

Discursive (Re/De)Construction of Objectivity-Subjectivity: Critiquing Rape/Flesh Trade-Documentaries

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Abstract : As an offshoot of journalistic discourse, the documentary should be objective in nature without harbouring any preconceived notion to foster ulterior motifs. When it comes to a social issue like rape in South Asian countries, as media in recent times is inundated with this violent act in India, Pakistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, how does one document it in terms of objectivity and subjectivity? The objective of this study is twofold: to document the history of documentaries, and to critically analyze South Asian rape/flesh trade-documentaries. The overall goal is to trace the (re/de)construction of objectivity-subjectivity in documentaries. This paper adopts a qualitative approach to documentarist discourse through the lens of critical discourse analysis (CDA). Data was gathered for 10 documentaries on the theme of rape and/or flesh trade from eight South Asian countries, predominantly the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) region. The documentaries were primarily categorised by using three frameworks based on six modes, six subgenres, and four basic approaches of documentary. Subsequently, the findings were critiqued from CDA perspective. The outcome suggests that there are two schools of thoughts regarding documentaries. According to journalistic ethics, news and/or documentaries should be objective in orientation and focus on informing the audience and/common people. The empirical findings tend to challenge ethical parameters of objectivity. At times, it seems that journalistic discourse is discursively (re)constructed to give an augmented simulation of objectivity. Based on the findings it may be recommended that if documentaries steer away from empirical facts and indulge in poetic naivety, their credibility could be questioned. A research of this nature is significant as it raises questions with regard to ethical and moral conscience of documentary filmmakers. Furthermore, it looks at whether they uphold journalistic integrity or succumb to their bias, and thereby depict subjective views, which could be tainted with political and/or propagandist ulterior motifs.

Keywords : discursive (re/de)construction, documentaries, journalistic integrity, rape/flesh trade

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