these functions. They regulate institutions and try to make media content conform to their ideal social order. The most active public organizations are the state censorship boards and federal propaganda agencies. The same control is visible in advertising too. Advertising in capitalist economies is a major source of revenue. These large corporations influence content and development. People are encouraged to identify themselves with brands (Pepsi generation), based on what they consume rather than what they produce. In some countries, where mass media is state controlled it becomes instrument of the government. In countries where private companies own mass media the influence of the market forces of capitalism dictate policy and profits are aimed for at the cost of information.

Television newsrooms have a hierarchy of specialized staff divided into:

- i) News-gatherers (journalists who work in the field) and
- ii) News processors (like editors and sub editors) who filter the news/information and decide what goes where.

The story is written by the sub-editor and duty editor supervises the compilation of the bulletin, fixes the running order of the film and gives it shape. (Hood 1972). Because all of these media workers tend to be drawn from certain class background (urban middle class) their view of their judgement of events and their newsworthiness gets affected. The shots which get included with the story are selected by the film editor. The day's story is decided by the editor, the day's coverage, briefs' about the story, camera crew and reporters' are dedicated to different news stories.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) What is culture industry?

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4.3 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we discussed editing as a technique and process for films. We looked at how meaning is constructed in the narrative in a cultural context and gets affected by various external factors. We also observed how gender and ideology both play a big role in the construction of meaning and affect media in its various forms and mediums.

4.4 KEYWORDS

Editing: It is about the selection, arrangement and timing of visual shots together.

Shot: Shot is the most basic unit on which a film is built.

Male Gaze theory: Laura Mulvey gave this theory and observed that films offer men the dominant spectator position, the implied viewer who is seen as the 'bearer of the look' while women are given the position of identifying with objectified and passive images of themselves.

Culture industry: It produces a standardised, homogenised mass culture in which the market, consumes everything considered valuable in society.

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4.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISE

Check Your Progress 1

Editing is about the selection, arrangement and timing of visual shots together, and shot is the most basic unit on which a film is built.

Check Your Progress 2

Laura Mulvey gave the Male Gaze theory (1975) and in her analysis of the cinema's system of representation sees it as offering men the dominant spectator position, the implied viewer while women are given the position of identifying with objectified and passive images of themselves.

Check Your Progress 3

Culture industry produces a standardised, homogenised mass culture in which the market, consumes everything considered valuable in society.



UNIT 5 UNDERSTANDING MULTIPLE SHOTS AND CAMERA MOVEMENTS*

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Shot
- 5.3 Types of Shots and their Uses
 - 5.3.1 Shots classified by the movement of camera
 - 5.3.2 Shots classified by the subject's size in the frame
 - 5.3.3 Shots classified by camera angle
 - 5.3.4 Other types of shots
- 5.4 Camera Movement
- 5.5 Types of Camera Movements and their Uses
- 5.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.7 Further Readings and References
- 5.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercise

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you'll be able to:

- Understand the different types of shots used in film and video production;
- Describe the various camera movements;
- Explain the purposes of different types of shots and camera movements;
- Select the suitable shot or camera movement for your film or video production.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Film is an audiovisual product which generally consists of two elements: audio and visual. A film communicates its message mainly through visuals, supported by the audio component. If you want to make a film you must have understanding of visual language. Visual language has its own grammar, and shots and camera movements are its important elements. In this Unit, we'll discuss the different types of shots and camera movements used in filmmaking. Once you'll understand the basics of visual language, you can use it in different audiovisual productions including ethnographic films. For example, if you know the English language, you can use this language for writing different things like stories, news reports, books, articles, novels, etc. The style of language may be different in story writing, news writing or book writing, but basics and grammar of the language will remain same. The same logic is also applicable to visual language.

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5.2 SHOT

Just like written language, visual language (language of film) has also different units. You can equate letters with frames, words with shots, sentences with scenes, paragraphs with sequences and the whole story with the complete film. Though letter is the smallest unit of written language, it lacks meaning. Collection of letters form a word which carries some meaning. So, we can say that word is the smallest meaningful unit of the written language. Similarly, shot is the smallest meaningful unit of the visual language. It is a collection of frames. Basically, frame is a still image recorded by the camera and a number of frames together form a shot. As you know that by playing a number of sequential still images at a certain speed, the experience of movement can be created, and the film works on the same concept.

In filmmaking or video production, you can define shot as the recording or footage without any break. Shot is a single unbroken footage or recording. You can also say that shot is a footage or recording from one cut to another cut. The duration of a shot may be a few seconds or up to several minutes. If you see any film cautiously you can easily identify different shots.

5.3 TYPES OF SHOTS AND THEIR USES

As we discussed, shot is a very important element of visual language through which you can narrate your story in a film. Every type of shot has its own purpose and usefulness. You can make your viewers more connected to your film by using suitable shots. Wrong selection of shots can create disturbance in smooth storytelling and cause distraction of the viewers.

Shots can be classified on the basis of different criteria. A few important classifications are given below:

- i) Shots classified by the movement of camera
- ii) Shots classified by the subject's size in the frame
- iii) Shots classified by camera angle
- iv) Other types of shots

5.3.1 Shots classified by the movement of camera

You can classify the shots into two following broad categories on the basis of the movement of camera:

- i) Static shot
 - ii) Dynamic shot
- i) **Static shot:** If you don't move camera during recording of a shot, it'll be called a static shot. In static shots, camera doesn't move, only the characters can move.
 - ii) **Dynamic shot:** Dynamic shots are taken by the moving camera. If you move your camera during the recording of a shot, it will be classified as dynamic shot. For example, two persons are talking to each other angrily in your shot, then camera moves to left for showing the presence of few other

people. It will be counted as a dynamic shot. We will discuss the different types of camera movements in the later part of this unit.

5.3.2 Shots classified by the subject's size in the frame

Shots can be classified by size of the subject captured in the frame. Here, you need to know about the two terms: 'subject' and 'frame'.

Subject: A subject may be the character or any object which is the center of interest for the camera. In other words, subject is the character or object which will be in focus during recording. More than one character or object may also be treated as subjects.

Frame: A frame is a still image and the smallest unit of any film or video. As we discussed earlier, a number of frames together make a shot. In this context, frame is the space of that still image available to a director or cinematographer to compose a shot. You can also say that frame is an area which is captured by a camera and visible to the audience. Anything which is out of frame during shooting is not the part of film because it is not captured by the camera.

On the basis of subject's size captured in the frame, shots can be divided into three basic types:

- 1) Close-up
- 2) Medium shot
- 3) Long shot.

These three basic shots can further be divided into few other types. On the basis of subject's size, you can classify shots into seven following types:

- 1) Extreme close-up (ECU)
- 2) Close-up (CU)
- 3) Medium close-up (MCU)
- 4) Medium shot (MS)
- 5) Medium long shot (MLS)
- 6) Long shot (LS)
- 7) Extreme long shot (ELS)

All these above-mentioned shots can be framed by changing the distance between camera and the subject. While framing a shot, you can capture anything according to the need of your story. It may be human beings, animals, plants, non-living objects, etc. Here we'll use a female character as an example to explain the different types of shots and their purposes. But before starting the discussion on different types of shots, you should be aware of one rule. A shot should never be cut at the natural divisions of our body like neck, waist and knees. You should always cut your shots from just above or below these natural divisions.

- 1) **Extreme close-up (ECU):** It is closer than the close-up shot and captures a part of face. It is abbreviated as ECU. Extreme close-up shot is used to show the important details of a smaller area. You can use this shot to reveal some important marks on your character's face or some important and

meaningful activities of your character's eyes, lips etc. It helps to show detailed facial expressions and emotions. For example an extreme close-up could be of a character's tearful eyes. It helps the director reveal the character's emotion beautifully. Extreme close-ups of shining teeth are commonly used in the advertisement films of different dental products. Figure 1.1 is an example of extreme close-up shot.



Figure 1.1 : Extreme close-up shot

- 2) **Close-up (CU):** It captures the whole face. The whole frame is mainly covered with the face only, so negligible background information is available. Close-up shots are used to show the facial expressions and emotions. These shots provide opportunities to actors and actresses to show their acting skills. Close-up shots are frequently used as reaction shots to show the character's reactions and emotions. It is abbreviated as CU. Figure 1.2 shows an example of close-up shot.



Figure 1.2 : Close-up shot

- 3) **Medium close-up (MCU):** Medium close-up shot is generally framed from just below the armpit or lower chest. This shot is also called as head and shoulders shot because it captures head and shoulders both. Bust shot is one of the more popular name of a medium close-up. You can use this shot to show your character's reactions and emotions. It reveals some information about the background. Figure 1.3 shows the example of medium close-up.



Figure 1.3 : Medium close-up shot

- 4) **Medium shot (MS):** It is also called as mid-shot. In medium shot, you frame your character from just above or below the waist. It reveals information about the background. You can capture the body language and the activities of the characters. Figure 1.4 shows an example of medium shot.



Figure 1.4 : Medium shot

- 5) **Medium long shot (MLS):** It is an intermediate shot between the medium shot and the long shot. In medium long shot, you should frame your character from just below or above the knees. It is also called as three quarters shot because it covers three quarters of your character. Medium long shot reveals enough information about the background. You can show the activities of your characters through medium long shot. Figure 1.5 shows the example of medium long shot.



Figure 1.5 : Medium long shot

- 6) **Long shot (LS):** A Long shot (LS) is sometimes also known as wide shot or full shot. In a long shot, you frame the full body from head to toe. Long shot puts your character in the context. You can use this shot to establish your location. It provides detailed information about the background. You can show the activities of your characters with clear background details through this shot. Figure 1.6 shows the example of a long shot.



Figure 1.6 : Long shot (LS)

- 7) **Extreme long shot (ELS):** In this shot, background or location is more dominant than the character. It gives larger view of the location. Extreme long shot is often used as an establishing shot to establish the location. Generally, it comes at the beginning of any film or sequence to show the larger view of the location. You can see the example of extreme long shot in figure 1.7.



Figure 1.7 : Extreme long shot

Activity 1

Watch any film (preferably ethnographic film) just for two minutes and try to do following things:

- Count the number of shots used during these two minutes
- List the types of shots used during these two minutes

5.3.3 Shots classified by camera angle

You can also classify the shots on the basis of camera angles. Camera angle tells about the placement of camera in relation to the subject. For example, if the camera is placed at a higher place to the subject, it'll be called higher angle and the vice-versa. On this basis you can classify shots into following types:

- 1) Eye-level shot
- 2) High-angle shot
- 3) Low-angle shot
- 4) Bird's eye view shot
- 5) Worm's eye view shot

1) **Eye-level shot:** It is a normal shot. You can frame an eye-level shot by placing the camera at the eye level of the character. Eye level shot provides a normal viewing effect. It is a common and most utilized shot. All the pictures from figure 1.1 to 1.7 are the examples of eye-level shots.

2) **High-angle shot:** As name suggests, in high-angle shot, the camera is placed at the higher level. It gives an effect as you are looking down at the subject. You can use high angle shot to show your character weaker or less important. High-angle shots are also used to show those things which can't be shown through eye-level shot. Figure 1.8 presents an example of high-angle shot.



Figure 1.8 : High-angle shot

- 3) **Low-angle shot:** In this type of shot, you place the camera at lower level. It gives the effect as you are looking up at a taller or bigger thing. Low-angle shot makes the subject stronger, important and dominant. Figure 1.9 is an example of low-angle shot.



Figure 1.9 : Low-angle shot

- 4) **Bird's eye view shot:** This shot provides a view as a bird observing something on ground from the sky. It is also called overhead shot. In this type of shot, you place the camera just above the subject and location. This shot gives a complete view of the location where the action is going on. You can use this shot to reveal the information about the location and action which are not possible to be shown through a high-angle shot. Figure 1.10 shows the example of bird's eye view shot.



Figure 1.10 : Bird's eye view shot

- 5) **Worm's eye view shot:** It is an extreme low-angle shot. It gives effect like a worm looking at the bigger or taller things. You can frame a worm's eye view shot by placing the camera far below the subject. It exaggerates the subject's appearance and makes it very strong and dominant like a giant. Figure 1.12 shows the example of worm's eye view shot.



Figure 1.12 : Worm's eye view shot

5.3.4 Other types of shots

There are few other types of shots which are used frequently in filmmaking or video production. You should know about these shots. These are following:

- 1) **Over-the-shoulder shot (OTS):** Figure 1.13 shows an example of over-the-shoulder shot. The name of this shot refers to the placement of camera just behind the shoulder of a character, presenting a view of what the character sees. Generally, it is used to show conversations between two characters.



Figure 1.13 : Over-the-shoulder shot (OTS)

- 2) **Point-of-view shot (POV):** Point-of-view shot shows the things from the viewpoint of a character. Figure 1.14 shows the example of a point-of-view shot.



Figure 1.14 : Point-of-view shot

- 3) **Reaction shot:** Reaction shot is very important in storytelling. You frame this shot to show the reaction of a character on any dialogue or action. For example, just imagine a scene in which three characters are discussing something. One of the characters reveals a shocking information. Now you'll have to show the reactions of other two characters through reaction shots. Reaction shots show the facial expressions and emotions of the characters. Generally, reaction shots are framed as close-up or medium close-up shots. An example of reaction shot is shown in figure 1.15.



Figure 1.15 : Reaction shot

Check Your Progress 1

Answer briefly.

- 1) What is shot?

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- 2) When will you use extreme long shot?

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- 3) Explain the differences between high-angle shot and low-angle shot.

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- 4) What is the smallest unit of a film?
 - a) Shot
 - b) Frame
 - c) Scene
 - d) Sequence
- 5) To show the character's reaction (reaction shot), you will use _____.
 - a) Long shot
 - b) Extreme long shot
 - c) Close-up shot
 - d) Knee shot

5.4 CAMERA MOVEMENT

Camera movement refers to the movement of a camera while recording a shot. It is an important element of the visual language. It helps in storytelling and getting involvement of the audiences. Camera movements can also create or add emotions in a shot. The type of movement and the speed of movement both create some meanings. Camera movements are very important in filmmaking and you must know about the commonly used common camera movements.

5.5 TYPES OF CAMERA MOVEMENTS AND THEIR USES

As we discussed earlier, there are various types of camera movements that create dynamic shots. Few important camera movements are following:

- 1) Pan
 - 2) Tilt
 - 3) Pedestal
 - 4) Dolly/Track
 - 5) Zoom
 - 6) Truck
 - 7) Arc
 - 8) Crane movements
 - 9) Handheld camera movements
 - 10) Movements with the help of camera stabilizers
- 1) **Pan:** Pan is a horizontal movement in which you can move your camera from right to left or left to right. In panning, camera mount stays stationary. Panning gives effect like looking from side to side while standing at one place. You can use pan to follow the movement of a character or to reveal the information about any place. Figure 1.16 displays the pan movement.

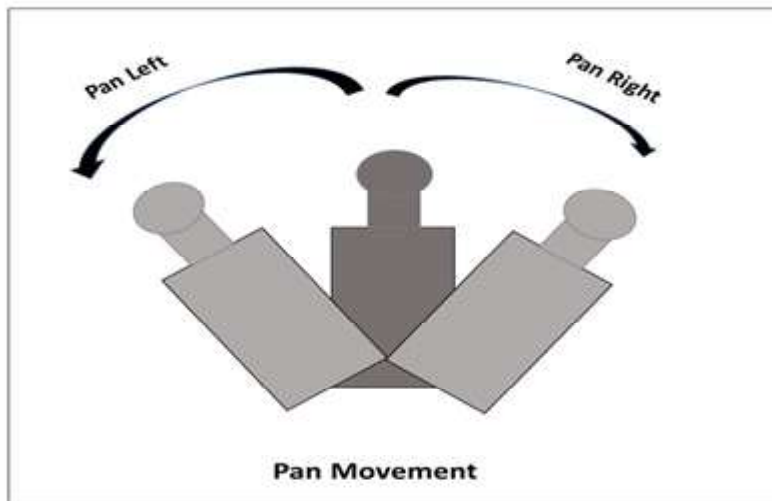


Figure 1.16 : Pan Movement

- 2) **Tilt:** Tilt is a vertical movement in which you can move your camera up or down. Like pan, camera mount stays stationary in tilting also. Tilting gives effect like looking up or down while standing at one place. Tilt movement can be used to follow the upward or downward movements of your character. You can use this movement to reveal more information about your location. Figure 1.17 shows the tilt movement.

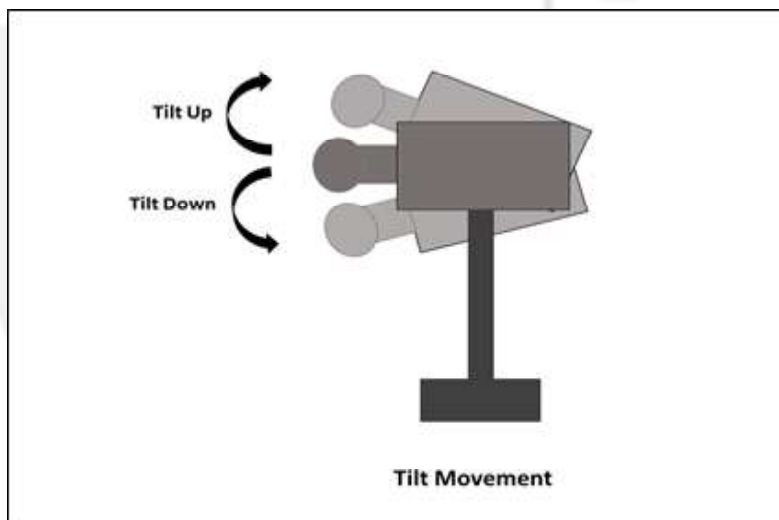


Figure 1.17 : Tilt Movement

- 3) **Pedestal:** Pedestal is a type of camera mount generally used in studios. In pedestal up/down, camera moves up and down without any change in its vertical or horizontal axis. You should not be confused between tilt and pedestal. In tilt, camera mount stays stationary, there is no change in the height of camera mount, only camera pivots up or down. But in pedestal, the height of camera mount changes. In pedestal up, camera moves upward as the height of camera mount increases and vice versa in pedestal down. It is difficult to do this movement with general tripods. Figure 1.18 explains the pedestal movement.

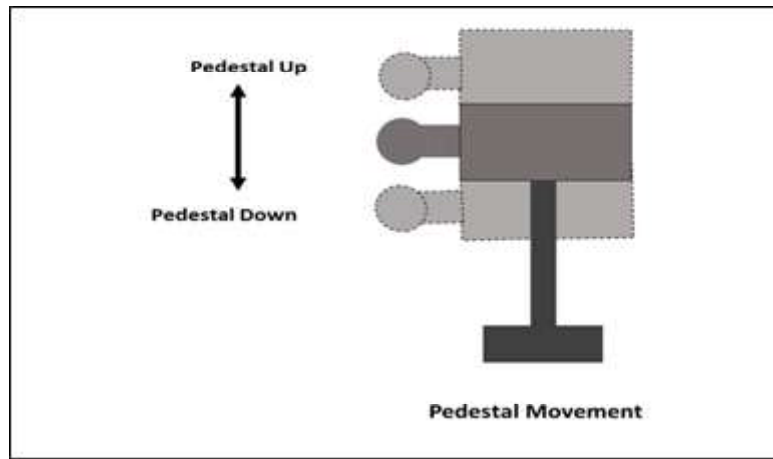


Figure 1.18 Pedestal Movement

- 4) **Dolly/Track:** Dolly or track is a movement of camera towards or away from the subject. If you move the camera towards the subject, it will be called 'dolly in' or 'track in' whereas if camera goes away from the subject it will be called 'dolly out' or 'track out'. Wheeled camera mounts and tracks are used for this movement. This movement maintains the normal perspective. It gives the effect as you are moving towards or away from the subject. Figure 1.19 explains the dolly or track movement.

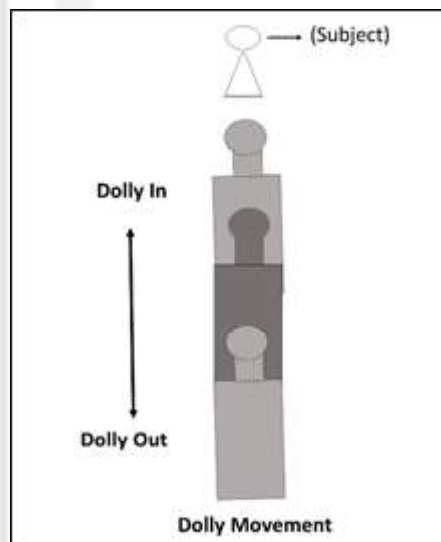


Figure 1.19 : Dolly movement

- 5) **Zoom:** Technically zoom is not a camera movement because it doesn't require any movement of camera. Zooming changes the focal length of a zoom lens. While zooming in, you increase the focal length and as a result the angle of view is narrowed. 'Zoom in' magnifies the subject and remove few elements from the frame due to narrowed angle of view. On the other hand, in zooming out, focal length is decreased and angle of view is widened. As a result, 'zoom out' reduces the size of subject and includes more elements into the frame located around the subject.

You should not be confused between dolly and zoom. 'Dolly in' gives an effect like you are coming towards the subject. It provides normal perspective shifts, but 'zoom in' just magnifies the subject. In 'dolly in' you feel the depth of space but 'zoom in' lacks it and looks artificial.

- 6) **Truck:** Like dolly, truck is also a camera movement performed with the help of wheeled camera mounts and tracks, but in trucking you move the camera sideways. If you move the camera right, it is called 'truck right' or if you move the camera left, it is called 'truck left'. You should not be confused between 'pan' and 'truck'. In 'pan', camera mount (tripod or pedestal) stays stationary only camera moves right or left on its axis, but in trucking camera mount moves right or left along with the camera. For example, if you want to stay with your character who is moving straight, you can use the 'truck movement'. Figure 1.20 demonstrates the truck movement.

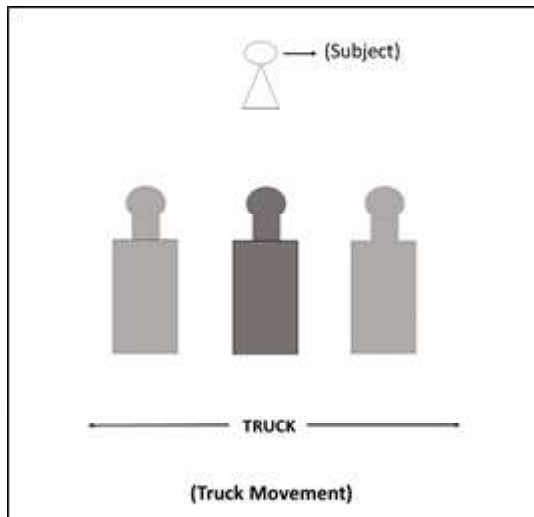


Figure 1.20 : Truck Movement

- 7) **Arc:** When you truck your camera on a curved path, it is called arc. Arc movement can be arc right or arc left. In this movement, camera moves around the subject in a semicircle. You can use arc movement to reveal more information about your subject, to shoot a moving subject and to bring visual Variety in your film. Figure 1.21 shows the arc movement.

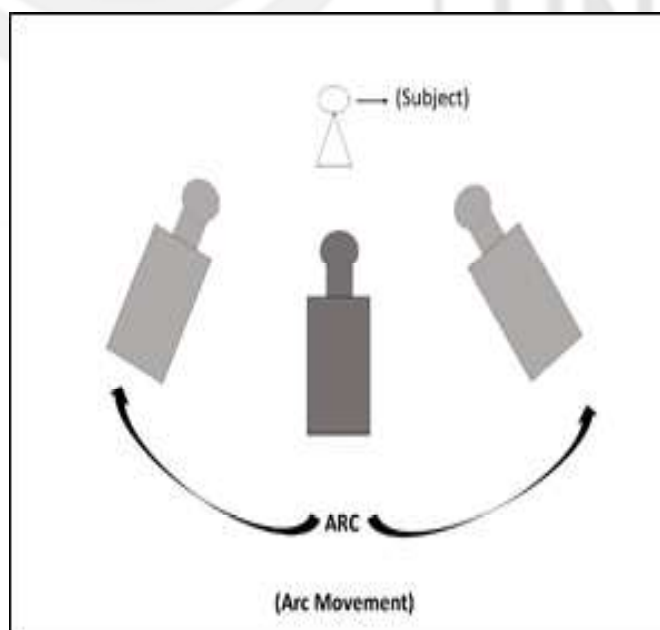


Figure 1.21: Arc movement

- 8) **Crane movements:** In filmmaking or professional video productions, cranes are used frequently. The crane is an equipment which has a long arm and the camera can be mounted on that. We can perform many movements with the help of crane. ‘Crane up’ and ‘crane down’ are used for the movement of crane arm upward and downward along with the camera whereas ‘tongue left’ and ‘tongue right’ are used for left and right movements of the crane arm. With the help of crane, we can do multiple camera movements. A camera mounted on a crane can be operated manually or with the help of remote control. Generally, the small cranes are called jibs.

You can use crane movements for various purposes. For example, you can shoot a subject from high angle and then come to eye-level in one shot with the help of crane movements. Cranes can help to take bird’s eye-view and other high angle shots. With the help of crane, you can combine multiple movements and get the desired views.

- 9) **Handheld camera movements:** If camera operator holds the camera in his/her hands during shooting, it is called handheld camera shoot. In handheld camera shoot, camera is not mounted on tripod or any other camera mounts. Handheld camera shoot provides greater freedom for different movements but at the cost of jerks and shakes. You can see the use of handheld cameras in news gathering because many times camera persons of news channels don’t find enough time and space to fix their cameras on tripods. Documentaries also use the handheld camera shots.

Sometimes handheld camera is used purposefully to create certain effects. You can use shaky handheld camera shots to show nervousness, instability and anxiety. These shots can also be used for other creative purposes.

- 10) **Movements with the help of camera stabilizers:** Movements with the help of camera stabilizers: Camera stabilizers are the equipment which enable the smooth and shake free handheld camera movements. Variety of camera stabilizers are available from simple to complex ones. Steadicam is the leading brand. The camera operator can wear the suitable stabilizer and mount the camera on it. Now he can move anywhere and on any type of surface. These camera stabilizers provide a great degree of freedom for different complex camera movements.

Suppose you are a camera operator and a camera mount is fitted on your body with a technology to minimize the shakes created by a human body. Now you are free to move during shoot. Just think about the degree of freedom you can enjoy during shooting.

Check Your Progress 2

Answer briefly.

- 1) What is camera movement?

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2) Why do we use different camera movements in film production?

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3) Why is zoom different from dolly?

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4) Explain the difference between 'pan' and 'truck' movements?

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5) In pan movement, you'll move camera _____.

- a) Up
- b) Down
- c) Up and down
- d) Right and left

5.6 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have discussed the different shots and camera movements. If you want to write a story, knowledge of language is must. In the same way, filmmaking requires the understanding of visual language and its grammar. Once you understand the visual language well, you can use it to produce any type of film including ethnographic films. The theme of the film decides the style of the visual language. For example, as you learnt in previous units, in ethnographic films we shoot the reality, so we select the shots and camera movements accordingly.

Shots and camera movements are very crucial elements of the visual grammar. The proper understanding of these two elements help the filmmaker to produce a good film which can communicate its message properly, smoothly and interestingly.

5.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISE

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) See section 1.2
- 2) See point no.-7 of Sub-section 1.3.2
- 3) See point no.- 2 and 3 of Sub-section 1.3.3
- 4) b)
- 5) c)

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See section 1.4
- 2) See section 1.4 and 1.5
- 3) See point no.- 4 and 5 of Section 1.5
- 4) See point no.- 1 and 6 of Section 1.5
- 5) d)

UNIT 6 FILMING ORAL TESTIMONIES, INTERVIEWS AND INTERACTION: FINAL FILM PROJECTS*

Structure

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Filming Oral Testimonies
 - 6.2.1 What makes Oral History Different?
 - 6.2.2 Oral History–Theory and Practice
 - 6.2.3 Filming Oral History
- 6.3 Filming Interviews
 - 6.3.1 Filming Interviews with Freedom Fighters
 - 6.3.2 Oral Testimony: Is it free from Bias?
 - 6.3.3 Techniques of Interviewing
- 6.4 Filming Interaction
 - 6.4.1 Interaction Vs. Discussion
 - 6.4.2 Importance of Meaningful Interaction
 - 6.4.3 Strategies of Filming Interaction
- 6.5 Final Film Project
- 6.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 6.7 Further Readings
- 6.8 References
- 6.9 Unit End Exercises
- 6.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercise

6.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you will be able to

- understand the importance of Oral Testimonies, Interviews and Interaction;
- analyse the need for Filmmaking of Oral Testimonies, Interviews and Interaction ;
- understand various issues involved in Filmmaking of Oral Testimonies, Interviews and Interaction ; and
- understand various techniques involved in Filmmaking of Oral Testimonies, Interviews and Interaction

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Oral testimony can be described as the oldest type of evidence (OT, n.d.). Usually, before recording their history in the form of written testimony, people passed information from generation to generation through story-telling. It is still in practice today. Don't you think so? If you recall, you would realise that you have

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come to know about the lives of your grandparents, mother, father, other family members or even, important figures of the society through word to mouth. Most probably, you must have either heard them talk about someone to you or to other people. Therefore, it's not very difficult to understand why oral testimony should be considered as an important source of evidence. But, it is also true that it hasn't always been recognised as being important. It is simply because many historians in the past considered oral testimony as unreliable and they preferred to rely on written evidence. They believed that the story changed as it had to pass through many mouths and above all, there was also no way of ensuring the credibility of the story. But it is noteworthy that written sources are mostly found to have recorded the details of important, rich or otherwise noticeable people rather than ordinary people. As a result, a lot of information about the lives of common people was lost.

However, oral history has never gone out of frame completely. A lot of oral testimonies have survived although there have been testimonies preserved in written form. As Catherine Isabel Littlejohn, a Research Scholar writes in her Thesis, "The Indian Oral Tradition: A Model for Teachers", "The use of the oral tradition as a source is not a new idea. The most familiar book to use it is the Bible! Socrates wrestled with the conflicts of values between oral and written sources. Herodotus, the espoused 'Father of History', used oral sources in History of the Persian Wars" (Littlejohn, 1975). According to the great epic *Mahabharata*, Lord Krishna talked to Arjuna in *Kurukshetra*, in the battlefield, itself. These are found in the, *Bhagavat Geeta*, an important part of the oral customs in India. These were also transmitted orally for hundreds of years in the previous Christian Era (BCE). Around 20th century, the use of Oral Testimony became easier with the invention of the telephone and recording equipment. Interviewing people had never been easier earlier to that. Their thoughts, beliefs, views and experiences could be recorded for future generations to come.

In this Unit, we will discuss at length– What are Oral Testimonies? It would also throw some light on Oral History, its Theory and Practice. How is 'Interviewing' a person different to the interacting with him/her?

The unit would focus on various issues and techniques involved in Filming Oral Testimonies, Interviews and Interaction. More importantly, it would present some basic idea of handling any Film Project.

6.2 FILMING ORAL TESTIMONIES

What are oral histories? Accounts given by a person of events that have occurred earlier in their life are considered to be 'Oral Histories'. More often, these accounts are taken by family members, historians, archivists, or others by way of interviewing older people. It is considered to be an attempt to document events and lives that might otherwise be forgotten and lost in the past.

It is true that oral histories are valuable. But whenever we use them as primary sources, we must not forget that memory is usually considered to be weak. Because most of the historians believe that in the intervening years between the events and the recounting of them, a person may be influenced by others' accounts as well as books or even movies about the events in question (VILLAGE, 2018.). It is also believed that in general, the closer in time to the events that the account is given, the more reliable they (oral testimonies) are considered to be.

6.2.1 What makes Oral History Different?

In the context of Film Making, it would be proper on your part (specifically, for those who don't work with audio-visual media) to understand that "what makes oral history different if we can see what we hear?" (Lichtblau, 2006). Media experts believe that the media of communication shape communication itself since it styles the structure of contents and messages and thus influences how communication is understood by readers. Albert Lichtblau, University of Salzburg, Austria has illustrated this point by analysing how handwritten letters differ essentially from letters that are written by typewriter or are printouts of computer files or just appear on screen (Lichtblau, 2006). According to Lichtblau, the character of one's personality can be easily recognised in handwritten letters by personal style than in typed ones, which involves a small range of standardised typographic formats. He further adds that even in the form of typed letters, one can distinguish among various forms, such as the formal letter or the much more informal one. As far as E-mail and SMS are concerned, they fundamentally change the form and structures of typed communication into informality. In fact, both tend to a specific form of language, signs and codes.

Therefore, by this logic, you would agree that there are essential divergences when the format of the communication media differs. Consequently, it is required to understand the differences between audio-taped or video-taped interviews and accordingly, one can analyse these differences on various levels like form, structure, interview setting and interaction, intention, re/construction process, different kind of information and reception by the academic and non-academic audience (Lichtblau, 2006).

6.2.2 Oral History—Theory and Practice

Paul Thompson, a Research Professor at the University of Essex, England who played a leading role in the creation of the British Oral History Society and the international oral history movement, writes in his Classic Text book '*The Voice of the Past*' that...it is only quite recently that skill in handling oral evidence has ceased to be one of the marks of the great historian.' Therefore, it is pertinent to understand 'Oral History' from its theoretical and practical perspectives. Oral history is a method of collecting evidence about the past, and about how the past is connected to the present. Oral history plays a vital role in obtaining information about people and events in situations where there is little documentation, or any other sources of evidence, available. It is believed that the collection and interpretation of oral history is intimately linked with the workings of memory. Interviews with individuals inevitably address questions of how and why individuals as well as their communities remember what they do.

In order to have a thorough practical and theoretical knowledge of all aspects of Oral History, you need to understand as a student the oral interviews as historical resources; how to plan, conduct and analyse an oral history interview, current uses and interpretations of oral history. Therefore, it is suggested that you may explore various issues related to Oral History on following lines

- 1) How oral history has developed, where oral history sits in the canon of historical resources, and what must be taken into consideration when evaluating it as a historical source?

- 2) How does memory work, how do the workings of individual and collective memory influence how people talk about the past, and relate the past to the present?
- 3) Planning, conducting, and archiving an oral history interview.
- 4) Practical and theoretical issues of creating oral histories with different communities.
- 5) Practical and theoretical issues of interpreting oral history will be explored with reference to oral histories of a variety of aspects of urban life e.g. post-independence development in some specific areas, lives of different communities, memories of Freedom Struggle Movement.

6.2.3 Filming Oral History

With regard to the moving image record as historical evidence, Alan John Percivale Taylor, an English historian, a journalist and a broadcaster, expressed the view in 1968 that ‘film as well as being very useful, is a very dangerous instrument for historical study’(UH, n.d.). Only 5 years later, Martin A Jackson concluded in the *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* that ‘what film research does offer is a new and provocative source material, one that does not replace traditional sources, but adds to them.’ Therefore, it is essential on your part to have a critical understanding of the moving images so that you would be able to engage with them and determine their place and value alongside other historical sources.

In this context, the following strategies may be adopted to deal with moving images

- 1) The origins and nature of film should be taken into consideration with regard to the developing technologies of the media.
- 2) The approaches to film making should brought into our focus. Particularly, the developments in ‘documentary’ film making should be looked at while considering the notion of “the real” in film and its value to the historian.
- 3) The television programmes, particularly regional television news should be looked at as an exploration of historical resource along with other issues including understanding of the method of treating the news story of an event or a sequence of events and also analysing that how it differs from later written history of the same event or sequence of events.
- 4) The archives and the impact of archival practice should also be looked at with regard to the use of material in this context.
- 5) The film should be looked at in the context of television history and in the context of the material shot. For instance oral history should be shot with the intent of adding to the historical record.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) What do you mean by Oral History? What makes oral history different if we can see what we hear?

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2) Explain 'Oral History' from its theoretical and practical perspectives.

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3) Why is it essential to have a critical understanding of the moving images while filming oral history?

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4) Describe various strategies to deal with the moving images.

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6.3 FILMING INTERVIEWS

Film makes it easier to communicate our interview-related research than purely audio sources (Lichtblau, 2006). ‘Film’ being an Audio-Visual medium has a great advantage over Audio as far as the effective communication of oral history is concerned. Why is it so? As Lichtblau writes, “*The reason for that is quite obvious. Audiences are not accustomed to only listen to edit or unedited audio sources; they are used to watching documentary films.*” It is also believed that even within the community of oral historians; film seems to be a more appropriate and therefore more powerful form to communicate the sources.

Lichtblau opines that while viewing an interview, we respond to moments of silence differently than if we “just” hear the interviews. Very rightly he points out that ‘Silence’ gives the viewers’ space for ‘additional interpretations’. It may be considered as a treasure for the audience, since it allows one’s own fantasies to visualise a story. Not only ‘Silence’, a ‘facial expression’ of the interviewee plays a crucial role to articulate one’s memory effectively as it is capable of transmitting the emotional struggle without using a word.

6.3.1 Filming Interviews with Freedom Fighters

Most of you might have read the History on India’s Independence Movement. Have you ever heard its history? I mean the Oral History on India’s Independence Movement! As you all know that millions of Indians participated in the struggle for independence from the British Rule. They were the witness and were part of the large non-violent movement, led by Mahatma Gandhi. As claimed by Gandhi Serve Foundation, in cooperation with its sister organization, Gandhi Serve India Trust, Mumbai/India, in 2005 for the first time a concentrated effort was made to video-record reminiscences of non-violent fighters for India’s freedom (Gandhiserve, 2005). They systematically identified veterans and talked to them about various aspects of the struggle, which was the first large campaign in history based on truth and non-violence.

6.3.2 Oral Testimony: Is it free from Bias?

Oral testimony is very much useful to the historian of today. If oral testimonies are used carefully and treated it like any other kind of evidence, we can find out a lot about the past. Oral testimony can tell us what life was like in the past, what people thought about various subjects and even how people talked about a particular event. But is Oral testimony free from bias?

If someone has asked you: Are you biased? It’s not a trick question. Practically, everyone is biased in some way. If you support one political party, you are probably biased against another, if you support one ideology, then you are probably considered biased against another. You may show your bias whenever talking about different books, television programmes, issues, even the Government policy. So what does it mean? Basically, bias means having an unfair or unbalanced opinion. History is considered to be a subject where people express their opinions. It means that we need to be very careful in order to get rid of bias.

For example, as a student if you look into the two sides of the story whether there really was a Hindu temple at a particular site later covered by a Masjid, one

would not avoid being biased. In references to the question, the focus is invariably on the case made by the Hindu side, viz. that there was a temple, and that different types of evidence confirm this. You may confront with a standard question: Is the evidence for the temple demolition scenario valid? By contrast, the anti-temple argumentation also offers evidence that the allegedly demolished Hindu temple never existed. Now it must be clear to you that if you take any side, you will be considered biased by the other. Therefore, you would end up with a very one-sided view if you are not very careful. Filming Oral Testimony would definitely facilitate as another source to recognise that a particular source is biased. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't use other available sources - just that we should be careful.

It is also important to recognise that bias is not found just in secondary sources, primary sources like filmed oral testimonies can also be biased. Bias is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it can be very useful as it allows one to find out about what people believed or thought about a particular subject. Historians are required to find evidence from lots of different sources including the filmed sources so that they can form a balanced opinion themselves.

6.3.3 Techniques of Interviewing

Filming an interview is more than just filming someone answering questions (Walker and Germano, n.d.). Besides a good interviewer, for a successful interview you need to understand various techniques of interviewing with regard to academic and technical aspects of filming a particular interview. On-camera interviews demand just about every production skill going (Stinson, 2000). For your understanding, various aspects of interviewing techniques can be split into three categories: questioning techniques, production methods and interview editing secrets.

i) Questioning Techniques

a) Preparing Your Subject

Before filming an interview, you must decide your style of questioning. Either you may like to have a classic question/answer style with the interviewer audible and occasionally visible or you may go ahead with the monologue style with the subject talking to an off-camera listener who's never seen on camera. However, both styles have their pros and cons (Stinson, 2000).

Deciding to include both the interviewer and interviewee has its own advantages:

- The audience hears each question so the subject doesn't have to build it into the reply (Stinson, 2000). For example, if the interviewee answers: "You have asked a very good question", it does not make any sense by itself. But it works if it follows "According to you what has made you to feel as a Proud Indian?"
- In this style of questioning, there is always a possibility to re-shoot the interviewer's questions later. But you should be careful because the interviewee may take this as offensive. The questions can be revised just to match more closely with the answers given by the subject. But definitely it should not allow the audience to interpret the answers differently with the revised questions recorded after the interview. That would be purely unethical.

On the contrary, the invisible interviewer style has its own advantages:

- In the absence of questions, more answers can be covered in a given time.
- The spontaneous responses appear to be more natural than a question-answer session.

However, the style of questioning/answering depends on the subject (interviewee). If the person (interviewee) is sharp (and relaxed) enough to improvise exchanges like this one:

“Would you recall and tell us about when you have joined Freedom Struggle”

“I joined Freedom Struggle in 1942 when I was a student; that time I was in the final year of Graduation...” Now, you are sure that you have found a pretty well subject. But if the subject can only respond, “1942,” then you will need an interviewer.

b) Decide on your Questions

One must stay away from TV reporter-type interviews (“So how does it feel to be trapped under that truck?”) (Stinson, 2000). If time permits, you should do research on your topic and formulate questions beforehand. It would be ideal if you prepare a list of questions to ask. But you should put those questions to the interviewee based on your intuition so that you would be getting the answers to your queries? You may prioritize queries like this (Stinson, 2000):

- Casual questions first, while the subject warms up and relaxes.
- Important questions next, when the subject is fresh and energetic.
- Less important questions will help to round out the interview.
- Pickup questions to fill gaps in the subject coverage and for later insertion into the main body of the interview.

You may share the questions with your subject, so that they would know what you expect from him/her. You must try to think of open-ended questions rather than ones that result in ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers. Most importantly, explain how you will use editing to make every mistake disappear. If the subject stumbles he/she can repeat.

ii) Production Methods

a) Conducting the Interview

Most likely, while conducting the interview, you may have to wear two hats: Historian and Interviewer. But you need to separate these functions. As long as the outcome of the interview would be used as oral evidence, you need not to be worried for the audience since it is not usually meant for broadcast. However, it is expected that you may have to hire a Director or professional Cameraperson who would handle the Production/Technical aspect of Filming the Interview. For example, if you use the subject-only style, cutaways are essential. Cutaways are usually ‘Close-Up’ shots recorded with a second camera (if one is available). Cutaways can be recorded if there is only one camera by panning/tilting the camera. Hand movements or facial expressions of the Interviewee are used as cutaways. If the interviewer appears on camera, cutaways of him or her listening intently, nodding with agreement and smiling in appreciation can be filmed/recorded. In fact, cutaways provide more choices to the editor of the filmed

interview. Please remember that your filmed footage may not be required to be edited if your main objective is to use them as testimonies.

b) Framing your Camera Angle

Irrespective of the fact that whether the filmed interview is going to be broadcast or not, the subject should be positioned that looks good to you. The professional cameraperson on duty would take care of the frame. Nevertheless, you should know that the conventional framing for an interview is in a medium close-up (MCU, from centre of the chest to the head). At the same time, we also see the subjects framed in close-ups, medium shots, and wide shots. Sometime, you may find too much headroom left at the top of the frame. Selection of an appropriate background for an interview is an important task to make a shot more informative. You should choose a background that reinforces the content of the interview or tells us something about the subject (Walker and Germano, n.d.).

iii) Interview Editing Secrets

Editing of Documentary and Interview is a close door activity where putting your recorded/filmed footage to a meaningful evidence. Since your main objective is to use your footage as testimonies/evidences to support or to be critical any social movement, struggle of a group or any historical events, then you have less scope to glamourize any interview. In fact, you have less opportunity to have a cinematic treatment to your visuals because it may distract the specific audience from the truth. Editing is actually the process of using visuals to suggest/support the opinion, comments and memory or past events described by the subject. The main secret of editing is to use multiple angles and cutaways in order to hide the breaks and mistakes occurred during filming/recording. You may remember that an interview is audio-driven: it's a sort of illustrated radio show (Stinson, 2000). Therefore, you may use the sound to set the pace. You can listen to each edited sequence with the picture off. If you find the audio is sharp and smooth then the pace is considered to be good.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Filming Interviews has a great advantage over Audio as far as the effective communication of oral history is concerned. Why is it so?

(Within 100 words)

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- 2) Do you find the video recorded oral history on India’s independence movement more informative than reading it? Explain in the context of excerpt of the video-record of some freedom fighters provided in the unit as example. (Within 100 words)

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- 3) Explain the usefulness of the presence of bias in filmed oral testimonies. (Within 100 words)

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- 4) Describe different categories of interviewing techniques for the purpose of filming interview. (Within 100 words)

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6.4 FILMING INTERACTION

Interaction is another aspect of our day to day life towards improving social outcomes. There are lot of evidences found relating to meaningful interaction. You may find well-documented evidences in support of the benefits of interaction with other people (whether or not from different backgrounds) (d’Alembert, 2008). Particularly, it appears evident in relation to: increased levels of psychological health, assessed by various measures of happiness and emotional well-being; and increased physical health, such as lower blood pressure.

Filming of the meaningful interaction between people of different backgrounds could be used as a strong evidence of its potential to increase understanding and reduce prejudice. These filmed evidences may suggest that the meaningful interaction help build trust between people in an area, and thus increase resilience in communities (against inter-group tension and resentment and the appeal of extremism) (d’Alembert, 2008).

6.4.1 Interaction Vs. Discussion

Interaction can be describes as any process whereby the action of one participant influences the action of another participant (ICC, n.d.).

Conversation and Discussion : these two words share a common meaning i.e. a mutual exchange between two or more people. But with regard to the difference between these words, *conversation* is commonly used for all talk between two individuals, whereas *discussion* is for talk concerning a precise subject (d’Alembert, 2008). To simplify, we can say that a man’s *conversation* is good which indicates that he speaks well about different subjects on which he has the occasion to talk. But we should not say he is good at *discussion*. The word *discussion* is also used when the talk concerns an important subject. For example, two heads of states may have talks or a *discussion* for to make peace. Whenever a number of people, especially more than two, gather and speak together informally, we say they are having a *conversation* and not a *discussion* (d’Alembert, 2008).

6.4.2 Importance of Meaningful Interaction

A study shows that those who come into contact with people from diverse backgrounds in the workplace are likely to “exhibit less prejudice” compared to those who do not (Garner, 2009).

Therefore, while interacting with people from different faith and ethnic groups, and different generations, the person involved in interaction should be free from bias. According to a report commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government of United Kingdom (OPM, 2011), the most prominent benefits of interaction were found in terms of the reduced levels of prejudice and improved community resilience, increased education attainment, skills and employment opportunities, improved health outcomes, particularly in relation to psychological health and avoidance of depression and reduced crime and anti-social behaviour.

6.4.3 Strategies of Filming Interaction

In order to have a meaningful interaction, we need to identify the places and spaces where meaningful interaction can take place. Research study claims that meaningful interaction can actually take place in ‘unexceptional and mundane’ environments (Cattell, Dines, Gesler & Curtis, 2008). Places of interaction don’t need to be special, but they do need to be shared (OPM, 2011). But it is believed that some public spaces like educational settings with ‘school-linking’ schemes, can be considered as effective for meaningful interaction.

Some important skills for practitioners are required to lead meaningful engagement with people particularly when you are bringing together diverse groups of people. However, both practice and training are required for skills like active listening, facilitation of discussion and conflict/tension management (OPM, 2011).

Check Your Progress 3

Note: 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

- 1) What do you mean by interaction? Describe the usefulness of filming interactions?

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- 2) What is the difference between Conversation and Discussion?

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- 3) What is the importance of meaningful interaction?

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- 4) Discuss regarding some strategies of filming interaction?

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6.5 FINAL FILM PROJECT

As a learner if you want to learn from the ground zero then you need to produce (or to be part of the production team) a short Film/Documentary (or a collection of shorter films) of 20-25 minutes duration. During the course, you may have to form small groups on various aspects of the film (production, screenwriting, filmmaking, post-production, and marketing).

With regard to “Production”, the production team/group holds the charge of legal, financing, casting, and location hunting and works towards the completion of the film within the deadline by making a production schedule for the film. As far as the “screenwriting” team is concerned, it creates a screenplay (in case of fiction) and storyboards (in case of both fiction/documentary) for the film and further finalises the shooting script. This team takes care of creative writing, photography, drawing, etc. At the same time, shooting, lighting, directing, sound, etc. is taken care by the “Filmmaking” team. This group is primarily responsible for acquiring equipment involving cinematography, constructing sets, arranging costumes/props, etc.

The post-production team prepares background music, sound effects, animation, and graphics etc. much before editing. This group’s work will be primarily technical, using video and sound editing software to finalize the film.

Finally, the last and not the least, the activity pertaining to marketing which is performed by the marketing team. It produces a trailer and uploads on website. It usually organises a full preview, prepares a press-release and coordinates the advertising campaign on print/electronic media.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) What different groups do you need to form while taking up a film project?

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2) What is the responsibility of the Production team/group?

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- 3) What are the areas in your film project which is taken care by the Screen-writing team? How is it different to Filmmaking team?

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- 4) What do you mean by Post-production? Which tasks are performed by Post-Production team?

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6.6 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have first discussed about filming oral testimonies during which we have tried to explain that what makes oral history different if we can see what we hear. In order to have a thorough practical and theoretical knowledge of all aspects of Oral History, we have explained the need of understanding the oral interviews as historical resources; particularly in the context of planning, conducting and analysing an oral history interview as well as interpreting it. With regard to filming oral history, we have also highlighted various strategies which may be adopted to deal with moving images.

Next, we have explained the advantage of filming interviews over purely audio sources as far as the effective communication of oral history is concerned. We have critically analysed that how the filmed oral testimonies can also be biased. But on the contrary, the filmed sources help historians form a balanced opinion themselves by gathering evidence from lots of different sources. Various techniques of interviewing have been discussed thoroughly.

Further, we have emphasised the importance of filming interaction, particularly regarding the importance of meaningful interaction. After that, we have also discussed about the adaptation of various strategies of filming interaction.

At the end of the Unit, we have discussed about taking up Film Project by the learner.

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6.9 UNIT END EXERCISES

- 1) What do you mean by Oral History? Discuss ‘Oral History’ from its theoretical and practical perspectives. Why is it essential to have a critical understanding of the moving images while filming oral history ?
- 2) Describe various strategies to deal with the moving images.
- 3) Filming Interviews has a great advantage over Audio as far as the effective communication of oral history is concerned. Justify the statement with suitable examples.
- 4) Bias is not necessarily a bad thing. Justify the statement with regard to the usefulness of the presence of bias in filmed oral testimonies.
- 5) Describe different categories of interviewing techniques for the purpose of filming Interview with suitable examples.
- 6) What do you mean by interaction? What is the importance of meaningful interaction? Discuss regarding some strategies of filming interaction?
- 7) What are the different groups you need to form while taking up a film project?
- 8) What is the prime responsibility of the Production group? Please explain it giving suitable examples.
- 9) What is the difference between Screen-writing team and Filmmaking team?
- 10) What do you mean by Post-production? Which tasks are performed by Post-Production team?

6.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Try to define Oral History. You may recall watching either a ‘Documentary’ having the bytes/opinion/interviews of people or an interview programme on Television. If you have listened to any such thing on Radio, then explain what different you have felt as compared to television?

- 2) While oral history is a method of collecting evidence about the past, and about how the past is connected to the present. In practical perspective, oral history helps us obtaining information about people and events in situations where there is little documentation, or any other sources of evidence, available.
- 3) A critical understanding of the moving images is essential for enabling us to engage with them and determine their place and value alongside other historical sources.
- 4) The films should be considered with regard to their origins and nature of film, the approaches to film making in the context of the notion of “the real” in film and its value to the historian, the use of the archives and the impact of archival practice and the intent of the film to be added to the historical record.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Audiences are used to watching documentary films besides listening to edited/unedited audio sources. Film seems to be a more appropriate for people including and oral historians.
- 2) Reading the History on India’s Independence Movement is different to hearing its history. Millions of Indians participated in the struggle for independence from the British Rule. They were also the witness and were part of the large nonviolent movement, led by Mahatma Gandhi. After talking to them we would know about various aspects of the struggle, the first large campaign in history based on truth and non-violence.
- 3) Bias is found in secondary sources as well as in primary sources like filmed oral testimonies. Bias is not necessarily a bad thing. Since, it can be very useful as it allows one to find out about what people believed or thought about a particular subject.

Historians can form a balanced opinion themselves as they would find evidence from lots of different sources including the filmed sources.

- 4) Various aspects of interviewing techniques can be split into three categories: questioning techniques, production methods and interview editing secrets.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Interaction can be described as a process whereby the action of one participant influences the action of another participant. Filming of the meaningful interaction between people of different backgrounds could be used as a strong evidence of its potential to increase understanding and reduce prejudice.
- 2) Conversation is commonly used for all talk between two individuals, whereas discussion is for talk concerning a precise subject.
- 3) The most prominent benefits of interaction are found in terms of the reduced levels of prejudice and improved community resilience, increased education attainment, skills and employment opportunities, improved health outcomes, particularly in relation to psychological health and avoidance of depression

and reduced crime and anti-social behaviour.

- 4) In order to have a meaningful interaction, we need to identify the places and spaces where meaningful interaction can take place e.g. some public spaces like educational settings with ‘school-linking’ schemes. Some important skills for practitioners are required to lead meaningful engagement with people particularly while dealing with diverse groups of people. Both practice and training are required for skills like active listening, facilitation of discussion and conflict/tension management.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) While taking up a film project, you may have to form small groups on various aspects of the film: production, screenwriting, filmmaking, post-production, and marketing.
- 2) The production team/group holds the charge of legal, financing, casting, and location hunting and works towards the completion of the film within the deadline by making a production schedule for the film.
- 3) The “screenwriting” team creates a screenplay (in case of fiction) and storyboards (In case of both fiction/documentary) for the film and further finalises the shooting script. This team takes care of creative writing, photography, drawing, etc. At the same time, the “Filmmaking” team takes care of shooting, lighting, directing, sound, etc. This group is primarily responsible for acquiring equipment involving cinematography, constructing sets, arranging costumes/props, etc.
- 4) The post-production team prepares background music, sound effects, animation, and graphics etc. much before editing. This group’s work will be primarily technical, using video and sound editing software to finalize the film.

UNIT 7 FINAL FILM PROJECTS*

Structure

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Stages of Film-Making
 - 7.2.1 Role of Producer and the Story idea
 - 7.2.2 Start of Production
 - 7.2.3 Production
 - 7.2.4 Shoot
 - 7.2.5 Post-Production
 - 7.2.6 Distribution and Publicity
- 7.3 Role of State
- 7.4 Film Making Stories
 - 7.4.1 Mother India
 - 7.4.2 Sholay
 - 7.4.3 Mughal- E- Azam
- 7.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 7.6 Key Words
- 7.7 References and Further Readings
- 7.8 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

7.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you would be able to:

- Discuss how film projects are conceptualised.
- Describe the process from story to a finished product.
- Explain the role that state plays.
- Discuss examples of some famous film projects and their behind the scenes story.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Unit, we observed the relationship between ‘camera and social research’ and we explored the use of camera for conducting social research. In the present unit ‘Filming Oral testimonies, Interviews and Interaction: Case Studies, we are going to take this discussion further and will be discussing Final Film Projects.

Discussing the process of film making, here with Final Film Projects we are looking at how the progression happens from an idea to story and then culminates into a finished product which is then brought in front of the world as a ‘film’.

7.2 STAGES OF FILM-MAKING

Film making is a long drawn out process. Let us have a look at the different stages of film making.

*Dr. Uzma Azhar

7.2.1 Role of Producer and the Story idea

Project initiation can vary from project to project. The idea from a book or social life/ society can be turned into a script or a brief story line. Producer can come up with the idea himself or a director/ writer can also suggest the idea to him. Producer selects the story/writer, guides the story-writing process then gets the funding, appoints the creative team, overlooks the production process and supervises the post-production till the release of the film. Marketing and distribution processes may also involve the Producer.

7.2.2 Start of Production

The idea of film can be from event/ person (biography)/ issue all of which can be from history or from current times. True story or fictionalized stories (deals/ agreements worked out with writers in case of book/biography) all of which are given a dramatic treatment which would make audience identify with the story's conflict/change and characterization added for interest. Before the start of the film, project finalization requires writer, script, budget, director and cast of leading actors are selected. Then at the stage of planning selected options are narrowed down before the start of shooting and generally visualization for the project happens. Casting for the film and shoot details, locations, etc. get decided as well. Assistants and other professionals are hired, budget is worked out and schedule is finalized.

7.2.3 Production

The production period can be divided neatly into three phases: preparation, the actual shooting and post-production. The actual shooting period is the shortest as it is also the most costly and establishes the value of the accomplished project.

As the project starts Line Producer or Unit Production Manager (UPM) is appointed to handle responsibilities regarding the following:

- 1) Appointing and firing people,
- 2) Regulations and clearances required,
- 3) Equipment availability for the crew,
- 4) Travel and transportations,
- 5) Daily production cost analysis,
- 6) Functioning of all departments and processes with regard to film making.

(Line Producers and UPM have a minor difference as Line Producers can also be creatively involved along with all the tasks mentioned above while UPM are in charge for logistical and organizational details).

A location office is selected where base-office is created and from where operations are conducted for different shoot locations. Script is turned into a shooting script as scenes are numbered and location details are specified with director, producer and the UPM. Casting of supporting cast is completed and a shooting schedule is issued by the First Assistant Director (AD) with full details of everything needed to complete work on each day. Final budget of daily/ weekly costs is worked out by UDM.

The director takes the charge once shooting starts. First AD is the person responsible for logistics and the second AD is responsible for the background of each scene. The Director of Photography is the in-charge of camera and crew and decides the *appearance* of the film including its lighting. Recording of dialogues is done by production sound mixer and boom operator. Art decorator, production designer, set decorator decide the sets and backdrop aesthetics for the scenes. Costume designers, hair and make-up professionals work on the artists' and their looks in the film. Office staff and communications are supervised by production coordinator and production accountant keeps the records, bills updated.

7.2.4 Shoot

A call sheet is developed as the work is announced before the day of the shoot. The following day's work is listed in the call sheet with reporting time mentioned for each department. Advertisement, dress and make-up professionals arrive first, followed by the actors who have their scene listed for the day. The assumption is that once the camera starts rolling everyone must be ready as the camera waits for nobody. A single scene may require different shots until technically it is acceptable to DP, sound mixer and camera operator and Director. Script may undergo changes where lines get edited/ added by the actors on the sets. After a day's shoot gets finished, the film is sent to a laboratory for developing it and then transferred to videotape for the director, editor, executives and producer to have a look at it.

7.2.5 Post-Production

Post- production period can be divided into three parts: editing, music and effects addition and dubbing and printing. Re-shooting of scenes is scheduled if the story demands. The flow and final look of the film gets decided by the editor during post production.

7.2.6 Distribution and Publicity

Once post production work gets finished the final product requires distributors and publicity is done on various media forums to attract interest to the film.

When we discuss Indian films we also have to take into account the aspect of music and songs which are an integral part of Indian films. Sometimes the music is even composed ahead of the film-shoot. The music director, lyricist with the film director and producer decide the timing of songs in the film, singers, dance choreographers, editings etc.

In India, *Alam Ara* was the first 'talkie' film which had released in 1931. Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Malyalam, Kannada, Bengali, Bhojpuri, Punjabi are different languages in which Indian films are popularly made.

ACTIVITY

At your Study Center with other students make a short film on a social issue.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What is the role of the Producer?

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2) Production can be divided into how many parts?

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7.3 ROLE OF STATE

In India, the Cinematography Act was passed in 1952. Since then to accommodate the changes that have happened, a committee was formed under Justice Mudgil to propose changes. Based on the recommendations, the Cinematograph Bill was proposed in 2013.

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting deals with all the matters relating to films, i.e. promoting production, dissemination and preservation of film content. It also looks into the organization of International Film Festival of India, other national and international film festivals, sanctioning of films, granting film shooting permission, and also holding National Film Awards. No film can be publicly viewed in India without the Certification by the Board of Film Certification. The guidelines given by CBFC have to be strictly adhered to.

Guidelines by CBFC

In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (2) of section 5B of the Cinematograph Act, 1952 (37 of 1952) and in supersession of the notification of the Government of India in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting No. S.O. 9E , dated 7th January, 1978, except as respects things done or omitted to be done before such supersession, the Central Government hereby directs that in sanctioning films of public exhibition , the Board of Film Certification shall be guided by the following principles.Objectives of Film Certification

- The medium of film remains responsible and sensitive to the values and standards of society;
- Artistic expression and creative freedom are not unduly curbed;

- Certification is responsible to social changes;
- The medium of film provides clean and healthy entertainment; and
- As far as possible, the film is of aesthetic value and cinematically of a good standard.

In pursuance of the above objectives, the CBFC shall ensure that anti-social activities such as violence are not glorified or justified the modus operandi of criminals, other visuals or words likely to incite the commission of any offence are not depicted; scenes -showing involvement of children in violence as victims or perpetrators or as forced witnesses to violence, or showing children as being subjected to any form of child abuse; showing abuse or ridicule of physically and mentally handicapped persons; and showing cruelty to, or abuse of animals, are not presented needlessly pointless or avoidable scenes of violence, cruelty and horror, scenes of violence primarily intended to provide entertainment and such scenes as may have the effect of de-sensitising or de-humanising people are not shown; scenes which have the effect of justifying or glorifying drinking are not shown; scenes tending to encourage, justify or glamorise drug addiction are not shown; scenes tending to encourage, justify or glamorise consumption of tobacco or smoking are not shown; human sensibilities are not offended by vulgarity, obscenity or depravity; such dual meaning words as obviously cater to baser instincts are not allowed; scenes degrading or denigrating women in any manner are not presented; scenes involving sexual violence against women like attempt to rape, rape or any form of molestation or scenes of a similar nature are avoided, and if any such incidence is germane to the theme, they shall be reduced to the minimum and no details are shown; scenes showing sexual perversions shall be avoided and if such matters are germane to the theme they shall be reduced to the minimum and no details are shown, visuals or words contemptuous of racial, religious or other groups are not presented; visuals or words which promote communal, obscurantist, anti-scientific and anti-national attitude are not presented; the sovereignty and integrity of India is not called in question; the security of the State is not jeopardized or endangered; friendly relations with foreign States are not strained; public order is not endangered; visuals or words involving defamation of an individual or a body of individuals, or contempt of court are not presented.

EXPLANATION: Scenes that tend to create scorn, disgrace or disregard of rules or undermine the dignity of court will come under the term "Contempt of Court": and national symbols and emblems are not shown except in accordance with the provisions of the Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950 (12 of 1950).

The Board of Film Certification shall also ensure that the film is judged in its entirety from the point of view of its overall impact; and

Is examined in the light of the period depicted in the films and the contemporary standards of the country and the people to which the film relates provided that the film does not deprave the morality of the audience.

Films that meet the above – mentioned criteria but are considered unsuitable for exhibition to non-adults shall be certified for exhibition to adult audiences only.

While certifying films for unrestricted public exhibition, the Board shall ensure that the film is suitable for family viewing, that is to say, the film shall be such that all the members of the family including children can view it together.

If the Board, having regard to the nature, content and theme of the film is of the opinion that it is necessary to caution the parents / guardian to consider as to whether any child below the age of twelve years maybe allowed to see such a film, the film shall be certified for unrestricted public exhibition with an endorsement to that effect.

If the Board having regard to the nature, content and theme of the film, is of the opinion that the exhibition of the film should be restricted to members of any profession or any class of persons, the film shall be certified for public exhibition restricted to the specialized audiences to be specified by the Board in this behalf.

The Board shall scrutinize the titles of the films carefully and ensure that they are not provocative, vulgar, offensive or violative of any of the above-mentioned guidelines.

Source: <https://www.cbfcindia.gov.in/main/guidelines.html>

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What is the role of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting with regard to films?

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7.4 FILM MAKING STORIES

We have seen some of the biggest films on screen but some of these classic films also have interesting film making stories about them. Let us look at some of the iconic Hindi films and stories of their making.

7.4.1 Mother India

Mother India released in 1957, a remake of Mehboob Khan's earlier film Aurat (1940). The title was borrowed from Katherine Mayo's book (1927, Mother India) which criticized Indian society. The movie is loosely based on The Mother (1934) a film which depicted the struggles of a Chinese woman abandoned by her husband and raising her children. Mother India, epitomizing Indian womanhood, is the

story of a poor village woman named Radha (Nargis), who struggles to raise her sons and survives against a cunning money-lender in the absence of her husband.

Chatterjee (2002) describes the film and its opening shot, which was a tight close-up of an old woman's face. She is old but strong, villagers come to request her to inaugurate the dam and put a garland on her. She seems irritated and the story goes into flashback where she is shown as young bride getting married to actor Raj Kumar.

The film reflected high moral values and self-sacrifice, also somewhere plays on the idea of nation as the mother alluding to a strong sense of nationalism and nation-building. The film was shot in Mumbai's Mehboob Studios and in the villages of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh. Shot mainly on sync sound, very little dubbing as Khan was against dubbing, with dialogues mostly in vernacular Hindi. Naushad gave the music and did some experimentations, including Western classical music and orchestra to Hindi cinema.

It was an epic film for its time and was a huge commercial hit. It won many awards, including for Best Film, Best Director, Best Actress, Best Sound Design, Best Cinematography etc. It became the first Indian film ever to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film from India, film came close to winning the award but lost by a single vote. The government of India supported their travel as they represented India at the Academy Awards.

7.4.2 Sholay

Anupama Chopra in *Sholay the Making of a Classic* (2000) talks about the making of the famous film *Sholay* (1975). It is basically a revenge story. It was developed from four lines that writers Salim-Javed had shared with Ramesh Sippy and he asked them to develop it into a script. The actors and characters kept changing. Gabbar's role was originally given to Danny Denzongpa and later went to newcomer who was suggested by Javed Akhtar, Amjad Khan. Sanjeev Kumar and Amitabh Bachchan were both interested in Gabbar Singh's role and Dharmendra wanted to play Thakur. Ramnagar, 50 kms from Bangalore was selected as location shooting of the film.

Sippy shot Hema Malini's scenes in the first half of the schedule, as Hema Malini's dialogues were long, which she had trouble in memorizing. Javed Akhtar had to enact them for her to help her get the character. Some single shots took even twenty days as Sippy wanted each shot perfectly enacted. Some real life situations were made a part of script, for example, the scene where Jai (Amitabh Bachchan) tries to convince Basanti's aunt (Mausi) for Veeru, came from real life. Javed Akhtar had asked Salim Khan to meet Honey Irani's mom and convince her about him as a suitable son-in-law.

The film *Sholay* won the Filmfare Award for Editing. CBFC had asked the makers to change the climax of the movie where Thakur (Sanjeev Kumar) kills Gabbar (Amjad Khan) to Gabbar gets arrested by the police.

7.4.3 Mughal- E- Azam

Mughal-E-Azam (1960) directed by K. Asif starring Madhubala, Dilip Kumar and Prithviraj Kapoor, is one of the most grand of the film with massive budget

(the most expensive film of its time). It had magnificent sets and authentic costumes, spectacular cinematography and art direction. Elaborate costumes were embroidered in Surat and stitched in Delhi. The jewellery came from Hyderabad, the crowns from Kolhapur, weapons from Rajasthan and the shoes from Agra. For the war scenes 2000 camels, 4000 horses and 8000 extras - some of them actual soldiers on loan from the Indian Army. The entire movie was colorized, restored and re-released worldwide in 2009.

The story idea came around 1944-45 as K. Asif thought of adapting Imtiaz Ali Taj's play about a love story between Salim, the Mughal prince and Anarkali, courtesan-dancer in Akbar's court. Although, the story has no basis in historical fact. In 1946, when the first shooting schedule began, for the roles of Akbar, Salim and Anarkali, Chandra Mohan, D.K. Sapru, and Nargis were taken respectively. Due to Partition as some of his cast and other team members went to Pakistan he had to shoot major portions again of the film, another reason of its delay and increase in budget. The chains worn by Madhubala were authentic and heavy and she took days to recover post-shooting.

Naushad gave the music and K. Asif wanted Bade Ghulam Ali to sing for the movie. Bade Ghulam Ali Khan Sahab quoted a big figure but K Asif agreed and paid him the advance then and there. Each scene was shot meticulously paying attention to the details. Mughal-E-Azam was a huge commercial success too, breaking all box office records at the time of its release. The film was originally shot in black and white with only a few scenes and one song in color.

Check Your Progress 3

1) How many awards had Mother India won?

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2) How did CBFC change the climax of Sholay?

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3) From where did the original idea came for Mughal- E- Azam?

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7.5 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have looked at how film projects are conceptualized in detail have described the process from story to a finished film. We have also examined the role that state plays through certification and its guidelines for film exhibition in India. Lastly, we discussed examples of few famous films like *Mughal e Azam*, *Sholay* and *Mother India* in detail as successful film projects and their behind the scene stories from conceptualization, to period film depictions, to casting, shooting, locations, etc.

7.6 KEYWORDS

Call sheet : Day's work is listed in the call sheet with reporting time mentioned for each department.

Location Office : Base-office from where operations are conducted for different shoot locations.

First AD : Person responsible for logistics.

Second AD : Person responsible for the background of each scene.

Director of Photography : In-charge of camera and crew and decides the appearance of the film including its lighting.

7.7 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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7.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISE

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Producer selects the story/ writer, guides the story-writing process then gets the funding, appoints the creative team, overlooks the production process, and supervises over the post-production up to the point of release of the film. Marketing and distribution processes may also involve the Producer.
- 2) The production period can be divided neatly into three phases: preparation, the actual shooting and post-production.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Ministry of Information and Broadcasting deals with all the matters relating

to films, i.e. promoting production, dissemination and preservation of film content including organization of International Film Festival of India, other national and international film festivals, sanctioning of films, granting film shooting permission, holding National Film Awards are handled in Films Wing.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) It won many awards including for Best Film, Best Director, Best Actress, Best Sound Design, Best Cinematography etc. It also became the first Indian film ever to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.
- 2) CBFC had asked the makers to change the climax of the movie where Thakur (Sanjeev Kumar) kills Gabbar (Amjad Khan) to Gabbar gets arrested by the police.
- 3) Mughal- E- Azam's story is an adaptation of Imtiaz Ali Taj's play.

