CHAPTER- I

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1.1 Beginnings of Resistance in Imaging Woman

Imaging woman constitutes a major theme or one can say that it is a living tradition in the world of visual arts of contemporary India. But the theme becomes problematic in the socio-political context of countering the tradition that marginalizes Indian women in general and usurps their living space. Hence some contemporary artists do not opt for imaging woman in the so-called socio-politically accepted mode. They do not make woman a subject for study. Woman becomes an Other in this context, an Other with freedom for expressing the selfhood. In contemporary Indian visual arts she becomes an Other in post-colonial arena. Here the Other is not merely a being that resembles the self and then gets separated from the self. On the other hand the other with small ‘o’ develops his ego or patriarchal ego with a hope for an anticipated mastery over Others:’ In post-colonial theory, it can refer to colonized others who are marginalized by imperial discourse, identified by their difference from the centre and, perhaps crucially, become the focus of anticipated mastery by the imperial ‘ego’. (Ashcroft, et al, 1988, p. 132).

Contemporary Indian visual arts often counter this hegemonized and marginalized image of woman not necessarily by representing woman as they are in this domination of patriarchy, but more interestingly by projecting women as an Other with capital ‘O’ which has been called grand-autre (the great Other) by Lacan, as a transcendent pole of address.

1.1.1 Power and Resistance
Resistance in art is ‘Real’ and it sustains a struggle against the imaginative fact. The ‘Real’ denotes that resistance is not only an object of ‘jouissance’\(^1\). Rather resistance is an actual threat to its jouissance and will become ‘Real’ in visual art. The sustainable struggle of resistance against the irony of imagination serves as an alternative to the reality of spoken facts. Resistance may not always be open and clear; it can go on continuing like a
silent gesture archived in human history, -a gesture against all types of conventionalism, collective arrogance, hegemony, patriarchy, eclecticism and taken for-granted attitude. Resistance consists in questioning any stereotyped fact of dominance and in art it brings forth an alternative.

Resistance has a keen relation with power. Resistance signifies the existence of power as well as it threatens the presence of power in variable ways within specified cultural structure. The discourse of power was first derived by Michel Foucault on the analysis of knowledge in postmodern context. According to Foucault power does not originate from the central or hierarchical structure but silently flows through the small molecular signs of society, like a capillary action. According to Michel Foucault, ‘Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere’. (Foucault, 1990, p. 93)

Therefore the orientation to centrality and possessive concentration of power is being termed by Foucault as micro-power to denote the localized network of power. After Foucault power became a discursive issue for the distorted vision of egalitarianism in the era of post-structuralism. According to Baudrillard power is to be totally neutralized because of its evenly diffused character. In the writing of ‘Forget Foucault’ (Trans: Nicola Dufresne) Jean Baudrillard compared power with ‘a shattered windscreen still holding together’ and analyzed it in the following manner ,“However, this ‘power’ remains a mystery---starting from despotic centrality, it becomes by the half-way point a 'multiplicity of relations'…..and it culminates, at the extreme pole, with resistances …” (Baudrillard, 1977, p. 37)

One important issue lying behind this discursive analysis based on the west-centered philosophies is that the connotations of power and resistance do not always represent the ‘real’ image of the struggling people of the post-colonial society. Particularly in various cultural conditions (such as subaltern, marginalised or gendered) power has been operated by a formulation of constructed hegemony; the hegemony which encompasses the heterarchy of identity and ideology.
The concept of ‘hegemony’ was formulated by the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci evaluated Machiavelli’s logic of power. Machiavelli’s logic was, power can be achieved through both force and fraud. But Gramsci suggested that ruling classes achieve domination by creating subjects who ‘willingly’ submit to being ruled. According to Gramsci, power does not coerce directly, but power is achieved in a hegemonistic set up through a combination of coercion and consent.

Ideology is the medium through which the ideas of ruling class can be transmitted to the created subject who ‘willingly submits to being ruled’ and can play upon the common sense of the people. Gramsci analyzed ideology and common sense in separate aspect. Gramsci’s idea of common sense is not concerned with the popular consciousness of human beings but concerned with a sense which is common to everybody and it is the combination of different ideas. Gramsci also classified ideology in the terms of class and individual and made the distinction among various kinds of ideologies. For him ideology could express the dominant interest as well as the protest of the exploited.\(^5\) Loomba says: ‘The proletariat or oppressed subject possesses a dual consciousness – That which is beholden to the rulers, and complicit with their will, and that which is capable of developing into resistance.’ (Loomba. 1998. p. 28)

There are many forms of resistance and they interact and debate with each other according to the types and conditions of the authority and dominance. Sometimes resistance plays an active role against power and hegemony. But sometimes it also plays a silent role. The silence is not the measuring scale of the intensity of resistance and it should be judged from the angle of the hegemony. Perhaps it is necessary to review the role of power and how power operates its institution which would be considered under the ‘real’ condition of the subject, who are dominated by the hegemony of ‘force and fraud’. Hence resistance could be judged in the way of ‘exclusion’, but not in the way of negation, because through the way of exclusion, resistance can place the idea of difference between dominant culture and dominated culture. In this connection, Homi. K. Bhabha’s comment on resistance can be taken into account: ‘Resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of
political intention, nor is it the simple negation or the exclusion of the content of another culture, as difference one perceived...... the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference.’ (Bhabha, 1985, p. 153)

1.1.2 Gender, Culture and Resistance

The signs of cultural difference are present in the different aspects of the ethnographic study. Though ethnography is not an alteration of cultural study, but it joins another body of work by black, post-colonial and feminist theorists oriented with identity, history and social relations. In the begriming of the practice of the cultural study in Britain, Richard Haggard and Stuart Hall put some important questions about the anti-disciplinary aspects of the culture at the ‘CCCS’ at Birmingham. The Birmingham cultural study explores some new kind of ideas, ‘to enable people to understand what [was] going on, and especially to provide ways of thinking, strategies for survival and resources of resistance.’ (Nelson, 1992, p.2) According to Stuart Hall and others ‘Cultural studies was thus forged in the face of a sense of the margin versus center.’ (Nelson, 1992, p.12)

The position of women in view of gender study, could be compared with the aspects of colonial subjects, because both are oppressed by the shadow of hegemony; the hegemony which is not only oriented with the poststructuralist reading. According to Lata Mani, ‘... That poststructuralist reading of hegemony can be misleading when applied to a colonial state that achieved not hegemony but dominance.’ (Nelson, 1992, p. 8)

A meta-narration of femininity was introduced from the beginning of the 19th Century in the colonial nations. A nation and its culture began to be represented in the image of woman under the nuances of femininity. Several colonial elites and intellectuals interpreted the nation as mother and justified the ideal femininity and sacrificial motherhood under the notion of “the nation as mother” in the emotional tide of Pan-nationalism. Loomba puts a critical view on the discussion of nationalism. She said:
As already discussed, for colonizers and the colonized, women, gender relations as well as patterns of sexuality come to symbolize both a cultural essence and cultural differences. Veilings, clitoral excision, polygamy, widow immolation, matriliny or same-sex relations (to take just a few examples) are interpreted as symptoms of the untranslatable cultural essence of particular cultures. Maintaining or undermining these practices or the social relations they signify thus becomes central to colonial struggles, often tinting them with an extremely patriarchal hue. (Loomba. 1998, p. 217-218)

The relationship between women, nation, and culture became extremely complicated in the colonial period and were intertwined and interrelated with the firm network of constructed values. Through those varied relationships some important questions arose in the feminist arguments, i.e. - women rights, understanding women’s place in the society and women’s labour. As Loomba remarked:

‘Women’s labour was universally expropriated either directly or indirectly, to feed the colonial machine, and this legacy dovetails with patterns of globalization to ensure that third world women and women of colour remain the most exploited of the worlds’ workers today.’ (Loomba, 1998, p. 230)

The Third World women are the major exploited part of post-colonial society, and the most important subject of the ethnographic study together with the study of cultural differences. Cultural differences between the power and resistance, dominant and dominated, colonizers and colonized, ruler and ruled, men and Other women arrived in a new dimension and assured questions/debates under post colonial context, against the post-structuralist explanations of gender in cultural differences.

Derrida opposed the binary structure of sexual difference under post-structuralist context and Linda Kurti explained the matter in other connotation and told, ‘Derrida has advocated replacing the dualistic opposition with an indefinite series of differences in an anti-dialectic movement:'
‘when we speak here of sexual difference, we must distinguish between opposition and difference. Opposition is two, opposition is man/woman. Difference on other hand, can be an indefinite number of sexes ....All that you can call “gift” –love, jouissance – is absolutely forbidden, is forbidden by the dual opposition.’ (Curti, 1994, p. 134)

But the post-structuralist deconstruction in sexual difference is obtained from a single-point perspective by the common western philosophical practices. Those philosophies often introduced woman as a subject or figuration not as a real woman. In this context Curti's protest was significant, and she has taken the references of Teresa de Lauretis and Gayatri Spivak to notify the real position of woman. Curti told:

‘The deconstructionist position has been criticized by Teresa de Lauretis in "Technologies of Gender". She points out that Derrida, in his critique of phallogocentrism uses women as mere instruments for theoretical discourse. Just as Nietzsche positioned women as the symbol of truth, the discourse of woman becomes the discourse of male philosophers... philosophers speak about woman, never about real woman. In spite of her deconstructive position, Spivak in "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman" similarly observes that deconstruction defines its own "displacement through woman, and woman becomes its figuration; the discourse of man is the metaphor of woman." 1993.p-169' (Curti, 1994, p. 140)

Some of the cultural discourses of postmodernism and post structuralism are important in the study of gender and feminism; such as the opposition of essentialism in sexual differences. Sexual difference alone cannot reflect any real essence of the Other of the woman, because female subjects are multi dimensional and they interplay within the sphere of individual womanhood. This different angle of any difference can be explained by the notion of the separate identities.

In “This Sex which Is Not One”, Luce Irigaray speaks of the “apartness” of being a woman, apartness even from language: ‘I am a woman, I am a female sexed being. The motive of my work lies in the impossibility of
articulating such a proposition: …In other words, to articulate the reality of my sex is impossible in discourse (1978, p- 123)' (Curti, 1994, p. 141).

To establish the identity of individual woman and to oppose the solitary aspects of sexual differences in an essentialist position Linda Curti quoted Gayatri Spivak, Tercsa de Laureties and Kristeva, and told:
‘Gayatri Spivak polemically declares that essentialism is a trap and, following the deconstructive lesson, that “no rigorous definition of anything is ultimately possible, so that if one wants to, one could go on deconstructing the opposition between man and woman, and finally show that it is a binary opposition that displaces itself”. (1987, P-77). Teresa de Lureties stresses that the paradigm of a universal sexual opposition keeps articulating the differences among women: “I see a shift, a development…in the feminist understanding of female subjectivity: a shift from the earlier view of woman defined purely by sexual difference (i.e. in relation to man) to the more difficult and complex notion that the female subject is a site of difference” (1986, P.14).’ (Curti, 1994, p. 141)

Despite the rhetorical legitimization of gendered issues of the western world, the identity of women could be re-assessed from the cultural and ethnographic study, particularly in colonized arena, where the women are more dominated and marginalized. Ania Loomba referred:
‘At a national feminist conference in 1987, for example, 79 percent of the participant were also active in black, labour and working class, church and other political movements, and feminists from autonomous groups were dubbed fossils, (soares et al. 1995 : 309). It is easy to understand why women in several colonial and post colonial situations would identify more readily with anti-imperialist or working class struggles, than with the dominant images or concerns of white First world feminism. As a South African feminist puts it:

“Burning one’s bra to declare one’s liberation as a woman did not connect psychically as did the act of a Buddhist monk who made a human pyre of himself to protest the American occupation of Vietnam. And perhaps that was the point – we were a people under siege. As women we identified with this – the national liberation
From the beginning of 1970s, women resistance became evident in different anthropological and historical works; basically concentrated in the women of Asia and south East Asia. A new concept of resistance was developed in the term of 'everyday forms of resistance' locating everyday social religion and the subcultures of women's protest. Women protest and resistance expressed by Padma Anagol through the acts such as: ‘…feigning sickness to stave off work; threatening to return to the natal home in gross cases of justice; refusing sex to disloyal or recalcitrant husband; learning to read and write in secret; and utilizing vows of silence and non-communication as strategies of withdrawal to bring attention to themselves within the home. Collectively and individually these suggested the everyday efforts of women to gain some control over their lives.’ (Anagol, 2007, p. 230)

Women lifestyle and resistance is a new thought which was brought into limelight in the 70’s decade by Veena Talwar Oldenberg in her article Life Style as Resistance: The case of the Courtesans of Lucknow, India in the journal of Feminist studies, Vol 16. no. 2. Summer, 1990. Here she showed the courtesan women within the subaltern class, tried to search and introspect their interior persona in the periphery of traditional practices with active and passive resistances.

Padma Anagol showed in her article ‘From the Symbolic to the Open: Women’s Resistance in Colonial Maharashtra’, where the women are discriminated against and are disadvantaged politically, economically, sexually and legally. She argued about the monopoly of knowledge and education that are the tools of control over the female sexuality. She told in the context of resistance that, ‘Resistance is an important term in context of power, because the poststructuralist concept of resistance is the other pole of power what Anagol has described as ‘Karmie cycle’ or Raka Ray has perceived it as the ‘Capacity to act’. These thoughts have raised definite questions against resistance and its way of act against power. In case of
female resistance Padma Anagol has put up some questions about the methods of resistance, utilizations of resistance, impact of the resistance etc. She then argued in favor of women resistance and put certain logic behind her ideas:

‘I would therefore, like to begin my essay by looking more closely at the concept of resistance, keeping in mind the circumstances of the subordination of women and the conditions in which resistance may be generated. The term ‘resistance’ is wide ranging, encompassing many acts and extending its sweep from the private sphere of the home while also implying the public/political arena. By resistance we mean the ability to limit, mollify, or overturn structures of power. As such, women’s resistance is a conscious act and is characterized by intention arising within conditions of unequal relations of power within society, and as often generated (although not exclusively) by the imbalance of power between the sexes.’ (Anagol, 2007. p. 27)

It is important to think and bring up some identical difference about the role of resistance in postcolonial context because in a claustrophobic subaltern space how resistance could act as an opposition against the delicate network of essential ideas of westernized construction, may enable some debates: debates are of race and gender, object and subject, identity and difference etc. It is true that there is an immense gap between women as a constructed group and women as a subject. Women as a group is a construction of the homogeneity of material reality, which has been labeled by the (his)story, as powerless, exploited, sexually harassed etc. Women as such groups are constructed by the gaze of men, which discriminated women from their real identity.

1.1.3 Identity and the Space as ‘Other’

In the cultural periphery the ‘self of a woman lies dormant into the discourse of her individual space. The individual space of woman is particularly her personal territory, where the space expresses the identity of self and reflects the image of individual being. Every individual woman should be identified separately from her personal perspective; where not only she separates her
identity from the men but also expresses the difference from other women. Contextually the tautological slogan of 1960s could express this individual space of woman, ‘The Personal is political’. This slogan encapsulated a basic spectacle of radical feminism. That (the slogan) denotes each and every personal space of woman as politically identifiable within a territory of common struggle and carries her individual' as 'being'; This introspection of identity as 'self' could also be analyzed through the studies of culture. Ania Loomba brought the debate by referring to Stuart Hall’s prediction on making of personal identity, which Loomba denoted as the 'matter of becoming' and told, ‘...as Hall goes on to suggest, it is possible to think about cultural identity in a related but different way, one which is “much less familiar and moiré unsettling.” This second position recognizes that identity is a matter of “becoming” as well as of "being".’(Loomba, 1998, p. 181)

While identity is a matter of becoming, it can be predicted in a process of continuity and an opposition of essential position. Identity varies under the changes of situational diversity and interactive signs. In the essay, ‘post – Marxism and Cultural study’, Angela McRobbie questioned:
‘But what exactly is meant by identity? Is it a term which implies the psychic processes of acquiring identity as theorized by Lacan? Is it a term which somehow suggests the political shift away from class? Or does class identity constitute one among many identities of equal validity in the struggle for a pluralist radical democracy? Through what processes has identity in cultural studies come to replace the more psychoanalytical notion of the subject?’ (McRobbie, 1994, p. 49)

These diverse aspects of identity raised some issues in the field of cultural studies, where identical position becomes fragmented and denies the essential static position of “Ego-ideal”. Angela McRobbie discussed on the identical aspects of Marxism; She explains the critique of Ernestio Laclau in her same essay. Here she interpreted Laclau's critique on the “agency of one united class”. She showed how Laclau analyzed lacan's theory on extending his psychoanalytical vocabulary to incorporate a more sociopolitical perspective. Laclau gave impetus on Lacanian lack on the arguments of incompleteness against full or total identity. This
incompleteness creates the “Social imaginary”¹, which is the sphere of an ironical representation. Angela put her view on identity through this incompleteness and translocated the signifiers in the new form of struggle; she explained, ‘Incompleteness, fragmentation and the pluralities of emergent identities need not mean loss of political capacity. Instead they can point the way to new forms of struggle…’ (McRobbie, 1994, p. 50)

These new forms of struggle of the fragmented identities become unsaleable under the conditions of frauds and forces. The fragmented identity sustains a separate space against all kinds of Meta discourses of power to make a position for the survival of the self and this fragmented position creates an incompleteness of Identity. The incompleteness of identity can create a difference between the stigma of “us and them” and gives birth to a new space as ‘Other’. The ‘Other’, could also be categorized in different variety and could be estimated through the signifiers of identity. Though identity was fundamentally unitary and harmonious, but in the context of the ‘Other’, identity takes the position of differences, where it denies the position of essential identities such as of race, class, nationality etc. Through the negation of these essential positions, identity denotes an internal process of relational and contextual mode. Identity also destabilizes and de-essentializes the delicate nuances of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nationality etc. Though identity could be seen as fundamentally harmonious and unitary, but in relation to the cultural Other, identity encourages the area of real struggles, real attempts to falsify historical authenticity by means of invasive divergence and disintegration.

Some new questions often come in differentiation of various identities such as race, gender etc. Sara Suleri asked, in her paper ‘Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition’ published in Critical Inquiry, 18(4) (summer), 1992, where she told, ‘In seeking to dismantle the iconic status of postcolonial feminism, I will attempt here to address the following questions: Within the tautological margins of such a discourse which comes first, gender or race?’ (Suleri, 1995, p. 273). She answered her question in the connotation of postcolonial discourse, ‘In the context of contemporary feminist discourse, I would argue the category of post colonialism must be
read both as a free-floating metaphor for cultural embattlement and as an almost absolute signifier for the historicity of race …’ (Suleri, 1995, p. 274). In the same article Sara Suleri commented on the identity of postcolonial woman, ‘…It is still prepared to grant an uneasy selfhood to a voice that is best described as the property of ”postcolonial woman”.’ (Suleri, 1995, p. 274)

Identity of a woman within postcolonial and/or subaltern space subsequently becomes marginal and monolithic. In the postcolonial arena women are subjected to struggle and oppression like the subalterns. They are struggled not only in the ways of domination of economic differences but also by the hegemony of sexual differences of patriarchal gaze within and across the race. The very notion of subaltern and woman as ‘Other’ has been investigated in the article ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ by Gayatri. C. Spivak. In this article Spivak made her critique of the intellectuals who could study and write for subalterns. But they are not sufficiently concerned to enlighten the real problematic of true subaltern. Here she obtained the classification of groups of colonial differences in itemized order through the interpretation of Derridas ‘antre’. The ‘antre’ or the (place) in-betweenness (The Double session, Dissemination. 1981. trans. Barbara Jonshon. Chicago. University of Chicago press) is divided into following categories:

1. Dominant foreign groups.
2. Dominant indigenous groups on the all India level.
3. Dominant indigenous groups on all the regional and local levels.
4. The terms ‘people’ and ‘subaltern classes’ [are] used as synonymous throughout [Guha’s definition]. The social groups and elements included in this category represent the “demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the “elite”.

Consider the third item on this list the antre of situational indeterminacy these careful historians presuppose as they grapple with the question, Can the Subaltern Speak?’ (Spivak, 1995, p. 26). She also made her critique, that, ‘For the true subaltern group, whose identity is its difference, there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself; the
intellectual’s solution is not to abstain from representation. The problem is that the subjects itinerary has not been traced so as to offer an object of seduction to the representing intellectuals. In the slightly dated language of the Indian group, the question becomes, How can we touch the consciousness of the people, even as we investigate their politics? With what voice-consciousness can the subaltern speak?’ (Spivak, 1995, p. 26/27)

The important area of Spivak’s essay is containing a comparative analysis between subaltern and women, where Spivak creates a special awareness to point out the narrow epistemic violence, the stereo-type representation of class, gender, race and authentic manipulation of academics. Through this essay she tried to interpret women in the signs of gender and race. The notion of feminine and the figure of women (through the notion of femininity) is an indeterminate issue in the phallogocentric tradition, which raises questions and resistances to prevent the feminine figuration of women in silence; and the silence is a similar ‘figure’ of the races and classes of subalterns. Spivak also emphasized on the subaltern historiography. She examines the sexual difference of women as doubly effected ‘within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject’14.

In comparison of women and subaltern, Spivak viewed both the issues as ‘object’ in the colonialist historiography and as ‘subject’ of insurgency, under the ideology of construction of gender that keeps the male dominant. And at the last line of her article she made her final comment: ‘If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow...’ (Spivak, 1995, p.28). Through this comment she tried to establish that women are the most oppressed and struggled group in colonial context as ‘Other’. The ‘Other’ as woman often arrives as a resistance against all kind of dominant groups controlled by the patriarchal ‘nation-state’ machinery/mechanism.
1.2 Making of Woman Image in Cultural Constructions

The image of woman is constructed by the politics of patriarchal system. There are some specific criteria which have been determined by men’s society to make a perfect woman. These images of women are not always real, but these virtues have been projected as the real woman.

1.2.1 Real and Imagined: Connotations of Culture

Woman and her ‘Other’ image is alienated from the privileged world and some question eventually arises in connection with alienated ‘Other’, such as, can the woman unfasten herself from this constructed alienation of social norms? Or she is really fastened in Spivak’s ‘silence’ within the claustrophobic wall of powers and prejudices? Is this silence real?

Perhaps this silence of real woman is imprisoned within the hegemony of real world and cannot speak out for her own rights. But in the real world there is a continuous flow of struggle of woman, within and across, to unfasten this silence. This continuous struggle could create an image of resistance, through the different expressive mediums, like film, architecture, music, literature, performance, visual arts etc. These different forms of expressive mediums of art transfigure real woman into the form of imagined woman. Now the question comes, whether the image of imagined woman is more resistant than that of real woman? Does it mean that the image of the real woman creates an ambience of romantic resistance, against the facts of the real experience of the struggled woman? Perhaps it is to be examined through the positive approaches of resistance, because the resistant image of the imagined woman not only brought some example to the real world, but also raises a voice of protest and opens the challenge against the delicate network of patriarchy. In this connection Rajeswari Sunder Rajan’s view could be taken from her book:

‘Though theoretically resistance is not always positive. Resistance may be an absence of acquiescence in ones oppression. The act of reading it as resistance can be an important political recognition... the positing of resistance... without a specific endorsement of “agency” in the traditional sense –with its attributes of both action, as well as intention-- is a somewhat problematic claim. But not only have I wished to avoid the romantic fiction of
resistance ....I have also sought to redefine individual resistance itself in terms of its social function rather than its performative intentionality.’ (Rajan, 1993, p. 12)

The positive and negative approaches of resistance vary on the basis of the situation and the application. In the review of the book, ‘Woman Writing in India’ edited by Susie Tharu and K.Lalitha, Rajeswari Sunder Rajan remarked that:

‘Surely women’s writing must be viewed fromwithin, and as an aspect of social practice as much as without it and as a form of resistance to it’ (Rajan, 1993, p.3).

Again she told: ‘Admittedly, if there is a danger of making resistance too “autonomous” there is also that of making the dominant too monolithic. In the methodological impasse that this issue poses, whether the subaltern historian / feminist critic celebrates resistance or privileges the ultimate authority of the dominant will depend largely on the strategic, political or corrective purpose that underlines her interpretation and intervention’ (Rajan, 1993, p.5).

Here the resistant image of woman should be analyzed through the views of postcolonial difference and oppression and argued positively in the essence of woman as ‘Other’. The debate of the 'real' and 'imagined' image of the woman is also an important issue. It (the issue) imparts an assessment of the struggle of woman under the constructed gender politics of the Third World and their resistant image in visual arts.

The debate between ‘imagined’ and ‘real’ is a delicate practice of culture. Some domain of culture could be restricted from the other domains of the society and it emphasizes to create another space outside its contour through which it may be reinterpreted, ‘...is it (culture) an envelope that wraps us around and constructs our very ‘reality’? the major theoretical debates about the relationship between culture and society the imagined and the real’...’ (Rajan, 1993, p. 9). Therefore culture can be assessed as the model of beliefs and conceptual practice of the society. So the debate between real and imagined in relation to woman image cannot be
separated, because they are complementary to each other. Rajan further told, 'Our understanding of the problems of 'real' woman cannot lie outside the 'imagined' constructs in and through which “women” emerge as subjects.' (Rajan, 1993, p. 10)

The construction of a new Indian woman is a contemporary discourse of woman in India. The signification of she as 'new' would perfectly fit with the time and the expressions of modern and liberated She is 'Indian', and also possessing a pan-Indian identity that neglects the regional, linguistic and racial specifications. This very image of the new Indian woman is constructed through the popular mediums like advertisements, music albums, video and audio jockeys, travel and tour managements, etc. The image of new Indian women of course rises from the urban middle-class and not only it provides an attractive and desired image, but also provides the image of a normative model of idealized beauty, namely the representation of ultimate femininity.

The hegemony of the state broadcasting and global consumer capitalism combines a powerful process in the construction of new Indian woman. Though some of the legal rights of the Indian woman have partially fulfilled, but the problematic of gender issues have deflected on to other areas by representing the image of woman under the constructed ethics of modernity. Suddhabrata Sengupta’s, “Nathabati Anathabat” an act of Female resistance is an important review in the journey of women struggle and resistance through the way of ethnicity to contemporary reality. Shaoli Mitra, the actress /director from West Bengal staged her one-woman show, Nathabati Anathabat, based on the other story of Draupadi (a character of the epic ‘Mahabharata’) simultaneously when the TV show Mahabharata was showing its titillating episodes of Bastraharan. Exceptional interpretation of Draupadi in the other way in Nathabati Anathabat undoubtedly practiced a resistance against the normative lessons of the society. In his review Suddhabrata Sengupta remarked, ‘Of this perhaps unconscious, rejection of femininity is born a healthy and skeptical androgynous elegance that is in itself perhaps an unconscious political statement about gender identity. Modernity is made of this uncomfortable, uneasy staff.’ (Rajan, 1993, p.142)
Therefore the question arises about the representation of real. Could the image of the constructed femininity (of the Capitalist or the neo-colonial hegemony) consider as the real image of the society? Whether the normative image of woman could be granted as the real image? Or the real lies under the imagined images of cultural resistance? Rather the image that comes from the different expressive mediums of cultural practices (like music, art, performance etc) have certain acceptability as 'real' because of its imagined truths not at all concerned with what is real, but concerned only with what should be real.

The constructed image of women, which commonly represented as the real is also representing the ideal of beauty. The term beauty, which is immensely analyzed and criticized in Third Wave Feminism, is questioned by the feminist critics at the last decade of 20th century.

There is another important factor that lies under the representation of women image, i.e. Beauty. Philosophically Beauty is one of the norms of aesthetic and became a philosophical discourse from the early classical period in the western world. The earliest western theory of beauty can be found in the works of early Greek philosophers from the pre-Socratic period, such as Pythagoras. The Pythagorean School saw a strong connection between mathematics and beauty. In particular, they noted that objects proportioned according to the golden ratio seemed more attractive. Ancient Greek architecture was built, based upon this view of symmetry and proportion. In the classical period, according to Greek philosopher Plato, beauty is an idea, something abstract that is revealed in the order of the natural world. Concepts of beauty became the primary notion in the appreciation of art from the era of Classical Greece.

Plato conceptualized beauty in the basis of true pleasure. Aristotle attributed a modified thought on beauty after Plato and his beauty concept is something imagined. Aristotle’s concept of beauty was manifested by the function of form, which was not as abstract as like the theory of Plato. This concept of beauty is grounded in the analysis of object. In other words, it is bound to a context. The most celebrating philosophy of his time, ‘Mimetic
Theory’ gives a new way to search beauty. The time was remarkable for its celebration of perfection in every sphere of life. In art the visual values (perfect form, perfect proportion, and perfect representation) reached its limit and beauty achieved the zenith of its visual perfection.

Throughout the middle ages, the debate over beauty as a transcendental property continued to gain momentum. On one side, there were those who could not bring themselves to believe that beauty is to be found in every existing thing. For them, the meaning of ‘goodness’ in the Platonic sense could refer analogously to the beauty of moral action or to the disposition of the soul, but not to all things as they appear to the human senses. To say that good moral action is “beautiful” is quite acceptable, but to say that every existent thing is “beautiful” in so far as it exists in contrary to common experience. Moreover, to say such a thing would offend the beauty of God by drawing parallels between God and even the ugliest of existing things. On the other side of the debate were those who staunchly maintained the transcendental nature of beauty. For these thinkers, beauty is present wherever being is present, and things are beautiful insofar as they exist.

A philosophical hybridism emerges from the foregoing analysis of Aquinas’s ‘In Dionysii De divinis nominibus’. In this work, Aquinas manifests sympathy for the Platonically inspired notion of beauty as a transcendental property. Standards of beauty are always evolving, based on what a culture considers valuable. Historical standardization shows a wide range of different dimension for beauty. However, humans who are relatively young, with smooth skin, well-proportioned bodies, and regular features, have traditionally been considered to be the most beautiful throughout history. People are influenced by the images they see in the media to determine what is or is not beautiful. Feminists and doctors have suggested that the skinny and thin models featured in magazines promote eating disorders; and others have argued that the predominance of white women featured in movies and advertising leads to a Eurocentric concept of beauty, that brought up the feelings of inferiority in women of colour, and internalized racism. The movement, The black is beautiful, sought to dispel this notion.
Conversely, it could be assumed that the beauty ideals may also promote racial unity.

Beauty became the prime factor of visual art through mimetic representation and also became the tool of justification for the normative of visual images. From the beginning of the classical age to the age of modernism women body, preferably nude, was a popular object of study among the visual artists (Except in the age of medieval era). Bare female bodies were legitimized in the essence of beauty by the artists, art critics, viewers and even by the women under privileged groups. Women are beautiful is an old myth, and this is the way they were pampered to sit nude against a blank canvas. The myth then occupied the whole visual world with its strongest notion as beauty. The Aristotelian concept of beauty lies under the beholder's eye, transforms into a new construction that is the viewer has to accept beauty as the norms of value.

This new perception of beauty is almost constructed in women representation which automatically stood against the real images of women in the society. New York based feminist writer Naomi Wolf critically analyzed the notions of beauty in her first book ‘The Beauty Myth’, where she told, ‘... the midst of violent backlash against feminism that uses images of female beauty as a political weapon against women’s advancement: the beauty myth.’

'... myths about motherhood, domesticity, chastity and passivity, no longer can manage.' (Wolf, 1991, p. 10-11).

This new thought about beauty emerged from the capitalist economy and the capitalist idea reshaped the concept of female beauty as well as female body; that spread out like capillary network through the media in the form of fashion, advertisement, film, pornography and soap- magazines etc. The result comes out when eating disorder and anorexia²⁰, cosmetic surgery, massage parlor, designer's collections, trends of spring/summer or fall/winter, soap operas, tele-shopping become the common factors for the development of women identity. Women identity becomes essentially generalized and reconstructed a genre of femininity (trend/fashion) in the
pitfall of the beauty myth. Naomi Wolf explained that, ‘... how we feel about ourselves physically, we may be worse off than our unliberated grandmothers. Recent research consistently shows that inside the majority of the West’s controlled, attractive, successful working women, there is a secret “underlife” poisoning our freedom; infused with notions of beauty, it is a dark vein of self-hatred, physical obsessions, terror of aging, and dread of lost control.’ (Wolf. N. 1991. P-10)

Sex and pornography played some special role in making of beauty of women body but sometimes also they stood against the construction of beauty myth. In the Introduction of ‘Reconcilable Differences’ Lynn S. Chancer wrote under the title Sex Versus Sexism:

‘...how feminists ought to respond to the persistence of beauty expectations. Should we be against such expectations because of sexism and its relationship to discrimination based on "looks" (a typical feminist belief about this topic)? Or does opposition to beauty expectations make women feel guilty about "looking good" (a pleasure to which we should all be entitled)?’ (Chancer, 1998, p.10)

These arguments are derived in the discussion of sex versus sexism and in the analysis of sexual freedom of women where she also pointed out the relation of sex with power. ‘Sex itself is less significant than its multifaceted ramifications in terms of power.’ (Chancer, 1998, p.10). The important issue is that the multifaceted character of sexism is pointed out by the Third Wave Feminists and they open up a challenge towards the institutional structure of patriarchy. Sex versus sexism became two poles of discussion within feminism as a common social dilemma. The dilemma of legal restriction on pornography divides feminists into two poles since 1970s. Probably pornography was the first debate on sex, sexuality and sexism. In 1992 laws against pornography were established by the Canadian Supreme Court. After taking this legal step against pornography feminists like Catharine Mackinnon and Andrea Dworkin supported Supreme Court and declared that the pornography ‘Comprises and reflects institutionalized sexism’. (Chancer, 1998, p. 9). But the other feminists like Echolo, Ellen Willis, and Carof Vance opposed the law against pornography and according to their
view, ‘... the legal restriction on pornography as new forms of sexist oppression.’ (Chancer, 1998, p. 9).

Nadine Strossen’s ‘Defending pornography’ published in 1995, shows Strossen was sympathetic to pornography and raised her voice against the domination of state and media oppression through the platform of law and judgment. Women representation in pornography is a capitalist intention to occupy the market of Third World showing bare bodies of women as an object of pleasure, because the main consumers of pornography in Third World countries are men. But the scenario changes in respect to the First World, where women were the primary customer of the pornographies. Naomi Wolf told:

‘The sexual revolution promoted the discovery of female sexuality; ‘beauty pornography’-which for the first time in women's history artificially links a commodified “beauty” directly and explicitly to sexuality- invaded the mainstream to undermine women's new and vulnerable sense of sexual self-worth.’ (Wolf, 1991, p. 11)

Another important question belongs to the relation between reproduction and beauty. From the very beginning, the interpretation of the beauty of women is concerned with the possibility of the reproductive power. This unreal beliefs and ideas gave birth of another myth about beauty that ended with beauty equals to fertility and ultimately this whole Meta discourse of beauty and fertility constructed the notion of womanhood, virginity and motherhood. Virginity of a woman seems to indicate that she is yet to be explored, which means woman as an unexplored object waiting to be investigated; it also denotes that the virgin is possibly more fertile in reproduction process because she is not yet cultivated…,

‘Strong men battle for beautiful women, and beautiful women are more reproductively successful. Women beauty must correlate to their fertility, and since this system is based on sexual selection, it is inevitable and changeless.’ (Wolf, 1991, p. 12)

Also Naomi Wolf denoted that the sexual selection is based upon the different social factors like politics, economy, and gender. All above factors are controlled by the power of patriarchy, she told:
'If the beauty myth is not based on evolution, sex, gender, aesthetics, or God, on what is it based? It claims to be about intimacy and sex and life, a celebration of women. It is actually composed of emotional distance, politics, finance, and sexual repression. The beauty myth is not about women at all. It is about men's institutions and institutional power.' (Wolf, 1991, p. 13)

Through this representation of virgin beauty another myth has been constructed, a new battle between young woman and old woman. Virginity, the degree of relative purity of the femininity is usually carried by the women of youth. Ageing in woman situates trauma for her so-called unbeautiful appearance and also creates insecurity among the older women; this insecurity again creates the inferiority complex between two groups of women, the women who are beautiful are not experienced (young) and the women who are unbeautiful are experienced (aged). This whole concept is unreal, but by the power of its myth, it occupies the mind of a large and major number of women of our society. This insecurity of beauty myth truncates the life span of woman and their identity. It also makes them vulnerable facing the opposition and discrimination of gender politics.

1.2.3 Third Wave Feminism: Real and Imagined Beauty

Third Wave Feminism pointed out the media attention focusing on beauty. As Suzanna Danuta Walters documented in 'Material Girls' (1995) that the first collective confrontation with beauty held in front of the Atlantic City, New Jersey against the Miss America pageant on September 1968. It was known as “No More Miss America” and a written pamphlet was distributed on this occasion, as follows:

'We will protest the image of Miss America, an image that oppresses women in every area in which it purports to represent us. There will be: Picket Lines; Guerrilla Theatre; Leafleting; Lobbying Visits to the contestants urging our sisters to reject the Pageant Farce and join us; a huge Freedom Trash Can (into which we will throw bras, girdles, curlers, false eyelashes, wigs, and representative issues of Cosmopolitan, Ladies' Home Journal, Family Circle, etc,-bring any such woman-garbage you have around the house); we will also announce a Boycott of all those commercial products related to the Pageant, and the day will end with a Women's Liberation Rally
at midnight when Miss America is crowned on television.' (Chancer, 1998, p. 158)

Probably the early works of feminism helped to initiate an organized movement at the time of Second Wave Feminism or Radical Feminism. Beginning with Simone de Beauvoir’s ‘The Second Sex’ and then later Kate Millets ‘Sexual Polities’, Firestone’s ‘Dialectic of sex’ etc; where beauty was spectacled through the different gender construction. In ‘The Second Sex’ Simone de Beauvoir argued that throughout history woman have been defined as the ‘Other’ sex, an aberration from the ‘normal male sex’. The dialogue that became the popular slogan of 20th century feminism, told by Simone de Beauvoir in her Second Sex is, ‘One is not born but rather becomes a woman’ (Beauvoir, 1973, p. 301)

The term “Third Wave Feminism” was first used by the author and activist Rebecca Walker in 1992. She used this term in an article for MS. Magazine called ‘Becoming the Third Wave’ as a critic to the hearings of Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas and the widely circulated media claims that ‘America had now entered an era of post feminism’. Rebecca Walker told that, ‘… I am not a post feminism feminist I am the third wave.’ (Heywood, 2005, p. XVIII)

There was a debate between the term Third Wave and post feminism because both the terms were critical of Second Wave Feminism. Naomi Wolf primarily denoted the confusion between two terms and defined the Third Wave in her first published book, ‘The Beauty Myth’ in 1991. In the same year Susan Faludis’ ‘Back lash’ was published to show a new wave in feminism. In 1993 Wolf again published ‘Fire with Fire: The Female power and how it will change the 21st century’ where she developed the concepts of two new terms ‘power feminism’ and ‘victim feminism’. All These books had established a new genre of feminism, in the name of ‘The Third Wave’.

Another term was developed during Third Wave Feminism, i.e. ‘girl power’. Feminists of the Third Wave had introspected that girls are not treated with as much seriousness as boys in the different field of the society; such as in schools, in play grounds, in public transports etc and this term was coined
by the *Spice Girls* of mid 90’s in popular culture. *Riot Grrrl* to *Suicide Girls* arrived in mid 90’s and established an ALT culture (alternative culture) to resists punk rocks and popularized feminism from the young generations. ‘*Bikini Kill*’ also a music band based on ‘*Riot Grrrl*’ basically represented the aggressive ideas about what they termed ‘revolution girl style’, to speak about their personal grievances and problems in public i.e. domestic violence, rape, feminism etc.

Third Wave Feminism is concentrated on ‘gender justice’ with other forms of justice like, environmental justice, economic justice, racial justice and justice around sexuality, religion and physical ability. Lesliei commented that, ‘...third wave feminism contributes to a wide range of social justice struggles today that include gender as one important variable of identity among others’ (Heywood, 2005, p. XXI)

In the context of Third Wave Feminism Lynn Chancer brought a new term as “*Lookism*” in her article ‘The Beauty Context’, where she showed how the privileged look (or gaze) could assert an ‘ism’ with different powerful notion, such as good vs. bad, beauty vs. ugly, proportionate(body) vs. disproportionate(body), young vs. old etc.

There was a recent movement in Third Wave Feminism known as ‘*Black Feminism*’. In her book ‘Black Feminist thought’ (1990) Patricia Hill Collin, who stands as a black feminist, depicted the discrimination between white and black women. She examined that media has constructed a typecast of African American women on the basis of looks, as ‘Bad Woman’ and ‘Good Woman’.

In the context of Black Feminism, artist Carrie Mac Weems executed a picture titled as ‘*Mirror. Mirror*’ (pl.1), in the silver print medium, shows a lady standing in front of a mirror and a children rhyme is inscribed at the lower panel of the picture which says,

‘Looking into the mirror, the black woman asked, “Mirror, Mirror on the wall, who’s the finest of them all?” / The mirror says, “Snow White, you black bitch,/ And don’t you forget it!!!” (Issak, 1996, p. 175)
Thus the essence of beauty is concentrated in the vessels of a male potter who works under the patronization of patriarchy and constructs the different shapes of the vessels by the commanding gazes of his patron. Through these gazes the vessels of beauty changes its shapes. It is not only an idea, but it is real like the ‘Iron Maiden’ of medieval Germany, an instrument of torture. ‘Iron Maiden’ was a body shaped casket painted with limbs and featured with a smiling portrait of young woman. The victim slowly enclosed into her (the casket) and the lid fell shut. The victim died either of starvation or of metal spikes embedded in the casket\(^\text{24}\). The representation of woman in visual art is also imagined in the form of 'Iron Maiden', omitting the real portrayal of the woman; this hallucination gives birth to the myth of beauty and spread its capillary network from the privileged First World to the oppressed Third World.

1.3 Resistance in Imaging Woman in Visual Arts: Ancient to Modern

Resistance in imaging woman in contemporary Indian visual art exists from the very beginning of its artistic development. The art of ancient India was an expressive medium primarily of religious practices and mainly influenced from Buddhism, Jainism, and Hinduism. In spite of the religious influence the art of India could flourish its own cultural identity and the different form of visual arts in India were liberal and not fully dominated by any religious dogma.

1.3.1 Resistance in Ancient Indian Art

Art of ancient India has simultaneously practiced two important and opposite character; one is the secret image of god and the representatives of god as the king, priest or monk. The other is the image of the erotic nudes (\textit{Mithuna}, \textit{Vidyadhari}, \textit{Yaksha} & \textit{Yakshi}, and other \textit{Nayika} images of woman). Those erotic images are mostly oriented with \textit{Kanya} figures, such as \textit{Shalavanjika}, \textit{Nayika}, \textit{Surasundari}, \textit{Alasakanya}, \textit{Yakshi}, and the image of various conjugal postures popularly known as \textit{Mithuna} figures. There are many thoughtful analyses of the erotic nudity of Indian art by the art critics and historians of 20\text{th} century. Some generalized logic could be obtained from those analyses.
that the purgation of all ills from the mind of the devotee after seeing those organic activities of the conjugal postures and before entering into the holy place the devotee would be free from all worldly Maya (illusion) and could deeply concentrate on spiritual feelings. Other belief was based on the flourishing thought of ‘Sahajia cult’ in 6th -7th c.AD in India that made a liberal ambience in the relation between women and men, and their free mixing in the society perhaps lasting up to the medieval era before the invading of the Huns from west. Another important logic made by the different art historians that this figures are obtained from the effect of Tantra Cult. Tantra Cult flourished in eastern India where sex was practiced as a part of the rituals. This holy practice of sex could also be a reason of the carving of the erotic Mithuna images, which are mainly erected in the architectural walls of the temples of Khajuraho, Konark, Ellora etc. Perhaps for the above reasons the images of women in Indian art were executed. These images have created a distinct feature of resistance with their unconventional appearance, which are directly opposed to the stereotypes of feminine representation. The nudes and Mithuna figures of Khajuraho (pl.2) temples and Konark Sun temple (pl.3) are carved out with rough chisel works to show vivid liveliness. The Mithuna postures are made in an exaggerated manner which reflects the strength and acrobatic skill of a woman that resists the male gaze in easy accession of soft and sober femininity. The unpolished rough work of chisel also carries real feelings of 'touch' that provides more attachment with the imaged woman and feelings of freedom from the architectural walls. The monumental approach of the female nudes also reduces the hierarchic gazes of the men controlled social power.

The Yakshi (pl.4) figures of Buddhism in Mauryan art or Gndhara sculptures of Kusana dynasty and the Tara Figures of Tantra-Buddhist cult (pl.5) are also evident with such resistant images through their exuberant eroticism. The paintings of Ajanta caves, mainly based on Buddha, Bodhisattava and Jataka tales are often concerned with the women superiorities, such as the Black Princess, Dying Princess etc. The women images of Ajanta caves are vividly represented with their naturalistic appearance, where they became the central character along with Buddha and Bodhisattvas (pl.6). The deep
penetrating outer contour of the eyes, nose, eyebrows, lips, fingers, and whole body show the confidence of the appearance of a women image from the dark and rough inner walls of the lonely caves.

After the medieval era and Muslim invasion in India the resistant image of women became reduced because of the changes in the society under different conservative domains, which remained till to the colonial occupation in India. Even after Eighteenth century, under the rule of colonial rulers, the Indian society remained unchanged in relation with women liberation and resistance. The Victorian Puritanism also established some new kind of conservative domain upon the marginal people of the colony through the so called elite class constructed by the colonial rulers. In the time of British colony Indian women became more marginalized by the religious dominance especially of Hindu pundits, because Hinduism was culturally surfaced by the dominance of the ruling laws of the British. Therefore the chain network of hegemony spread its shadow upon the most struggled and oppressed groups of the society where women were one of them.

1.3.2 Indian Art in Colonial Construction

The time of colonial empowerment in eighteenth and nineteenth century witnessed the main stream art practice of India gradually losing its identity and developed a hybrid style of western art. Under the development of Company School the British appointed Indian artists started to paint the topographic Landscapes and the royal portraiture in oil colour and in etching-water colour mediums (pl.7). The subjects and mediums were never familiar to the Indian culture and this artistic trend reproduced a rootless and random style in the evolution of Indian art. The image of woman was neglected by the British made Indian artists throughout this time. Often the image of women was represented in a manner of westernized portraiture and Mythological Illustration (pl.8) under stiff, unexpressive, feminine identity of Early Bengal School.
Art which were apart from the main stream like *Kalighat Pata Paintings* (pl.9) or *Bat Tala Lithographs* (pl.10) or popular studio works like *Calcutta Art Studio* (pl.11) projected different images of woman in different social context; even sometimes those images are resistant and critical of the social structure through their unconventional appearance and stereotype defying images.

‘Modern’ in Indian art appeared through the British when they introduced academic art practice (basically oil painting) in India. British rulers established art schools in Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta from the mid-nineteenth century onwards to produce some skillful draftsmen to serve their own purpose. A new kind of western art was proliferated throughout the country with the direct and indirect influence of colonial experience. Sovan Some said, ‘The art schools of colonial India set up on the model of the British technical schools during the mid-19th century to import training to a group of middle class Indians in copy work in the survey agencies of the expanding colonialism, played a major role in establishing the assumed supremacy of European art.’ (Some, 1993, p.19)

British government had initiated teaching oil painting to the localities and they established art schools in prime areas of the country. It is also important to rethink about the history and tradition of the visual art of British main land. One important issue has appeared in the discussion of post colonial art criticism that how British people could judge the tradition, heritage and the evolution of Indian art because they (British) did not even have enough artistic heritage since 18th century excepting the prehistoric *Stonehenge* and some monumental architecture of Gothic era. The artistic trend of British art was only flourished at the time of Romanticism, when two eminent painters Constable and Turner put a new genre in landscape art. From the beginning of Classical era to the Modernism, Western Art was mostly based on the countries like Greece, Italy, France, Germany, Netherlands, Spain and others while England had only contributed some unique examples of architectural monuments in medieval era and some important paintings in landscape. After Romanticism, again, there was no identical evidence which could be termed as British art in the period of
Realism, Impressionism, or Post Impressionism of 19th century. The Western academic styles, which were carried in India by the British colonial rulers, were not their own artistic achievements. They had borrowed the style from classical Greek art and Roman sculptures and Renaissance paintings and introduced them in the colonies where they ruled with the gorgeous packaging of Victorian marble sculptures or golden framed oil paintings. These artificial and dominating packages of Victorian art had permanently buried the comparatively pale and poor (in the perspective of Victorian look) indigenous art of subaltern people of India. The new art schools were established by British government and they did not have any motivation to create sculptors or painters; but those schools had a mission to reproduce trained draughtsman to serve the copy works of British government. British taught oil paintings in their schools to get trained apprentice for the professional British portrait artists and also for other commission works under British artists in India. British rulers have never expected any creative artist from India who can stand side by side of a British or a European artist. This was one of the ways among others how they have spread their cultural hegemony through art practice of India.

1.3.3 Resistant Image in Ravi Varma’s Art

In contrast to this colonial practice one Indian artist Ravi Varma raised his own style in painting from the southern part of India. Ravi Varma was a multi talented artist who produced several oil paintings, reproductive prints and oleographs. Ravi Varma has been largely underated by the history of Modern Indian art. He is judged more as a skilled draftsman than a creative talent. But here his art practice is viewed through a separate lens and Ravi Varma’s art is identified as the trend setting work against all kinds of hegemonized making of Indian art. The paintings of Ravi Varma first appeared with a challenge to the contemporary British Indian paintings/painters. The individual art practice of the Indian artist reconstructed a new trend in Indian art. Varma represented women (among other subjects) in different identities under different ideological backgrounds. Therefore the image of the women became real not by its representative approach but by its ideological differences.
Ravi Varma first cultivated the theme of resistance in Indian art against the hegemony of Victorian arts of the colonial ruler. He was not only professionally successful with his paintings but his paintings had spread into the interior corner of the country as the art of their own soil. Ravi Varma appeared as an individual artist (different from the group artists in his previous art movements like company school or Provincial court painting or Bazaar art) and his success came through his master skill on oil painting technique with the subjective composition of his own Indian experiences. Tapati Guhathakurta described him as a pioneer of traditional content with modern form.

Ravi Varma’s skill in oil painting reached the degree of certain excellence and his drawing was also highly skilled and academic. He extracted mythological, historical and indigenous scenes for his painting and portrayed them in appropriation of local expression. The men and women figures are typically Indian/regional in his painting and he practiced it because he used to portray his figures from the direct study of Indian models. Thus the negotiation of traditional content with modern form asserted a feeling of Indigenous identity; this identity rapidly became familiar to the Indian society and became the subject of their own tradition. This indigenous identity created another national identity that directly opposed the idea of ‘Nationalism’ constructed through the colonial hegemony. His paintings also created its own spontaneous appeal upon the so called naive colonial people of India.

Ravi Varma’s paintings are undoubtedly having wide range of subjects from Hindu mythology and classical Sanskrit literature to the portraiture or ethnic figurative composition of Indian women. Ravi Varma’s women are real, appeared from daily life, their expressions are not closed under the dualistic intellectual themes, and his compositions are simple and graceful with colour.

Painting like ‘Hamsa-Damayanti (oil.c.1899, pl.12) collected by Srichitra Art Gallery. Thiruvanthapuram, ‘Lady with a mirror’ (oil.c.1873, pl.13.) collected by National Art Gallery, Chennai or ‘Shakuntala writing a love letter to
Dushyanta (oleograph. C. late 1890s, pl.14) collected by the visual archive of the center for studies in social science, Calcutta, are executed with varied expression and unspoken words of the women. The entire individual pictures portrayed a separate space of woman which would be some one’s individual territory and personal world. In his compositions sometime she (a woman) is combing her hair and looking at the mirror, sometime she is busy in talking with a swan very personally, sometime she is writing a love letter to her loving one but she is not writing at all and only looking towards the nothing. All these compositions are holding a feeling of personal space of individual woman; her own world and her separation from the other world; the world represented through the deep and naturalistic portraiture of the women of our everyday life.

Apart from the mythological themes, his series portraiture on women is also created in a manner where women are imaged in a world of their own, where their individual identities are always prominent. Paintings like, ‘Lady in Moonlight’ (oil, pl.15) Collected by chitrasala, Mysore, ‘Vegetable seller’ (oil) collection of Sri Chitralayam, Trivandrum, ‘The Galaxy’ a group portrait (oil, pl.16) collection of Chitrasala, Mysore etc, could be the example of a new trend of art where the women images are not dominated in any kind of social dogmas or the colonial hegemony and nationalism. They are portrayed only as women along with their own and individual private space. There were no shadows of social norms or colonial order or nationalistic motherhood in the personified image of the women of Ravi Varma's Painting; rather the images of women in his paintings became more resistant through their negation and neglecting attitude toward the male dominated patriarchal gaze.
1.4 Construction of *Indian Woman, Motherland and Nationalism* in the Art of Early 20th Century India

The discourse on ‘Indian Woman’ first appeared in the history of nineteenth century at the beginning of Indian (Colonial) Renaissance. The idea of ‘Indian Woman’ is a product of colonial experience. The British rulers, missionaries and the Indian reformers took the opportunity to criticize the Indian culture through the narrow and shadowed portraiture of women of the nation. The images of women were essentialised as devoted, self-sacrificing, motherly, soft and fragile, beautiful and dependent on men through the different Indian texts. Women were not only differentiated by caste, class, age, religion and economy like men, but also they are discriminated in their personal periphery. Women are mostly dependant on men and even sometimes they are dependent on the other women members of the family who holds the signs of patriarchy. Renaissance (Indian) reformation had taken the issues of Indian women and then recasting them into the narration of civilizing mission through the British and Indian reformers. In nineteenth century a class of elites who were the carrier of colonial ideology was commenced by the British patrons in India as a medium between the British ruler and the common people of the country. Gradually Indian women had departed from their own culture and society. Women became the issue of the new born elites of India who were considered to be the savior as well as benefactor but at the same time quite diplomatically acted as a good conductor of hegemony of the British ruler. Tejeswari Niranjan described that, 'In a line of increased social mobility the promise of equal opportunity must simultaneously be coated into the language of 'distinction' and the formation of elite.' (Niranjan, 1995, p. 86)

During the colonial years, the rise of questions relating to women and their place in Indian society became an important issue. These issues led to the series of questions regarding women education, social status of women, early age marriage, windows' marriage, widow burning as sati, etc. In between 19th and 20th century some Indian social and political reformers initiated to work for the women rights. Raja Ram Mohan Roy initiated to abandon ‘satidaha’ with the help of British law, Iswarchandra Vidyasagar...
tried to start widow marriage (Bidhaba Bibaha) and women education by denying the religious dogmas of the Hindu pundits. Mahatma Gandhi initiated to involve women into the political movements of 1920's, 30s and 40s. Though their works are not fully celebrated under the spectacle of post colonial critiques but they had contributed a space where women questions could be rethought and reassessed. In such context Maithreyi Krishnaraj told:

‘Women studies as a distinct field emerged in India in the mid-seventies. But preoccupation with the position of women dates back more than a century and a half. What is striking in the case of India and untypical of other anti-colonial struggles is the way the woman question became central to rising national consciousness and assertion of national pride.’ (Maithreyi, 2000, P-I)

The practice and making of a new education policy also started from the beginning of 19th century India by the colonial intellectuals like Macaulay, Bentinck etc and they established a prima facie of hierarchy through the introduction of an education based on colonial culture and also inspired to neglect our previous cultural traditions as they were brutal and uncivilized (according to the colonial intellectuals ). In the latter half of 20th Century some serious monographs were produced by the critics, basically on how women experienced colonial rule, how colony affected their personal space etc. Apart from those critics, the questions of gender, especially pointing upon colonial structure and how the gender constructed women in a dominant discourse became important issues to the post colonialist and feminist writers of late 20th century. The critics also argued against the feminine constructions of nationalism under colonial rule. Practically the wave of nationalism was a strong tool of the elite Indians and British rulers and nationalism started to appropriate the pain and agony of the Indian women as their own issue. Nationalist movement pointed out the problems of women for their own benefit; though they never realized that the women problems and sufferings are personal issues of women themselves. The question about women in India was raised before the nationalist movements. According to Forbes:
‘If the nationalists solved the woman question, it was in terms of their own discourse; the women’s discourse about women’s problems was alive as well. I have discussed the women’s movement before the nationalist movement because women began asking for their rights before they were brought into the nationalist agitation.’ (Forbes, 1998, p. 7)

Nationalism constructed women image through the conceptualization of the country itself, or with the reconstruction of feminine roles as a typical ‘Varatiya Nari’ (Indian woman), through popular literature and calendar art, like Battala presses of Calcutta.

Indian National Congress was established in 1985 by the patronage of British to enhance the essence of a romantic nationalism like 18th century Europe and to justify the essentiality of the British rule in India as a cultural reformation to the so-called colonial naive community of India. Geeta Kapur reviewed ‘...that kind of romantic nationalism which also had a populist anarchist thrust. I would say that we in India had traces of both these in our own nationalist movement.’ (Kapur, 1989, p. 124)

The rise of the questions of women in national consciousness was not the only way to judge women position in nationalism. From the decade of 80s of 19th century, after the birth of national congress, nationalism had assumed the women issues (their problems, their questions, their sufferings) within their fold. For the interest of the movement women became the image of the country/state and a significant domain of patriotism was constructed in the aspirant image of motherhood by the swadeshi freedom fighters and social reformers. The women image as mother was the symbol of independence and at the same time her image was dependent on the freedom fighters, who were men. Loomba referred Ashis Nandy’s view from the book Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism, in the chapter ‘The Intimate Enemy’ (New Delhi: Oxford University Press) and told:

‘Under colonial rule, the image of nation or culture as a mother worked to evoke both female power and female helplessness. The nation as mother protected her son from colonial ravages, but was also herself ravaged by colonialism and in need of her son’s protection. ‘I know’, writes the Indian
nationalist Sri Aurobindo, ‘my country as Mother. I offer her my devotions, my worship. If a monster sits upon her breast and prepares to suck her blood, what does her child do? Does he quietly sit down to his meal … or rush to her rescue?’ (quoted in Nandy 1983: 92). ‘Thus the image of nation as mother both marshals and undercuts female power.’ (Loomba. 1998, p. 218)

Some later critiques have termed this whole mission as nationalist enterprise where the reconstructed feminine image reproduced the ideal patriotic profile. As a result women image were absolutely conceptualized as the image of the nation or motherland.

The concept of country and the people living on it dissolved in the sentiment of motherland. This sentiment of motherland was delicately improvised by the colonial rulers through the image of Queen Victoria and spread it throughout the nation in the form of popular songs poetry and art of the Indian poets, performer and artists. In her article ‘Nationalist Iconography: Image of women in 19th century Bengali literature’, Tanika Sarkar wrote:

‘...the country is not a piece of land with actual people living on it. It is abstracted from the people and is then personified as the mother Goddess…’ she has also documented, ‘Imperialism had produced its own Mother Goddess, the figure of the Great Queen Victoria, on whom a formidable load of emotional effusion was lavished by Bengali poetasters in the 1870s and 1880s:

where are you, Mother Victoria, I touch your feet
Mother, what kind of mother are you, why have you forgotten your child?

Or

Where are you, our mother the Great Queen
we have no other shelter but you
Mother, we call out to you and we all look up to you
For what sort of pleasure have you abandoned us?'
The slightly reproachful tone of the hurt, yet loving child is clearly drawn from the popular devotional songs of the 18th century Shakta poet Ramprasad Sen--songs of pleading to Mother Kali.' (Sarkar, 2000, p. 160)

The above songs were referred to by Tanika Sarkar from the collection of 'Bangla Swadeshi Gan' (Delhi, 1983 P-243) by Gita Chattopadhyay and she compared it with the devotional songs of Ramprasad Sen.

The intellectual members of the Indian Renaissance or nationalism tried to extract the feelings of mother from the age old representation of ‘Goddess’ figures of Hindu cult. But it is easily understandable that the motivation of the swadeshi and elites were dubious because they had only tried to encapsulate the sentimental feelings of mother as the deity of traditional India and channelized this sentiment to the common people of the country. Tanika Sarkar referred to Ramprasadi songs of Kali to show how it has been modified by the later Swadeshi writers and how nationalism apprised Queen Victoria, as the Mother Goddess Kali. Tanika Sarkar also pointed out the unfaithful approach of the nationalists in the context to re-appropriation of the mother land or mother goddess, and she told, ‘The tremendously agonized and anxious quest that began in the 19th century for the construction of this authentic past is deeply poignant precisely because such a search itself is a product of the self which is irredeemably differentiated. The past, the mother figure, to be reappropriated either as religion or as motherland, can no longer be a state of doxa^25, a moment of effortless ease, anterior to the anxious questioning or creation of an orthodox tradition , before even the question of acceptance or rejection of tradition comes up.’ (Sarkar, 2000, p. 162)

Worship of mother Goddess in India especially in the eastern part of India became popular after Vedic ages. The rise of Shakti and Tantra cult enhance the power of the Goddess images; where goddess kali was the most powerful image among all. There were also other images of Shakta goddesses such as Tara, Durga, Mahamaya etc and those images also having different incarnation in different appearances. ‘Kali’ is the image of a woman who has abandoned her femininity and other construction of typical
female hood. Her standing posture upon her husband god Shiva is a sign of total collapse (Mahapralay) of all order, norms of the world. She holds the bold and aggressive attitude in her total appearance; she is nude, black, drunk with blood, wearing a garland of human skull, standing upon the chest of Shiva and extracts her tongue by shame. Though her shame is not melted in the softness of femininity, but she holds a aggression with her long tongue and fully open eyes, which reflects that she is not anxious with her unorthodox appearance as a woman. This woman image was worshiped by the people of all status at all the levels of Hindu society; such as common domestic people, ‘Shanyasi’ (monks), Decoit, Tantric (worshiper of Tantra Cult), and Priest. Beside the image of Kali, the other Shakta images, like Durga, Tara etc, are not represented in such unconventional appearance. Those goddess images are more glorious with power and gorgeous look. The most popular Shakti image in Bengal is Devi Durga representing as a married woman visiting her father’s house with her children Laksmi, Kartik, Ganesh and Saraswati. Durga is more feminine in comparison to Kali and she holds smile in angry eyes, gloriously ornamented with gold, yellow in complexion, with dancing rhythm in her standing stance. Tanika Sarkar comment on the representation of the images of Kali and Durga, that, ‘Kali reverts back to Durga. Durga becomes a household drudge.’ (Sarkar, 2000, p. 164)

These mythological images of woman hold the strong reference of a record that how the people of India used to see woman and how those images have been modified by the purpose of the nationalism. The image of stri-shakti is a construction of patriarchy; because the raise of Shakti cult and Tantra was initiated by the religious ‘guru’ and priest who were almost male. They practiced a different kind of religion not purely Vedic but juxtaposed with the basic philosophies of Sanatan Hindu cult, such as ‘Maya’, ‘Moksha’ etc. But in context of feminism and women empowerment, the goddess image of Shakti carved a deep mark of aspiration to the unprivileged and discriminated world of woman. The image arrived as a support to the existence of the woman in many ways: Rajeswari Rajan has pointed out:
‘...That the Hindu goddess is unique that Hinduism is the only contemporary world religion that has a tradition and continuing practice of goddess-worship; that Hindu goddess-worship is radical insofar as the goddess is not inscribed in the mainstream of deities and her devotees are drawn largely from lower castes, woman and even non-Hindus thus clearing certain spaces of alternative belief and practice in the monolithic brahminical Hinduism, and finally that it is not only the existence and worship of the goddess but also her representation in ‘feminist’ ways-as complementary female principle’, as autonomous female agent, or a powerful cosmic force – that are under discussion here as aspect of her feminist recuperation.’ (Rajan, 2004, p. 319)

But, in nationalism these images of woman lost the identity of empowerment and their radical character. They became softer, feminine and represented in the essence of motherhood/motherland. Nationalism also incorporated some domain to represent woman where the important feature of resistance could gradually be degraded into a self sacrificed portrait of a poor and imprisoned mother. The art of revivalism organized this basic portraiture in different manifestation to enhance the motivation of nationalism and they appropriated their art mostly by criticizing the art of Ravi Varma.

Arrival of Havell as a principal in the "Calcutta School of Art and Draftsmanship" was an important incident in the field of Indian art at the last decade of 19th century. Havell entered into the intellectual periphery of Indian culture through the elites of Bengal and slowly introduced his (their) colonial policy sophisticatedly under the mirage of Indian heritage and tradition. At the end of nineteenth century and the beginning of twentieth century a new school in Indian art was developed by E.B. Havell (the then principal of Govt. School of Art and Crafts, Calcutta), with the association of Abanindranath Tagore (artist & writer from the renowned Thakurbari family of Jorasanko), Vincent Smith (colonial art critic), A.K. Coomaraswamy (Indian art critic), Sister Nivedita (social reformer and disciple of Swami Vivekananda) etc. and it was the beginning of the establishment of modern Indian art in the realm of Revivalism and Bengal School. Abanindranath
painted ‘Bhart Mata’ (pl. 17) at beginning of 20th century in the symbol of country as mother. This painting inspired a good number of young enthusiastic artists to take art as profession and they eventually came to Abanindranath Tagore in Jorasanko or to the Govt, College of Arts and Craftsmanship to take lesion on art. A new trend was established through the art practice of these disciples of Abanindranath Tagore which in known as Bengal School.

Havell had selected the renowned Jorasanko Thakurbari family to propagate his policy within the elite society of India and Abanindratnath Tagore became the main propagator of Havells/colonial idea. Actually that was a combined mission of colonial rulers and Indian elites and they inculcated a new form of art at the beginning of 20th century in the name of Bengal School or Revivalism. The postcolonial critics focused nationalism often as one of the important colonial policy because of its institutional character. The institution that essentialised the art history of India as ‘Modern’ and ‘Indian’. Tapati Guhathakurta sees, ‘Here the main weight one has to carefully negotiate is that of nationalism: of what the nation has perpetuated and institutionalized as its ‘own’ modern art history.’ (Guhathakurta, 2005, p. 72)

Abanindranath Tagore and his disciples of Bengal school claimed a revival of art by the negation of the so-called naturalistic art practices in British made art schools and also denied the reproductive art practices of Ravi Varma’s painting and oleographs. The new style of revivalism got immense support from the colonial intellectuals and from the critic like Vincent Smith, who was also a friend of E.B.Havell. Vincent Smith once narrated Havell’s view on Ravi Varma’s work, ‘His (Ravi Varma’s) pictures invariably manifest a most painful lack of the poetic faculty in illustrating the most imaginative Indian poetry and allegor.’ (Smith, 1969, p. 199)

In the same article Smith quoted Anananda Coomaraswami’s critique on Ravi Varma, ‘Theatrical conception, want of imagination and lack of Indian feeling in the treatment of sacred and epic Indian subjects are Ravi Varma’s fatal faults…’ (Smith, 1969, p. 199)
Again Vincent Smith put his own opinion on Ravi Varma more crudely, ‘...his works which are extremely numerous achieved wide popularity and have been freely vulgarized by oleographs and other cheap modes of reproduction.’ (Smith, 1969, p. 199)

The oleographic reproductions of Ravi Varma’s works were criticized from the beginning of 20th century and they are continuously criticized even in the latter half of 20th century and even at the beginning of 21st century. These reproductive oleographs are popularly termed as calendar art because of their wide range of acceptance to common mass and lack of so-called intellectual pursuit and artistic creativity that makes art elite and authentic.

Patricia Uberoi noted down in the first phase of an article, titled ‘Feminine Identity and national ethos in Indian calendar art’, the different visible problems of women and their invisible space in patriarchal society. She emphasized on the relation between subjectivity and objectivity in respect to women, woman resistance in subaltern position, beauty and nudity of woman and their individual politics of body, women in publicity and media politics and she also discussed of the problematic of deification in the representation of women. She told:

‘Others see deification as yet another, and even more insidious, form of patriarchal constraint. And others argue that deification is but the ‘flip’ side of a ‘Devaluation in a bipolar value scheme which rests on contrasting stereotypes of mother versus whore, wife verses vamp, and so on (Nandy.1981:93-94)’ (Uberoi, 2000, p. 325).

But at the second phase of her article, she discussed on calendar art and Ravi Varma’s oleographs in relation to women identity. There she made the critique on Ravi Varma’s works in respect to popular art and calendar art because Ravi Varma’s reproductive oleographs are not accepted as the dignified creative art till the contemporary era. The art historian, Uberoi described his works to be judged on the basis of the prints. Ravi Varma was the pioneer in setting of, one of the earliest litho press in India and that produced almost 90 of his works in thousands of copies. The Historians or
the critics of the school of ‘Modern Art’ could not accept Ravi Varma's works because they thought Varma’s art was not as much authentic, dignified, elite, delicate or sophisticated like the other works of modern era. So Ravi Varma was criticized in many occasions for his reproductive works. Uberoi wrote with the explanation of P.R.Ramachandra Rao that:

‘According to most art critics (see, e.g., Chaitanya 1906:5), the overproduction of paintings for the press, together with the technical shortcomings of the printing process, were ultimately disastrous for this work tended to be judged on the basis of the prints: That these distressing pictures, vulgarized by cheap and popular oleographs, should reign in every Indian home is a commentary on the degenerate perception of the time. That, incidentally, Ravi Varma became a nationalizing influence or provided devotional sustenance to the masses is highly irrelevant to his aesthetic appraisement ... An untrained, undiscerning public, valuing his painting for their devotional content and utterly ignorant of aesthetic criteria, worshipped Ravi Varma( Rao 1953:9).’

(Uberoi, 2000, p. 330)

There are some important questions that lies under this criticism and some gap of understandings between critique and artist, art and aesthetic, evoked from the above critiques on Ravi Varma's work: The questions seem to be,

Is the popular image or popularity made the oleographs of Ravi Varma, Vulgar”?

Is the mythological subjects ‘degenerated’ the quality of an artist?

How Ravi Varma could be judged as a nationalizing artist, when the art of nationalism criticized and rejected him?

What are the basics of aesthetic criteria and appraisement to judge a work of art? How could it be claimed that any aesthetic criterion is absent in Ravi Varma’s works?

Besides the allegation against Ravi Varma, in the same article, Uberoi referred that how Geeta Kapur has appropriated Ravi Varma in a different view, when Kapur told:
‘The fact and fiction of Ravi Varma’s struggle to learn oil painting becomes a legend. Here is not only the struggle of the artist to gain a technique but the struggle of a native to gain the source of the master’s superior knowledge, and the struggle of the prodigy to steal the fire for his own people.’ (Kapur, 1989, p. 60)

The popular (so-called cheap) reproductions of the prints of Ravi Varma are analyzed by Tapati Guhathakurta in the perspective of post modern view. She appreciated the option of the reproductive art, which are negated by the contemporary criticism. Tapati Guhathakurta told about Ravi Varma’s art that: ‘Towards the end of his career, we see the artist producing painting purely for reproduction by the press………transforming the Ravi Varma’s style into a brand name for a new highly marketable form of popular print picture….In many ways , this one move towards mass production both made and unmade the ‘modern’ artist. …it also signaled Ravi Varma’s fall from grace – his banishment from the canons of ‘high art’ and ‘modernity’ in Indian art history. The first of our new creed of modern Indian artists was lost to the mass market, largely a victim of his own success, as I have elaborated elsewhere.’ (Guhathakurta, 1995, p.19-20)

Krishna Chaitanya made a critique of revivalism when it accused Ravi Varma’s oleographs as cheap production, and he told ‘How far can we accept the revivalist appraisal of Ravi Varma when its own style is classed today’ (Chaitanya, 1984, p. 3)

Perhaps a common question could appear that why ‘Ravi Varma’ was critically attacked by the contemporary intellectuals. The answer seems to lie behind the ideas of nationalism. The popular artistic triumph of Ravi Varma built a resistance against the colonial art and patriotic identity of nationalism. His works also put a direct challenge against the mission of colonization through the way, steal the fire for his own people, uttered by Geeta Kapur. The colonial artist and art administrator, principal of the Calcutta School of Art and Draftsmanship, E.B.Havell tried to demolish the popular images of Ravi Varma’s art by the help of the group of elite artists of Jorasanko Thakurbari, under the leadership of Abanindranath Tagore.
The new revivalism in Indian modern art was constructed by the colonial patrons with a network of artists, critics, administrators, historians, social reformers and nationalist freedom fighters or swadhis. Havell himself was an artist and also a skilled administrator as a principal of Calcutta School of Art and Draftsmanship. He got direct and indirect support from other enthusiastic friends like administrator lady Haringham, critic Vincent Smith, art lover and social (religious) reformer Sister Nivedita, art historian A.K. Coomaraswami etc. These people had created some ironic notions like Indian (Deshi), traditional, heritage, motherland, patriotism etc to establish the idea of nationalism. This was the first mission of the revivalist group and the second mission of revivalist group was to critique other art practices of India as ‘non-Indian art’. As a result Ravi Varma's art was selected by them as their primary object of critique. These missions of revivalism and Bengal School have been termed as ‘the renaissance of new “National art in modern India’ by Tapati Guhathakurta. (Guhathakurata, 2005, p. 73)

The artistic trend of Santiniketan School was different from the Bengal school and created a new style in the second half of Modern Indian art. The new education theory of Rabindranath and his emphasis on the indigenous art forms gave aspiration to the Ashram people to make an identity of self as a non-colonized Indian. The art practice in Kalabhavan also had change its ways in art education under the guidance of Nandalal Bose. Nandalal Bose had given up the earlier trend of his art, which he used to practice during the period of Bengal School. In Kalabhavan he was inspired by Rabindranath Tagore and his works had got a new dimension with the use of free flowing lines and bold brush works (pl. 18). Ramkinkar Baij, the renowned sculptor of Santiniketan was also a man of difference with his life style and art practices. Baij's human figures, for example ‘Sujata’ (pl.19), always emphasized an indigenous mode of existence. An urban eye has either to appreciate and accept it or turn away from it. But they remain incorrigibly true, not simply in terms of representing a real form of life but mainly for asserting an alternative form of life both from aesthetic and axiological point of view. They resist any intrusion into and interference with that indigenous form of life. They speak for a tradition within tradition sometime absolutized from the socio-political hegemonic standpoint.
Rabindranath Tagore's paintings are also imaged in multi dimensional features, and executed a non stereotyped appearance in female portraiture. His ink and brush works are spontaneously resistant with their vivid and gorgeous look and strong consciousness about their self identity (pl.20).

The art practice of contemporary India searched its own way from the thirties and forties decade through the regional art groups like, Calcutta Group and Progressive Artists Group Bombay. In contemporary period, Indian art has developed a social consciousness that evoke the new cultural identity of visual arts. This new trend of contemporary Indian art became politically aware and reflected various ideological discourses. The discourse of imaging woman in visual art has consciously created an important trend to inculcate a new language of protest and resistance. Artists from different social, political and cultural background take up women images in various identical impressions. Some examples can be taken to judge the resistance in imaging woman from the art works of contemporary Indian artists.

Arpana Kaur's 'where Have All The Flowers Gone?' (pl.21), a tri-paneled work, is showing a seated woman composed at the last panel of the painting out of its three panels and a darken cloud is painted just over her head. The middle panel composed with a series of armed soldiers (bust figure) and the first panel composed with flowers. A crude politics of power represented here against the existence of women and significantly the title of the picture has an interrogative sign, ' ?', denotes the question mark of the women existence. Laxma Gaud's gouache painting 'Women In Interior' (pl.22) is an image of silence in the interior where Gaud portrayed women image, who are usually imprisoned by the male dominance within the interior of her home. 'His Life Series' (pl.23) is a series picture of Nalini Malani where she intentionally reduced the presence of the male.

Rekha Rodwittya's 'The willful Fashioning of Time' (pl.24), Basundhara Tewari's 'Reaching Out' (pl.25) and Madhabi Parek's 'Blue Goddesses' (pl.26) are contextual examples which raises various delicate issues of
women struggle and women oppression. In a discussion about her own painting ‘Sharing Secrets’ (pl.27), Rekha Rodwittya told about herself with her intimate feelings to her art works:

'...the root of my motivation and strength has come from my feminist beliefs, my life and my art has consistently been guided by these Politics...In conceiving this show I decided that the predominant colour would be red. This colour has always evoked and signified sacrifice, passion desire and protest for me...' (Tuli, 1997, p. 180)

In contemporary Indian art Painter Bikash Bhattacharya developed an individual language of visual art. His photo-realistic women images convey an impulsive resonance of resistance through the inner psyche of the personal space. His high skilled academic paintings are deeply rooted into an urban culture which is a projection of his personal belonging to North Kolkata. He instilled his feelings and experiences of the emergency period of Bengal in 1970’s into his paintings. One of the important series of that period was ‘Doll series’. His dolls are she, the image of the would be women, who represents a subverted position against the political chaos and horror of that time. His famous series of painting was ‘Durga’; painted between 1980’s and exhibited in May 1990 at Birla Academy of Art and Culture. His Durga represents various images of woman in the realm of different social context. They (Durgas') are self-conscious about their position and they are expressive of an identity of ‘Other’.

Contemporary of Bikash Bhattacharya, Arpita Singh also built a new style in contemporary Indian art. From 1970’s, her themes of painting relate to the secret or internal personal space of women with their rites and activities. Arpita Singh claims that her paintings should be viewed from a women’s perception of life and the world around her. Most of her women images are nude in the figure of sustained copulation, whereas sometimes they (women images) are vulnerable and encounter the gaze of patriarchy.

During the 1980’s Ravinder Reddy, a contemporary Indian artist who was based in Boroda worked on the representation of human figure, i.e. women figure in a distinct and different way. Reddy’s female figures are from the
inspiration of popular culture. He was also deeply influenced from Yakshi sculpture of Mathura and from expressive facial language of classical dance like ‘Kathakali’. In the late film heroines turned into monumental iconic heads of a woman with the shining effects of metallic colour on fibre glass. His women-portraits possess the unblinking eyes; the eyes are charged with primeval intensity that conveys a confident alienation and resistance.

Another Important Borada based artist is Pushpamala N. who dealt with questions of gender and female representation in her sculptures, installations and photo performances. Her Terracotta sculptures have extended that insight by employing ‘ready made’. Deluxe Hanger – 1998 AD is a set of hangers shaped like female Torsos that the artist collected from Mumbai market. At first glance this mannequin sculpture seems to speak of the female body as a commodity. But the accompanying text situates this conceptual exercise in a broader economy of desire that is to affirm the cultural validity of the kitsch against the disapproval of the official culture that shows the resistance in her image making (Nancy, 2000, p. 32-33).

Contemporary painter Chandrima Bhattacharyya belongs to Santiniketan and carved an unusual personal identity in her paintings from the first decade of 21st century. Her works are the mirror of her self-images. She incorporates narratives from her private world that rendered an invisible curtain as an obstruction to the unwanted invasion upon personal space. Her compositions are highly intricate with delicate lines and juxtaposed with numerous images or objects, the titles of her paintings always speak of a state of alienation, such as So Far Away From Me or Cuppa Morning. She says about her own works, "My paintings have a nightmarish quality about them," (www.indianartcollectors.com). Is this nightmare carries a trauma or a narcotic craze of an alienated artist? By the analysis of her paintings it is assumed that her nightmare seems to display a sequence of insecurity that is homologous to vulnerability and also homologous to resistance.

Images of women in the works of the above mentioned artists defy linearity of understanding in ‘women representation’ or images of so called beautiful women in visual art, -- the linearity that is usually backed by a value-system
under the spell of patriarchy. They speak of a different trend in the history of modern Indian art. The problem in understanding creativity in Indian context in a unilateral way needs to be re-evoked. The present thesis takes up a small but important dimension of history of contemporary Indian art that normally remains unnoticed. This study, from this point of view, is a quest for the right perspective of women in visual arts of contemporary India. Resistance, from this angle, has a normative nuance in the sense that it shows an alternative path to understand the history of visual arts with *righteousness* as its key to determine the trajectory to understand such history.

The form of resistance becomes more important in portraying women in contemporary Indian visual arts before it becomes a subject for study. Arpita Singh’s comment is worth remembering in this context:

“It is not a subject; it is form. The subject comes at the last moment when every form is in its place and made visible. That is why titles are not important in my work.” (Sen, 1996, p. 98).

A form is indicative of the subject. But the subject should not be imposed upon it. The images of women as we intend to discuss here are often expressive of certain ideological contours, particularly against hegemony and patriarchy, -- the contours that emerge and meet out of the aesthetic impulse of the artist, but not coming from without. The ‘aesthetic impulse’ must not be understood here as something uncontrolled and unreflectively reactive; it is a *response*. Though this is a general parameter for understanding any art production in a phenomenological sense, it is particularly relevant to the study of our kind. Resistance to subject or a ‘thematic’ reveals the ‘problematic’ and the image gets set in proximal terms with reality.
Notes: Chapter I

1. Gurewich analyzed Lacan’s explanation on mother’s desire and child’s encounter on mother’s jouissance in the article ‘A Lacanian approach to the Logic of Perversion’, where he told, ‘The jouissance of the Other, therefore refers to the subject’s experience of being for the Other an object of enjoyment,... that the threat of her jouissance will become real and the child will be forced to change position.” (Gurewich, 2003).

2. Ania Loomba explained the idea of silent flow of power in capillary action and told, ‘Human beings internalize the systems of repression and reproduce them by confronting to certain ideas of what is normal and what are deviants. Thus our ideas about madness, criminality or sexuality are regulated through institutions such as the madhouse or the prison and also by certain ideological “regimes” (Loomba, 1998, p. 41)


4. Discussion on Gramsci’s hegemony, ideology, and common sense Ania Loomba used the term heterarchy. (Loomba, 1998, p. 28/29)


6. Birmingham cultural studies: Centre for contemporary cultural studies at Birmingham'

7. Ania Loomba reexamined the term Third World in the discourse of colonialism and said, ‘How can widely divergent cultures, histories and narratives be squeezed into a single formal pattern? Ahmed points out that
such a generalization relies on the Three worlds theory according to which the 'First' and 'Second world' are defined in terms of their systems of production (i.e. capitalism and socialism) and the 'Third world' is defined in terms of its experience of an “externally inserted phenomena” (colonialism):’ (Loomba, 1998, p. 204)

8. 'Women’s oppression springs from the control of their sexualities and reproduction, mandatory motherhood and compulsory heterosexuality. Women’s liberation should aim at politicizing these "personal" issues which form the core of patriarchy; Jaggar writes, ‘the personal is political” was a 1960s slogan...’ (Mazumder, 2006, p. 85.)

9. “Ego-Ideal (see 22 P.65) is a termed coined by Freud to define certain parental traits that the child will appropriate to fortify his sense of identity.” (Rabate, 2003, p. 197.)

10. See, McRobbie, 1994, p. 49

11. 'It is this incompleteness which creates the "social imaginary.” (McRobbie, 1994, p. 50)

12. Chandra Talpade Mohanty refers in her essay ‘Under Western Eyes, Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses, the position of "Third world woman" as a singular monolithic subject. (Mohanty, 1995, p. 259)

13. ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ was a seminar lecture written after a incident of burning sati in India in 80s decade and published in "Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture" (Ed) by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. London. Macmillan, 1988. p-8

15 . ‘For the ‘figure’ of woman the relationship between woman and silence can be plotted by women themselves;’ (Spivak, 1995 p. 28)

16 . Rajeswari.S.Rajan described the new Indian woman in her book "Real and Imagined Woman" under the connotation of modern and liberated with the references of media culture and advertisement. (Rajan, 1993, p. 130)

17 . ‘In the Phaedrus Plato declares that beauty alone, in distinction from wisdom, has the privilege of manifesting itself to the senses. In the Philebus he speaks he speaks of the true pleasure as arising from beautiful in virtue of its efficiency.’ (Gupta, 2008, p.64)

18 . Transcendental are the properties of being. St. Thomas Aquinas traced out five transcendentals: Unun, res,bonun, aliquid, verun.

See, the article ‘The Progressive of Being I’ of Leo J. Elders. (Elders, 1993, p. 50-62)

19 . The black is beautiful is a slogan of the black feminism: ‘The history of black-defined women’s struggles. Black feminism has built on a tradition of leftist activism, adapting models of socialist feminism…’I capitalizes “Black” because I regard it not simply as a colour but as a cultural, personal, and political identity’ (Joseph, 1983, p. 134)

20 . Lynn S. Chancer gave a statistic on anorexia based upon a report Susan Bordo in her article Beauty Context, ‘Susan Bordo describes an eightfold increase in the number of inquiries received by the New York Centre the study of anorexia and bulimia between 1980 and 1984, after experts on eating disorders in the 1970's had proclaimed anorexia to be rare. Other statistics that Bordo cites are equally disturbing: I of every 200 to 250 women between the ages of thirteen and twenty-two suffer from anorexia; twelve to thirty three percent of female college students struggle with
induced vomiting, diuretics, and laxatives. Strikingly, two, 90 percent of anorectics are women, as are 80 percent of those who have their intestines partially removed to help control their weight.’ (Chancer, 1998, p. 84-85)

21. ‘During the past five years, consumer spending doubled, pornography became the main media category, ahead of legitimate films and records combined, and thirty three thousand American women told researchers that they would rather lose ten to fifteen pounds than achieve any other goal.’ (Wolf, 1991, p. 10)


