Chapter: VII

Conclusion: Reimagining the Identity of Defiant Womanhood
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Conclusion: Reimaging the Identity of Defiant Womanhood

7.1. A Brief Summary of the Trajectory of Discussion Carried out in the Study

The present study attempts to register the tenor of the representation of women images in visual art with the sensibility of celebrating resistance by conceptually and perceptively aligning five major contemporary artists and their unique perspectives in marking the defiant womanhood. To conclude, it would be presume that the contemporary visual arts of India have carved the image of woman with an identity of resistance. Though, India has a long traditional past of woman images in its huge and monumental art forms, post medieval era and colonial occupation the flow of Indian art became narrow in the sense of the representation of woman. From the beginning of 20th century, there was a slow injecting process which started to influence European art in Indian soil. In 1920’s, the establishment of Shantiniketan had shaped a new model of Indian art. Shantiniketan revived the actual Indian past through its indigenous tradition and folks. Before independence, there was some enthusiastic movements happening in India, centralizing in Calcutta and Bombay with some groups of artist in the fourth decade of the twentieth century. From this time onwards, it can be observed that the political consciousness had occupied the intellect of visual art and artists which became the direct concern of the society. This flow continued even after independence, through artists’ movements in political and social consciousness, formation of artists groups/ organization and through the new waves of feminist discourses, which stimulat ed the representation of women images in visual art through the perception of resistance.

The first chapter discusses the development of different theoretical discourses in the context of feminism with pro women subjects in artistic representation. It also discusses that how the visual arts of India reflect the resistant images of women against the stereotyped patriarchal norms.
The second chapter is based on Bikas's painting and mainly two series of his paintings have been taken for discussion in view of women resistance i.e. 'Doll series' and 'Durga series'.

In the third chapter paintings of Arpita Singh is discussed to show the woman's personal space is an important force of resistance against patriarchal domination.

The fourth chapter focuses on Ravinder Reddy and his sculptures/sculpting style as an interesting model of representing resistant womanhood.

The fifth chapter discusses Pushpamala N who created a new space for representing womanhood by formulating a unique language of visual art through her installation, sculpture, photo performance and videography.

The sixth chapter dwelt upon the paintings of Chandrima Bhattacharyya, who, as the most contemporary in terms of expressing the tangibility of experiencing womanhood and the representation of womanhood shows more nuanced modulation of the aesthetic understanding of the gendered world.

7.2. Concluding Recapitulation of the Study

7.2.1. Making of the Woman Image: Background of the Visual Art of India

India had a glorious traditional past in the field of visual arts. The Indian architectures, sculptures and paintings had developed in huge and monumental scale by the different people in different religions and cultures. The representation of woman image was extremely popular in the traditional art of India. Basically the architecture oriented sculptures were mostly occupied with women subjects. Despite the fact that the Indian traditional painting which was first evident in Ajanta caves, contemporary to the Gupta classic period, mainly based upon religious iconic subjects like the Buddha, Bodhisattvas and Jatakas, some dominant women images were visible in different caves. The visual images of woman which were created from the early traditional time to medieval era were apparently represented in the conventional norms of feminine values. But in many cases those images have also superseded the conventional norms of feminine representation. Though the traditional artists were almost men and they had created the
exclusive exaggeration of women’s sensuousness through the nudity of ‘Kanya’ and ‘Mithuna’ figures, yet this exaggeration in the architectural sculptures of medieval era had developed a spontaneous expressive appearance, which is not synonymous to the beauty notions of femininity. The basic characteristics of the femininity such as soft, timid squishy, coy are noticeably absent in many of the sculptures of medieval period. The mainstream painting tradition was again vivid after Ajanta period in the miniature schools of late medieval period. In the era of the Mughals, miniature tradition of Indian painting had touched the zenith of delicacy. But the representation of woman image was almost absent in the Mughal atelier. Mughal Empire settled their colony in Indian soil where they partially allowed a cultural interaction between the outsiders and insiders. They had taken cultural elements from Indian soil and amalgamated them with Persian tradition and reproduced a new cultural aspect. Through the process of cultural interaction they made the miniature painting, architecture, literature (manuscript), performing Art (Music and dance) etc, which produced a new kind of culture known as Indo-Persian style. Though Mughal Empire was extremely powerful and the emperors had showed their power in every corner of the political territory of India, still they did not fully occupy the cultural ethos of original soil. Rajput and Pahari miniature style of painting was contemporary to Mughal and they had built their own individual style in Indian art. In Rajput and Pahari miniatures, women images were painted in various representations. Although those women images were not exuberant like the images of medieval era or they were not away from the feminine representation. Those women were imaged, either in coy and innocent beauty or in the appearance of sensuous gaze. From the beginning of British colonial occupation in India, traditional aspects of art had turned into another phase, along with the Victorian culture. British had tried to put their own tradition and customs upon Indian people in direct and indirect acts of power. British colony had also tried to establish the notion that Indians are basically naïve, illiterate, uncultured and uncivilized. They also tried to show that the British Empire had come with the Victorian blessings to reform this country with proper literacy and education. They had made a mission for common people of India to create faith in the absolute authority of British tradition through a passive oppression of cultural hegemony. British had
chosen a group of elite class from the influential Indian people and convinced them about the positive approaches of Victorian culture. Though the politics of Nationalism, making of traditional art through Bengal School and Oriental School of Art and the role of British intellectuals and Indian elites have already been discussed elaborately in the first chapter of the study, still some of the issues are perhaps necessary to be analyzed here about nationalism and revivalism. The flow of nationalism was started from the second half of 19th century, when a group of elites of Bengal had carried the hegemony of newly constructed notion of cultural tradition of the colonial rulers, upon the common people of India. Here the speech¹ of Thomas Macaulay, who was the so-called educator of India can be referred to:

‘HOW THEN, STANDS the case? We have to educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother tongue. We must teach them some foreign language.’

He further added: ‘.......... It is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.’ (Macaulay, 1995, p. 430)

Though there was no strong artistic tradition in the cultural history of Britain like the other regions of Europe, nor even like India or Far East, but since Macaulay belonged to the identity of the ruling class, perhaps he did not hesitate to comment on the heritage of India without having proper experience in Indian epics, manuscripts, classics and folks. He states, ‘...The whole of Indian and Arabic literature was not worth a single bookshelf of a good European library.' (Havel, 1908, p. 246).

This is how cultural politics played the role of power and injected their constructed belief into by the newly manifested class of elites to create hegemony over the cultural identity of common people. The concept of nationalism happened to be half-baked which was taught by the English educated people who were by colour and blood Indian but had already become English in taste. Soon Indian people had started to believe blindly in the romanticism of 'English-made-Nationalism', English educators had schematized the frame of our culture, our tradition and our heritage according to their parameters, which could help them to rule smoothly in
Indian soil. The making of different art and culture as Indian and legitimizing them as Indian Tradition was a colonial politics of British rulers. Among them, one important mission was traced through the making of Revivalism and Bengal School as a traditional genre of Indian art. 

The establishment of oriental society of art was another successful mission of the British colony to institutionalize art in the tide of nationalism with the initiation of a class of elites like Abandranath Tagore, Gaganendranath Tagore, E.B. Havell, Lord Krishner, Surendranath Tagore, Norman Blaunt and John Woodrof of 'Land Holders Association', Maharaja of Nator Jagadindra Narayan, Maharaja of Baroda Binay Chand Mahatap, Sister Nivedita etc. These people had no direct connection with the Indian nationalist movements and through the 'Society of Oriental art' they were forced to project their sincerity for the nation and its culture. As Geeta Kapur opines, ‘…We have nationalism without an avant-garde. Does this spell a serious retardation?’ (Kapur. G. 1995 P-29)

The artist of Bengal School also represented the women images with stereotyped look; typically the way patriarchy constructed an identity of femininity. These women were used to execute in semi-nude posture with sophisticated and serene look, which are having a keen resemblance with the European nudity, rather than the Indian traditional art.

7.2.2. The Tagore Era: Shantiniketan School

In contrast to these practices by the British rulers and their faithful elites, Rabindranath Tagore had initiated a resistance from the beginning of his creative life. The series of letters which he wrote during the early period of his literary career were published in the name of ‘Europe Prabashir Patra’ and ‘Europe Jatrir Diary’ forms the roots of his protest against the colonial policies and practices. There he firmly protested against the so called signs and taboos of the white Europeans, who were used to make noises and bad comments without any proper reason against the blackies (people who are black or brown in colour are generally called as blackies by the Europeans) or Indo-Africans. In both these collections of letters, Tagore also showed a class of people as Ingo-bango who were bodily Indian and in mind belonged or behaved as English. Through these collections of letters,
Tagore proved that he had a strong resistance in his mind against the colonial discourses.

When Tagore had first made his doodles in a page of the manuscript of *Rakta Karabi* (pl. 95) it was 1923, a time of colonial struggle and the rising craze of nationalism. Later in 1924 these doodles became more modified into pictorial forms with grotesque features in the manuscripts of ‘*Purabi*’ (pl. 96) poems. Though Tagore was not deliberate enough to execute an art which will be theoretically anti colonial through his works, but he consciously manifested a new form of art which are not entangled with a stereotyped flow of the art of ‘Bengal School.’ or other traditional form of Indian art. He himself was a critique of the art during that period in India, and wrote many letters, article against those arts of time. In a lecture at Dhaka under the title Art and Tradition Tagore said:

‘I strongly urge our artists vehemently to deny their obligation to produce something that can be libeled as Indian art, according to some old mannerism. Let them proudly refuse to be herded into a pen like branded beasts that are treated as cattle and not as cows.

…Art is a solitary pedestrian, who walks alone among the multitude, continually assimilating various experiences, unclassifiable and uncatalogued’. (Tagore Rabindranath. 1989. Pg-9)

This is how cultural politics assumed the role of power and injected their constructed belief into by the newly manifested class of elites to create hegemony over the cultural identity of common people. Rabindranath Tagore had taken a separate position in 20th century visual art ignoring the increasing craze of nationalism. He tried to relocate a culture against the norms of power of the colonial rule. He established *Vichitra Studio* at Jorsanko Thakurbari to enhance the practice of music, theatre and visual arts in parallel with the British made art & cultural practices. But the powerful attraction of *Oriental Society of Art* had snatched out the young artists of Bengal and the activities of *Vichitra* became stagnant. The failure of *Vichitra Studio* was a setback for Tagore, but also it inspired Tagore to establish ‘*Kala bhavan*’ in Shantiniketan, where he rooted a new trend of art education imbued with the influences of the indigenous and folk cultures of India.
Rabindranath had seriously started painting in the second decade of 20th century and eventually realized that the different schools of Indian art are blindly searching their ways into the British made Indian identity and were trying to find out an art trend, which could be marked as an Indian Art. The historical exhibition in Paris (1930) followed by the first exhibition in the country in 1932 at the venue of Govt. School of Art and Draftsmanship gave Rabindranath an international fame in the field of Art. Rabindranath Tagore was gradually accepted as an artist by the media/press and art critics. Though the critics always tried to prove Tagore’s painting as true/genuine art, but they never discussed about the inner qualities of Tagore’s painting, such as his visual language, architectural space, interactive expression or the silence of resistance which he expressed through his women portraiture.

The critics had only tried to prove that Tagore was not only a great poet, but also he was a great artist. Also many of them started to notice Tagore’s art under the resemblance of European art movements. Sometimes he was euphemized as an expressionist; sometimes he was entangled with the surrealists by the critics to prove his noble image as a genius. But Tagore had brought a new trend in Indian art, which was not similar with the modern trend of Indian art, nor even borrowed from the western trend of art. He visited Europe, he visited Far East, and he also visited Latin America, South East Asia and returned to his own home after picking up the valuable cultural elements from those places. His mind and eyes were open and he never made his mind so narrow not to accept other’s culture. He was a man of plurality, who enhanced the art of seeing in a separate discourse. He wrote a small write up in the sub-title Dekha (seeing) in his full length essay Shantiniketan where he told that light is everyday telling us one word, see, with the full open eyes. This expression of Dekha (seeing) was again exposed in the essay, Japan Jatri, where he described a scene of sunset from the deck of a ship and after making a picture with words he declared that he deliberately called that sequence as a picture (chabi), not as a scene. Therefore the vision of art of Rabindranath was oxidized in a different visualization that gave birth to a new trend in Indian art. This new art trend was naturally not reproduced through any influence of colonial culture or through the romanticism of nationalism. Tagore has shown that art could be
done without the modified imitations of the Indian miniature or murals, which was a common feature of Bengal School. His images became expressive and portraits became exuberant with open eyes and closely attached lips; his figures/gestures became bold (not in sense of westernized academic muscularity) and dynamic; his colours became no more somber like Bengal school, rather became vibrant and played a chiaroscuro effect through the hues of black and red that beholds the very character of the folk paintings of Bengal. Tagore used a mysterious light in his work which is not similar to the highlight of western art or luminosity of Indian painting; but he managed to create such magic sequences in his paintings through this unpredictable use of light. In the exhibition in 1932 at Govt. School of Art and Draftsmanship Tagore brought his painting in the country with a serious tension of acceptance; because the British dominated colonial art trend had not yet experienced with such paintings. The critics, artists and common viewers were not familiar with such trends of paintings where every elements i.e. line, colour, light are unconventionally represented. Also the expressions of his Self Portrait (pl.97) are executed exceptionally with intimate feelings of inner psyche. India had no experiences with such non-representative images (at least during the two hundred years of British colonial period), which were neither abstract nor even naturalistic. Tagore’s art has a certain connection with Indian folk art, which did not come directly in his works. But the individual elements like colours, lines and textures represented passive feelings of the presence of folk tradition in Tagore’s painting. These images were different from the known narratives of the constructed phenomenon of so called Indian traditional or modern art. This is the place of resistance in Tagore’s painting which has directly denied the presence of colonial interventions to put up resistance against all kind of stereotyped visions of art. The resistance of Tagore’s paintings could be found mainly in the works of woman portraits. Basically his women were not represented in the norms of femininity. He consciously denied the disciplines of patriarchal constructions in imaging woman (pl. 98). His women have exposed the myth of cultural construction of beauty and they were not represented in the manner of conventional representations of femininity. Rather the cultural politics of aesthetics was exposed by the silent voice of his women portraiture where they are not claustrophobe with the norms of beautiful
eyes, delicate eyebrows, wet lips and ornamented hairstyles. Another important aspect of Tagore’s women images was their colour. They were mostly painted in black or sepia, which proves his certain passion for the brown and black communities, the common people of underprivileged classes. The black or brown women images of Tagore represent the identity of real woman (pl. 99), which becomes a resistance against the convention of symbolizing women in the mannerism of beauty. These unmanned, untitled and uncatalogued arts of Rabindranath Tagore had posed a challenge against the authenticity of modernist/nationalist norms. His women images became non-stereotyped and unconventional by imaging themselves reluctant to all patriarchal construction.

Rabindranath Tagore’s personal inspiration as ‘Guru dev’ has motivated residential teachers and students in Shantiniketan to build a new form of education policy in the open ambience of ashram. Establishment of Kala Bhavan was one of the important initiations taken by Tagore is Shantiniketan, which later made another history in Indian visual art. It has been discussed earlier in Chapter I, that under the guidance of Mastarmashai, Nandalal Bose, the students of Kala Bhavan were taught the skill of viewing nature not only through the outer retina but also through the lens of mind. Shantiniketan School did not accept either the art practices of British academy and Revivalism or Bengal School. In Shantiniketan visual art came out from the studio to the nature and found its real way into the folk. The first generation artists coming out of Kala Bhavan had taken the responsibility to carry Tagore’s philosophy and Nandalal’s art education into the next generation. Among them, Ramknikar Baiz and Benod Behari Mukherjee’s name should be considered for their glorious contribution to the fields of visual arts.

7.3. Scope of further study: Individual artists and their work

The research has opened the scope to read, interpret and examine individual artist’s work through the lens of feminist discourses. The deliberate negation of ism or manifestation of Meta narratives of this research work may introduce some new ways of interpretation of art, where art pieces become more important than the artists.
7.3.1. Self Resistance: Self Portrait

Conventional representation of beauty was denied by two mid-20th century women artists, one was Amrita Shergill from India and other was Frida Kahlo from Mexico. Both of them were individual artists and without any traces of any ism or school and represented their self images in non-conventional portraiture. They had painted several self portraits more or less in the same period but in two different regions and in two different cultures. The basic element of their self representation was concentrated in the otherness of women as self. They had executed these portraits with an individual intuition as a woman through their thorough self-experiences. These artists have searched out the personal space of their own womanism, and executed themselves in their canvases with the inner expression of internal soul. These portraits show that they are not framed by the construction of the so called beauty notions or feminine phenomena.

Frida Kahlo’s Self Portrait (pl. 100) narrates several unknown truths of an individual being; this portrait perhaps looking at the nothing or she has an empty look, with her confident reluctant eyes and thick, conjugated eyebrows. Frida Kahlo has never tried to show her image in the patterns of femininity to make a sensual penetration for male retina. Rather she has deliberately represented her image as a person (not as only a woman) who has crossed the miles of way as an individual and gathered the experience of existence in this oppressive society. Her portraits show a savage confidence that directly neglects the proud of the urban and civil society.

Amrita Shergill has represented her own image in various compositions, where she tried to catch her own presence as an artist. She also directly avoided the classification of gender in her personal appearance. In the painting ‘Standing Nude’ (pl.101) artist was not at all bothered about the representation of so-called woman beauty which is framed by the social customs. This straight standing profile image of Amrita shows a woman with the archeology of her personal body. She extracted a grass root feelings through her image by resembling her body with the indigenous people, after her long trip in South India. Thus here she tried to express her image in unsophisticated and un-urbanized manifestation to celebrate the position of the underdeveloped and so-called naive people of India. On a few occasions, the images of women in pre-independent visual arts of India
have served to curve an identity of self resistance. Self resistance of an individual woman performed as an identity to prove certain positions and individual identity against all kinds of oppression. Although these visual images behold some other connotation of beauty which is not being observed only by the surface of the skin, the artists who have searched such other version of beauty through the images of women were excavated the inner psyche of the woman mind. From the beginning of the present century the aesthetic explanations of beauty, i.e. mysterious, sensuous, erotic, fertility etc. were gradually challenged by the other images of women.

7.3.2 Woman Image after Independence: A Visual Transformation

After independence Indian contemporary visual art became more politically integrated and socially concerned. The social consciousness of visual art brought the critical issues of Independent India in the intellectual lime light. The problem of partition, the problem of war, the famine and starvation, the Tevaga movement, the cultural poverty of colonial India, the place of women in gendered world are scrutinized by the different artists in different medium in contemporary Indian visual art. Contemporary artists of India have executed the image of woman in other identity and they had tried to show woman not only in the oppressive mood, but also in different types of subversive stances to prioritize women’s position in the patriarchal world.

The 60’s and 70’s of the last century were the period when moral and political aspiration began to take place in the work of the major artists. In those decades women image was also evoked in different representation. The Indian (as well as the world) visual art was not much concerned about the representation of women till the end of 60’s and later in the 70’s. However, it can be observed that such a major trend in the case of some oppressed and empowered images of women which were found in a fragmented fashion in the works of the artists like Ganesh Pyne (pl.102), M.F. Husain (pl. 103), Mira Mukherjee (pl. 104), Anjali Ela Menon (pl. 105), Arpana Kaur (pl.106) S.N. Souza (pl. 107) et al.

Seventies onwards, there was a transformation in the representation of women image with noticeable changes with theoretical, social and political consciousness. Basically through the works of Arpita Singh, the self conscious image of women is exposed to make a challenging resistance in
the world of patriarchy. In the 80’s, visual art practice in India became more individualistic and identity specific. As a result the concern for identity becomes a primary element in every aspect of visual art. Also identity question in the image of women had taken a major role as resistance, which took an extremely developed expression and sense in the 90’s with all its radical integrity.

7.4. Thinking of the Future: Further Suggestion

This research has suggested the possibility of analysis of the visual images through its inner resistant values. These images show their own resistance and put the challenge against the existing normative of the society. This research work also suggests to get engaged in the critique of all kinds of constructed and legitimized gaze of privileged culture.

The recent changes in visual art within the discourse of feminism are recommended to reinterpreted and reread with some critical writings in context of the theory of resistance.

7.4.1 Woman Images in Feminist Discourse: Recent Changes in the Visual Art of India

Feminist discourse in India was noticeably visible from the 70’s. Though there were serious works and theoretical writings on women’s activisms in the 70’s, the critical writings on feminist discourses were still absent. The different theoretical debates within women’s issues between left feminists and autonomous women’s groups, debates between Dalit feminism and main stream feminism, emerged significantly in the 1970’s. Different women’s organizations, autonomous groups and establishment of feminist presses were taking place in the 70’s. The UN declared 1975 as International women’s year and 1975-1985 as Women’s Decade. In October 1975, a group of women activist organized the ‘United Women’s Liberation Struggle Conference in Pune. In 1979, a small group of women started to published ‘Manushi’; A Journal about women and society from New Delhi. In 1980 the ‘Center for Women’s Development Studies’, an autonomous research institute was formed, where Veena Mazumder was the first director. In 1974 the research Center for women’s studies at SNDT women’s University had started its activity as a research institute under the directorship of Neera Desai. In 1980s this research institute was accorded
the status of ‘Center for Advanced Research in Women’s Studies’ by the University Grants Commission. There were different women issues that socially and culturally became critical and exposed, such as ‘Mathura Case’\(^6\). Dowry murders’ became an important issue in late 70’s and 80’s decade.\(^7\) In 1982 a group of women founded a small organization, named *Saheli*\(^8\) in New Delhi. The organization tried to stop Dowry murders’ and had a vision to counsel the insecure women. Apart from Delhi in other places of India also, the dowry murder became a popular subject in relation with men power and domination. In September, 1987 the ‘Sati Daha’\(^9\) of Roop Kanwar, an eighteen year old woman, took place in the small village of Deorala in Rajasthan. These three major incidents along with numerous other issues of women opened the possibility of a certain resistance against the legitimization of social law and judgment by men. These serious issues had forced to make some changes in the structure of ‘law’ as well as these, came to lime light to expose the politics of power handled by men. From 1990’s, a body of feminist works in theoretical and critical perception emerged in India. The writers like Maintrayee Chaudhuri, Lata Mani, Vina Mazumder, Tejaswari Niranjana, Madhu Kishwar, Rajeswari sunder Rajan, Kumkum Sangari, Tanika Sarkar, Gail Omvedt, Uma Chakravarty, Vasanthi Raman and others came up with a handful of books and articles on women issues, debates, oppression of patriarchy, and upon the discourses of feminism. At the beginning, there was a debate on acceptance of feminism in Indian context\(^10\). They have denied feminism because feminism is mostly knotted with the western origins, which could be difficult to apply in Indian socio-perspective. This gap between western and other world feminism could be solved through a new kind of definition which will serve the problem of the world of *Other*. Sumi Chitnis has analyzed the problem of feminism in Indian perspective and tried to search out the crisis of sensitivity of women issues in the context of Indian society, as she said: ‘As feminism arrived in India soon afterwards in mid-seventies, I noticed many Indians respond to the feminist statement much as I had done in Canada. Well formulated though it was the western statement of feminism seemed to jar upon their sensitivities. In fact it turned several Indian women away from the cause. By now the women’s cause has gained substantial strength in the country. A growing number of women
are willing to speak out and to act... Since the situation of women in India is in fact quite miserable and a great deal needs to be done on their behalf, it is a pity that the Indian statement of their problems is often couched in statements that sound alien and which, therefore, fail to hit the mark. In order that the women’s cause in the country gain the massive support that it needs. It is important that Indian feminists understand the Indian context thoroughly and that they phrase their criticisms, their arguments and their demands on behalf of women with sensitivity to the Indian society.' (Chituis., 2004, p. 9)

In the discourse of feminism, the world of the visual art of India had consciously cited a new trend through the execution of their women images. Apart from the activist representation of women images in empowerment or in stri sakti, they became more integrated with the quality womanism. These images also became critical to all the stereotype types of feminine construction. One of the first Indian artists who claimed herself as feminist painter is Rekha Rodwittiya. She has taken a certain political position as an artist and her art developed as her personal politics. She says:

‘The hierarchies that prevail, the resulting subjugation, the dogmas of prescribed thinking, the inequality of gender, the violence and resulting chaos... many focus was drawn to this as my own life unfolded...' (Jayaram, 2001, p. 27). Rekha was even well aware about the contemporary incidents and works of the critics and theoreticians. In an interview with Georgina Maddox, Rekha says:

‘Paradoxically if you look at the 80’s, it had a strong presence of women artist’s... but as women artists we are being shown with great focus in the 80’s and 90’s. It was also there where women studies groups were very strong and gender politics was being deliberated upon. So I would not propagate that gender was a problem in relation to be taken seriously as an artist. I will say however that being a woman brought on certain stereotype attitudes from male artists in relation to sexual misconduct, which are patriarchal and dated, which was irksome and unacceptable in a space that one considered to be liberal progressive.’(Maddox, 2009, p. 129)

Rekha Rodwittiya painted her women images in the present century in exuberant gestures with unclothed appearance. The naked body stays with
the original resonance of woman’s vitality in various unorthodox attitudes. The use of flat colours with thin and sharp contoured lines represents her women (pl. 108) in straight and bold appearance, denying the patriarchal ambiguity in women representation.

Surekha, the 20th century video artist and photo performer uses to represent her works in the archeology of her own body. Body became her own site, where she could cultivate her passionate feelings, her intimate moments, her pains and also her revolutions.

In the video-photo works titled, ‘Selving a Body’ (pl. 109), Surekha tried to search her pain and wounds in multiple panel work and extracted the resistance through her own body. Another photo-installation of Surekha, ‘Spaces of Silence’ (pl. 110), executed in 2007, also shows the sound less world of a woman. Here she has showed an interior of a kitchen with necessary accessories and utensils. Surekha has kept a hip of red roses along with their leaves to celebrate the neglected world of woman, which is deliberately unrecognized and unappreciated by the patriarchal representatives. In a conversation with Veena Shekar, Surekha exposed her view on body and art as follows:

‘Selving a Body’ (1997) was the work from where my prolonged preoccupation with addressing the body in political and historic context was initiated;… The specific story I have quoted in the catalogue of ‘Selving a Body’ refers to desire. The first assured of and yearned, because the promise of desire was perhaps the initial moment when looked at herself as her ‘self’. This very realization is the beginning of her empowerment. From the blouses in ‘Selving a Body’ (1999), I have moved onto realizing this blouse/costume as a ‘body in itself’, which was further, in turn, photographed in relation to a real body.’ (Shekar, 2009, p. 151)

Mithu Sen, the sculptor, painter, photo-performer of 21st century has imbibed a vibration of dramatic thrust upon the rigid social norms by her art works. She had mainly started her work as a professional artist from late 90’s of 20th century and imaged the unique presence of women through the impression of her own portraiture. Mithu tries to search the personal psyche of the individual woman through her self presence. In the work titled, ‘Dance after Depression’, (pl. 111) she represented her portrait with the deer.
horn and ears through photo-performance. Her body is draped with a tiger-skin textured sari as a signifier of violence, an attack or threat upon the self/body. In another photo performance, ‘Mercy Killing’ (pl. 112), she has represented her image as a hunter bird, who has killed a smaller bird with her hands. Here she has pasted the collage of her own photograph/portrait and rest of the body has been drawn naked. A dialect of dominant and dominated is represented here within a single figure. Mithu has criticized sexual sensation of women representation through her works. The women images resist the construction of sexism and encounter the conventional representation of women images under feminine virtues:

‘Uta Grosenick emphasizes the fact that sex is not a natural given but a social construction and Mithu precisely developed the idea of sex as cultural construction… At first look, her readymade sculptures teethed bananas, teethed glasses box and with objects changed into mouth or lips, denote a parody of sensuality. They became a humorous critic on sex images consumption.’ (Ithurbide, 2009, p. 87)

7.4.2. Closing the Concluding Remarks

The present study emphasizes its attempt to highlight the space of artistic representation of resisting womanhood by restating that in the 21st century the flow of resistance becomes more articulated in the image and signs of women through the different visual languages. Visual art becomes more diversified with new forms of visual languages, such as photography, videography, installation, site-specific and performance Art. Different artists have projected different connotations of women images in the discourse of resistance, as women’s resistance stands against all possible kinds of patriarchal practices, such as oppression, alienation, discriminations, construction of femininity, patriarchal norms and gender gaze. The resisting images of women enlighten the women’s personal space, where the individual woman can discover herself with her own individual uniqueness. It gathers the strength to build a threat against the patriarchal society. This personal world of woman has gathered the strength to build a threat to the patriarchal society and the constructed feminine image of woman, passed on as universal and eternal is questioned and challenged in a changing panorama of resistance.
Notes. Chapter VII

1. This speech was published as ‘*Speeches of Lord Macaulay with his Minute on Indian Education*’ (selected with an introduction and notes by G.M. Young, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1935).

2. Tagore used the word *Blackies* in a letter series from Europe. (Tagore, R.1393 (Bengali), nineth Letter, p. 810)

3. Tagore used the word *Ingo Bango* in a letter series from Europe. (Tagore, R. (1393 (Bengali), Fifth Letter p. 810)

4. Tagore, (1393 (beng.) p. 482


6. 1980’s ‘Mathura Case’ was one of them. Mathura a low-cast girl (14-15 age) was detained and raped in police custody. Mathura complained against the rape, but police demanded that Mathura gave her consent for sexual relations. In first session judge gave the judgment in favour of the rapists. Then the high court found them guilty and again in 1980 Supreme Court reverted the judgment in favour of police, with a logic that no evidence had found that Mathura had resisted the rape. The decision of the court was a shocking thrush to the sensible people of India and there different protests were raised against the law and judgment of Supreme Court.

7. The first protest was cited in New Delhi in July of 1979, where a crowd of almost 200 people have gathered in front of a house of New Delhi. A young married woman was burned by her relations in her in-laws house and the crowd shouted for a police investigation. (Forbes, 1998, p. 245)

8. The organization *Saheli* tried to stop Dowry murders’ and had a vision to counsel the insecure women. Apart from Delhi in other places of India also, the dowry murder became a popular subject to the men power and domination. There were different kinds of social juridical, legal and humanitarian protest initiated by different activists, critics, artists, performers etc. A report tilled “Dowry Deaths and Law reform” was
presented by the Law commission of India and the final Dowry bill was produced in 1984 and passed, in 1986. (Forbes, 1998, p. 247)

9. ‘Sati’ was apparently abolished in 1829 by the colonial law; but the incident of Roop Kanwar signified that the colonial law and judgment could superficially stop the incident like ‘Sati’ by the power. Actually it was unable to change the practice of the patriarchal religiosity, which proves the limitations of colonial rulers and their policies in cultural reformation.

10. Madhu Keshwar has denied her image as a feminist in an article titled, ‘Why I Do Not Call Myself a Feminist’ published in Manushi, in 1991. In the conversation between Illa Dutta and Arpita Singh, Arpita had also denied her position as feminist. (Keshwar, 1991, p. 2-8)