Spatializing the Visual:

Re-locating Women's Photographs in Bengal, 1880s-1970s

Thesis Submitted To The Jadavpur University For The Degree Of Doctor Of Philosophy (Arts)

By

Hardik Brata Biswas

Jadavpur University, Kolkata–700032, India

2015

Certified that the Thesis entitled *Spatializing the Visual: Re-locating Women's Photographs in Bengal, 1880s-1970s* submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Arts at Jadavpur University is based upon my work carried out under the supervision of PROFESSOR SWAPAN KUMAR CHAKRAVORTY and DR ANIRBAN DAS and neither this thesis nor any part of it has been submitted before for any degree or diploma anywhere/elsewhere.

Countersigned by

Supervisor:_____   Supervisor:_____ Candidate: _____

Dated: Dated: Dated:

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Acknowledging, as we know, is a task and responsibility which on one hand can be an extremely formal assignment and one the other it is something which helps you remember the people, lives and angsts with whom you have literally grown up as a researcher. Albeit ineffectually, it is, to me, an effort in reliving the time I have used up in the process. Indeed it is a gargantuan undertaking, at this juncture, to think through so many lives which have been allied with my task for so long. The fear now is not about remembering, it is about forgetting.

I thank my supervisors Professor Swapan Kumar Chakravorty and Dr Anirban Das for bearing with me for so long. I have never been the exemplary doctoral candidate who have routinely flagged and posted the right thing at the right moment. They have calmly tolerated my life-threatening irregularities in work to the point that sometimes I had simply vanished into thin air for lengthy durations. They have always in their own erudite and caring ways brought me back from astray and led me to work. Shepherding me was most difficult with my erratic ways of scholarly gusto. Critical advises and inputs at the most necessary junctures from the former have immensely facilitated me to round up the work and without which this dissertation would not have been possible. The latter has silently pushed me to write and think critically without ever pushing me off the edge and without an exception have always protected me and my imagination. Any amount of thanks will always fall short of conveying my respect for them as scholars and teachers.

I take this opportunity to thank the teachers from whom I have continued to learn for a very long time now. Professor Ratnabali Chatterjee, Professor Manabendra Bandyopadhyay, Professor Sibaji Bandyopadhyay and Professor Ipshita Chanda have influenced my intellectual choices. I am especially grateful to Professor Tapati Guha-Thakurta for allowing me to audit her course on arts and its histories at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta.

This dissertation and my growing up as a researcher would not have been possible without the care and encouragement of Professor Samita Sen. It would not have been possible if sometime in 2008 she would not have prodded me to take on the task of building the digital archive of photographs at the School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University. In spite of always acting the greenhorn and not being able to live up to her scholarly expectations, she has been a constant inspiration and advisor at many crucial moments of my life.

School whenever it was necessary for my dissertation work. Not many seniors would risk such a thing. I thank Dr Panchali Ray and Rimple Mehta for allowing me customize teaching schedules and other assignments during the period. I fondly remember Anindita Bhaduri for helping me ubiquitously whenever necessary. Debamitra Talukdar promptly provided me with books and resources at the special library at the School. I remember all the support and encouragement from Abhijit Sen and Sarbani Goswami in my early days at the School as a student and a worker. In spite of the later corrosion in relationship with the latter, I had my first associations in Women's Studies through them. I am indebted to Nandita Bhattacharya, Principal Secretary, Faculty Council of Arts, Jadavpur University, who had always helped me whenever I had asked for it. Puranjit Barua at the PhD Cell of the Faculty Arts has advised necessarily helping me to avoid technical blunders.

I thank Sir Ratan Tata Trust for providing me doctoral fellowship for more than three years while I was doing my research.

Parts of this dissertation were presented in different seminars, conferences, talks and publications. I thank the organizers, coordinators, editors and chairs for their comments and critiques which have helped me immensely in constructing my argument.

I fondly remember Rumela Roy who was with me all the time, unfailingly encouraging me for the dissertation. In her own ways, which was often direct and always affectionate, critiqued me whenever I was deviating from the intended path. She remains a friend to whom I can, without the least hesitation, seek counsel and refuge. In all these years I have seen Adira grow up as a wonderful young woman who is in divided minds whether to be a singer, doctor or an actor. Nuanced as she is Adira is a little friend with some mature observations on me. Thanking Madhurima is the most difficult part as it exposes the imperfections of a formal acknowledgement in spite of trying one's best. I can just say that she has expressed extreme tolerance for everything that I did in the period and have always provided the best counsel. The everyday we share had been fulfilling in every sense of the word. I wish I could hold her hand in the same way.

List of Abbreviations

ABC	Anindita Bhaduri Collection
ACC	Aparna Chatterjee Collection
ADaC/ ADC	Aparna Dasgupta Collection
AGC	Amitabha Ghosh Collection
ARC	Ashok Ray Collection
ARoC	Anuradha Roy Chowdhury Collection
AvMC	Aveek Majumdar Collection
BCC	Bani Chakravorty Collection
BChC	Bandana Chatterjee Collection
BGC	Bijoya Goswami Collection
ECC	Eeshita Chatterjee Collection
GCC	Gita Chakraborty Collection
GDC	Gita Dasgupta Collection
GGC	Geeta Ganguly Collection
HGC	Hirak Ghosh Collection
IBC	Indrani Banerjee Collection
IDC	Ishita Dutta Collection
JCC	Joydeb Chatterjee Collection
JDC	Joysree Dutta Collection
JGC	Jaba Guha Collection
KBaC/ KBC	Krishna Banerjee Collection
KCC	Karuna Chakraborty Collection
KDaC	Kingshuk Dasgupta Collection
KDC	Keka Dutta Roy Collection
KDgC	Keya Dasgupta Collection
KKC	Kalpana Kundu Collection
KrSC/ KSC	Krishna Sil Collection
LSC	Lakshmi Sengupta Collection
MCC	Monojit Kumar Chakraborty Collection
MCuC	Mira Chowdhury Collection
MMC	Madhuja Mukherjee Collection
MuMC	Mukul Mitra Collection
NSC	Namita Saha Collection
PCC/ PMC	Prakriti Mitra Collection
PDC	Pinaki Ranjan Das Collection
RaMC	Ratna Mukherjee Collection
RBaC	Reshmee Banerjee Collection
RBC	Ranu Biswas Collection
RCC	Ratnabali Chatterjee Collection
RDC	Ritoban Das Collection
ReDC	Reba Dasgupta Collection
RGC	Rahul Guha Roy Collection
RMC	Ruchira Moitra Collection
RRC	Ranu Roy Chowdhury Collection
SBC	Sabyasachi Bagchi Collection
SBC	Sibaji Bandyopadhyay Collection
SCC/ SChC	Somnath Chatterjee Collection
SGC	Shyamal Ghosh Collection
SGhC	Sushovon Ghosh Collection
SLCC	Sheila Lahiri Chowdhury Collection
SoVC	Sova Chatterjee Collection
SPC	Srilata Paul Collection
SuCC	Suchorita Chattyopadhyay Collection
SuGc	Sudakshina Ghosh Collection
SuMC	Sunanda Mukherjee Collection
UDC	Uma Dasgupta Collection
UMC	Uma Majumdar Collection
USC	Uma Siddhanta Collection

Glossary

bhadra samaj	The genteel society in Bengal.
antahpur	Literally meaning the inner-quarters of traditional Hindu Indian households. A place for the woman of the household.
Andarmahal	Meaning almost the same as *antahpur*.
Babu	Earlier used in the sense of the city-bred dandy but late more generally used as referring to the respectable middle-class men. The word is generally used after the proper name of the middle-class man. Apart from these, the word also has other uses.
Adda	An informal gathering of friends, kins or relations in various places where the topics of discussion are not fixed and can flow fleetingly according to the choice of the participants. Discussions that take place are often disrupted to move into a new topic. It is one of the secular homosocial spaces of Bengali modernity.
Chotolok gentleman.	The coarse man as opposite to the sensibilities of the
Ghat	Stepping stones in a pond or river where people get down to wash, bathe and often socialize.
Chakri	Salaried profession.
Biliti	Of foreign origin.
asirbaad	Blessings of the elders.
Tankha	A Buddhist style of painting.
Rannaghar	Kitchen.
Raj	Royal.
Zamindari	Of matters related to land and the landed gentry.
Burqha	Veil used by Muslim women.
Methrani	Female sweepers often from the lower castes in India.

Introduction

Scope of the Dissertation

The scope of this dissertation lies in the intersections of the fields of visual studies and gender studies. Meant to be a qualitative study, the dissertation looks into the reception of Bengali middle-class women's photographs in the family albums and photographs from the 1880s to the 1970s. The realm of the visual and its cognition has been one of the primary concerns of epistemology in the philosophies. This dissertation traces the major associations of the visual to perspective based looking from the Renaissance toward the development of the camera as it emerged in the nineteenth century as one of the major moments altering the dynamics of looking and seeing in the modern. I deal with the historical and ideological dynamics of photographs in exhibiting Bengali middle-class women through the photographic medium. I do this to move onto the emergence of the family album in the Bengali middle class milieu.

The time period of the dissertation—1880s to the 1970s—witnessed the thoroughgoing popularity of the family album and family photographs to the extent that it became one of the pointers of the identity of the family and women in the region. On one hand the family album and family photographs became one of the cultural apparatuses through which the continuity of the Bengali middle-class family, gendered representations and the cultural nationalist tendencies of

exhibiting the woman as the moral anchor of the family was kept alive. To some extent this remained unchanged in the ninety years that I have reviewed. On the other hand, I point out in this dissertation two ways in which women's representation in family albums and photographs can be possibly relocated. Firstly I read the notion of the archive—the family album as an archive and the digital archive of photographs through which this dissertation has been produced—as fundamentally informed with deficiencies of generalized meaning making processs. I have made use of Derridian reading of the archive in situating the move. The Derridian notion of the archive, although not specific to the representation of woman, provides the deconstructivist substratum on which the *other* can be thought in its absence. This problematises the construction of a *history of women* through the photographic image of the woman as analogous to already available histories of development. The photographic image is also illustrative of the participatory developments of women in various spheres of the public and the private through the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Although a possible move, such histories could overlook the specific economies of the technologically reproducible and visual representational forms such as the photograph.

Secondly, while critiquing simplistic and analogous ways of doing women's history through her visual depiction, I argue that the space and place of the family album and family photography opens up scopes of representation of women from the Bengali middle-class background. Hitherto almost impossible ways of representations of women from the middle-class families become

possible through the photographic medium. On one hand I make my point through the examples of the romantic couple photography and sartorial misrecognition of women as in dressing up as a man from the family albums. On the other hand I take the death photographs showing couples with their deceased spouse as creating a space of women's (*and men's*) visual representation through love beyond the censures of the Bengali middle-class family. Such *fantastic* representations, I argue, might not follow the trajectories of the documented historical traditions looking at the woman in the region and her developments in the historical-social. The photographic album could be one way to look at the woman in the family without permanently reducing her to accepted stereotypes of mother, daughter, girl child, wife, widow and caregiver. In spite of the family album's general tendency of reducing the woman into neat categories of women's representation that the sexual-cultural politics of the family protects, it is a space where meaning making cannot be easily resolved. Family albums and photographs often open up spaces of representation that might appear as deviations from the visualization of middle-class Bengali women in the realm of lived lives. The photograph, in the album, remains as a singular moment to be remembered in absence and presence of the subject/object through the works of the memory. These points have been dealt with in this dissertation in bringing out the specificities of the photographic representation of women.

I was drawn to this area of research from my interests in the realm of visual studies generally and more specifically when I started collecting women's

photographs from Bengali middle-class families in Kolkata and other districts of West Bengal from 2008 to 2011. This dissertation, in a way, is a response to scholarly works dealing specifically in women's photographic representations in the region. I can cite Malavika Karlekar's (2005, 2006, 2013) detailed and pioneering work on early photography in India and especially her focus on the Indian woman as the subject/object of the modern camera in Bengal and India. Karlekar's arguments on women and photography in the Indian context comes from her long archival efforts in collecting family photographs and curating one of the first exhibitions depicting Indian women from across two centuries in the Indian context. She signposts important stages in the development and passage of Indian women from the indoors of the household to the public spaces from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. This she does through the comparable and *visible* world of the photograph as *exhibiting* the woman as subject/object. While her study is meticulous in details of history and in terms of metadata harvesting, Karlekar does not engage with the conceptual foundation of representation and the image. Also, Karlekar's work is based more on photographs from families who had specific public histories of their own as in their involvement in the nationalist struggle or public life. However, this is not say that the importance of her work diminishes. On the contrary, this dissertation takes copious cues from her critical-historical engagements with women in Indian photography and builds on it.

My dissertation, while borrowing from her work also moves away from it. Before stating my differences in comparison to her work, let me now flag the point that there are very few works on women, family albums and photography in Indian context or more specifically in the context of Bengal. Either the family album has been neglected in its ubiquity or has created problems for the archivist-researcher in its loss of data. Pinney's (1997 and 2008) work has been another important contribution in mapping the colonial anthropological and postcolonial social dynamics of the photograph in the contexts of its usage and exchange in India. Other works such as by Gutman (1982) majorly explore the early photographic scene in India or the coffee table books veer toward nostalgic celebrations of the *Raj* era photographs of *maharajas* and their court lives, queens or the exotic nautch girls. To the best of my knowledge, there is a lack in academic research on visualizing photographic representations of Indian middle-class women from Bengal and its possibilities with regard to the family album. This dissertation tries to address this gap in viewing/reading common middle-class women's photographic representations in the genre of the family album. Any naive attempt at writing a history of women in Bengal by *seeing* the photograph might harm the feminist notions of histories by causing it to be illustrative to theses already in hand, such as that of women's progress, celebrations, subjectivity, choice and agency *simply* emanating from the visual. It might therefore leave the specificities of the representational form and its economies of reception and reading toward becoming an eloquent *ad hoc* to already available histories. As I have stated earlier, such projects are possible to

the extent that it generally leaves out the calculation of the incalculability of knowing through forms of representations. On a more general level, as I did my fieldwork, it became more evident that more often than not photographs in the family albums have been *forgotten*. This *forgetting* might come in differently combined packages such as names, events, dates or places, placing an apparent block in attempts to do a definite historical reading. It also will not help much if one just comments that the family album *forgets*, assuming that the family album along with its photographs must also pass on a definite and *remembered* narrative thread. The forgetting and remembering, as it happens in the place of the album, happens through discourse and ideologies at work. Or it can be simply the fallibility of the human mind incapable of remembering in exact the intricate details of the woman in the photograph through this informal medium of familial record keeping in Bengal. This is one of the problematic and at the same time thought-provoking area of scholarly exploration through photographic representations of women from family albums. To formulate from what remains for the ordinary viewer (*as the researcher here often with no definite knowledge of the family or of the woman*), I have moved from the diachronic to the synchronic study of photographs. Before commenting on my methodology let me briefly summarize the chapters in the dissertation.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter One begins with a survey of the word representation and its other formations such as 'representative', and 'representing' as it will inform the scope of the work not merely as incidental usage but in its critical enunciations. It is from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that the word was 'widely used as an identifying element of REALISM or NATURALISM.' Much later and not probably before twentieth century the word became a standard utterance for exactitude in reproductions, especially in the category of representational art. (Williams: 1998, 267–269) The prefix 're' enunciates more than one possibility of meaning of the 'present'. The Chapter then moves to a review of positivism and the cognition of the exact which have close links with representation and especially representation as exactness. I have cited Comte's argument that the validity of knowledge or truth *per se*, according to positivist philosophy, resides in the knowledge derived from sensory experiences and scientific experiments which postulates a scientific knowledge (Macionis and Gerber 2007,Larrain 1979). The early twentieth century Vienna Circle philosophers, refuting a priori principles and metaphysics towards an analytical logical framework, took Comte's positivist philosophy to newer approaches where they were seeking reconceptualization of 'empiricism by means of their interpretation of contemporary advances in the physical and formal sciences'. With the context of positivism revealed I have done a review of the term modern moving beyond the swiping historical models of the conceptualization of modernity. Jameson (2002) quoting Oskar Lafontaine's memoir is of the opinion that the terms such as

'modernization' and 'modernity' have been unproblematically mixed up and have been 'degraded to fashionable concepts under which you can think anything at all.' (Jameson 2002, 9). Further, Jameson (2002) states that with the reduction of the concept of modernity to realms of economic and technical categories it has become important and necessary to introduce the term 'modern' 'as part of the fundamental discursive struggle' (Jameson 2002, 9). From here I have moved on to Heidegger's argument against the positivist tendency of reducing logical procedures and norms to psychological progressions. Although his phenomenology and notion of Being do not relate directly to technologically reproducible work of arts such as emulsion based photography, I have, in some measure read through his conceptual formulations, commenting on the nature of representation and follow it up with one moment of post-structuralist intervention by Jacques Derrida in his 1982 essay 'Sending: On Representation'. If one follows Heidegger's conceptual movements, understanding is not something we consciously do, but something we are achieved through a tacit intelligibility of the world. Heidegger reads through Immanuel Kant in positing his moves on phenomena and noumena as the *sensible* and the *intelligible*. Through the work of Heidegger in phenomenology the focus from the science of phenomena is shifted to a methodological rigour of phenomenology. With the brief discussion on the meaning of Being and how it work in the epistemological inquiries, I move on to Derrida's take on representation as nothing rounded off in the act of just sending representatives to the assembly. It remains with the problem of translatability inflecting any sense of representation. Rather than

closing the problems of translation and transference of meaning Derrida opens it up toward gathering the contextualized function. Derrida argues against a quick closure of 'representation is [*as*] bad' without the rigour of placing the evaluation of the argument in terms of specificities of disciplines and structures. In tracing the Being of representation where he brings in the example of, in an over simplifying (*Derrida uses this expression*) way, the teaching apparatus where acts like seminars and publications attests to the representation of the being. The objective purpose of representation for the subject will be necessary in the process of 'institutionalizing of knowledge'. Derrida says that the rendering available of the human subject allows the work of representation to happen and such 'rendering available' is what constitutes the subject as subject. The grounds of representation—if there is a solid ground at all, seems opaque and beyond a fixity (as conventional represented reality) which it itself promises—is at this stage seems to point to the assertion of, as Kirby observes, 'there is no outside of text'. She further compensates the problem of language and representation by imagining an "outside".

Taking into account the surveys of 'writing in general', 'worlding of the world' and the instability of the corporeal markings in the process of Being, I have discussed Heidegger's position on the artwork—which for the time being I am taking as an historical precursor of the photographic visual representative mode that will form the representative archive of this dissertation—and Derrida's negotiations with a point in Heidegger's meaning making in Van Gogh's painting as discussed in his 1998 essay 'Restitutions of the Truth in Pointing

['Pointure']'. The question of knowledge emanating from the painting, can be, for now, solved only in a provisional way of taking into consideration the apparent and representative dissolution of the differences between work of 'disclosure' and 'truth' but also being aware that the dissolution does not happen. From this, I have discussed Heidegger's ideas on the 'thingly character' of art to arrive at the problematization of truth and essence in the oscillation between certainty and correctness in the realm of representation. Here, in this Chapter, I have briefly discussed the nature of the ontic and ontological toward understanding the meaning of Being intrinsically informing the meaning of representations.

I end Chapter One with a note on the problematic nature of the complexities of representation which is always in general terms tied up with the simple cognitive/historical moment of interpretation/description/fact finding through Derrida's critique of Heidegger on his notion of meaning of the work of art. The survey forms the critical backdrop of the reading into the structures of the family album and photographs from the perspectives of post-structuralist conceptualizations on the meaning and its displacements. This review, contrary to popular reception of the *genre* of the family photograph, will help me go back to the specifics of the particular photograph while taking the generalities of the visual into account. This opening up of the gaps in conceptualizing the process of creation of meaning of/from an object will counter essentializing tendencies widely accepted in the reception of the visual depiction of woman in the family.

Chapter Two deals with the scope and place of the photographic image in the age of technological reproducibility. I have dealt with Walter Benjamin's 1936 essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction / The Work of Art in the Age of Technological Reproducibility' and its critique where the 'new' world of photographic visuals and the cinema are taken as a vantage point of ideological critique in grappling with the relationships of exchange and affection between producers and consumers. The Chapter also reviews the concept of aura as a notion which does not simply go away with multiple reproductions of the same. The notion of the negative auratic and auratic return haunting the spectator in training her reception has been also discussed with respect to a critique of Benjamin. I have flagged and discussed the arbitrary nature of the relationship between the signifier and the signified and its enunciations on the reception of the photograph that is devoid of exact verbal or written cues thereby complicating the relationship between the reader/onlooker and the photograph in front of her. From this survey, the Chapter moves to a review of the technical development of the camera and the evolution of photography in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. This is done to establish the technical popularity of the medium and the extent of its reach leading toward the birth of the family album form. The conceptual scope of photography in modernity has also been reviewed through a reading of the occularcentric notions of the Cartesian schema of perspectivalism and truth through critiques by Georg Lukacs and Walter Benjamin touching upon the photograph as an object of cognizance. The notions of realism and

pseudorealism, in the context of the photograph's polysemic meaning making, has been discussed to address the problem of the floating chain of signifieds possible to be thought of in reading a photograph. This Chapter also reviews the relationships between the real, imaginary and the photograph through Roland Barthes, Franz Kafka and Marcel Proust in twentieth century imagination. With this survey, the Chapter moves on to trace the early colonial anthropological and governmental uses of photography in the Indian context. I have described the processes through which a carefully curated exposition of the colonial subjects was achieved. It perpetuated the notions of colonial difference and othering in the registers of gender, race and tribes. In continuation, the Chapter reviews the developments of photography in India and Bengal with reference to representations of the marginal in the popular and the governmental efforts at photography toward the notions of textualization and citationality. From the parallel registers of official-governmental photography, the Chapter moves on to the specific location of photography as accepted by the middle-class. It was a bid to negotiate the porousness of colonialism in carving out the space of public exposition of the *bhadramahila* from the middle-class *bhadrasamaj* in Bengal without much dislocation of the partial veiling, respectability or morals of the family. The Chapter ends with the note that the realm of early photography in Bengal used the photographic representation of middle-class women as markers of progress and modernity in the realm of the colonial-modern.

Chapter Three begins with a detailed introduction of the digital archive on which this dissertation is based. The survey maps the scope of the collection and the notion of middle-class that has been used here. While doing this, I read through Malavika Karlekar's (2005 and 2006) work on photography, gender and women in the rubric of history. The Chapter then moves on to a conceptual analysis of archive as a place of storage, knowledge production and epistemological intervention. The Chapter critiques the inferential production of knowledge from the archive that presupposes a kind of knowledge that the archive already exists. This has been done mainly through a reading of the concept of archive as a political-historical construct, critiquing it though post-structuralist and feminist thinking about the nature and possibilities of the archive. The Chapter reads the scope of the archive from the perspective of colonial history and post-coloniality. The question of the 'object' and the 'reader' and the specific contexts in which these can be selectively produced and re-produced through the archive, situates the argument for a post-structuralist reception of the concept of the archive. This I will do through Spivak's (1984) essay 'The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives' which reappeared in a reworked fashion in 'Critique of Postcolonial Reason (1999) where she problematises the notion of the reception and production of archival knowledge. The subjectivation of the Bengali woman in the domain of cultural nationalism in colonial historiography is discussed here as it forms the basic structure of looking at the Hindu/Brahmo middle-class woman in the postcolonial. Bimala, the woman protagonist of Rabindranath Tagore's novel *Ghare Baire* (1916), is

one such point through which I have tried to read the subjectivation of the Bengali woman subjected to a facilitating patriarchal culture. The question that confronts is whether at all it is possible to represent women in the archive? The Chapter in some measure reads through Derrida's 'Of Grammatology' and more extensively through 'Archive Fever' in an attempt to arrive at the conceptualization of the nature of the archive which in turn affects representations of women. It is read in conjunction with Irigarary's notion of the specificity of the woman in the grid of differences.   With the context of the archive and subjectivation of women as the substrata, the Chapter will move on to discuss the specificity of the colonial Bengali Hindu and Brahmo women in the context of family photographs and albums. With the moment of the Derridian reading of the archive as the place of a possible aporetic knowledge of the subject and Spivak's argument about the selective and 'disappearing' production of the knowledge of the object of the archive—the woman, the Chapter proceeds to mapping the condition of the middle-class women in Bengal.

Chapter Four traces the interplay of the image, history and memory with regard to the family photographs and the representation of Bengali middle-class women in them. The argument begins with questioning the possible tracing of the continuity of the family that is assumed in the conception of travel and transference of the family album in the region. On the basis of a simple content analysis, based on a general cognizance of the stereotypes that informs the representation of Bengali middle-class women, fourteen categories of

photographs have been flagged. This generalization does not attempt at essentializing the representations but are based on maximum visibility of such photographs in the family albums and collections. The categories are 1) The Family, 2) Single Women[1], 3) With Other Women/ Women in Groups, 4) Women with Children , 5) Education, 6) Marriage, 7) Couples, 8) Dressing up, 9) In the Act, 10) Outdoor Sporting Activities, 11) Travel, 12) Children, 13) Widows and 14) Men Together. The Chapter raises the question of women's photographic representations remaining only as aid to women's history. Apart from that can we think of the possibilities of finding spaces and places where a *specific* history of woman with regard to her photographic representation is possible. Through the reading of J L Austin's speech act theory and Derrida's notion of a 'women's place' the Chapter problematises available visualization of Bengali middle-class women while acknowledging the presence of such representational categories. The problematization of the representation of women in family albums is done through the ideation of contradictory meanings in photographs, remembering and the work of the memory which marks an area of recognition beyond the presence or absence of the written word or the verbal cue. The process is densely linked in one way to the owner/spectator of the photograph and in another way to the viewer/reader with no cue to the specific history of the image of the woman. The simple relationship with history breaks down with the notion of performativity and memory informing the meaning making of the photograph. At this point a short description of six female respondents on their relationship with photography forms a part of the Chapter.

---

[1] as in the photographic frame.

The last section of the Chapter discusses the production of the *familiar* women in the family as represented in the family albums and photographs. Through this discussion, it emerges that even if one attempts a neat description of the categories such as the *family* and the *single woman* (single as in the frame of the photograph) it resists simple compartmentalization of Bengali middle-class women's accepted stereotypes and opens up possible spaces of representation in the family album. Changes in the sartorial presentation, demeanour, poses and the increased movement of the camera in the hand of the enthusiast in the family recording the woman in the family and outdoors are visible throughout the twentieth century.

Chapter Five, the concluding chapter of the dissertation, after the review of the familial turn of Bengali middle-class women's representation in photography, attempts to move away from the linear production of visual histories from family photographs of women. It does so toward arguing that the family album is an enabling place/space of women's representation as producing the impossibilities of the task of representation. The Chapter looks into this with regard to the work of memory, romantic couples and death in the place and space of the family albums which can be thought of as specific and enabling spaces of Bengali middle-class women's representation. Attempts to read history and memory(ies) in family albums incites towards an understanding of the problematic nature of the meanings of the word memory. In women's photographs in the family albums there is an unsure and undecided mixture

between the collective memory of a family history and individual memory that will inscribe the woman with various degrees of description. The next part of the Chapter walks on a tightrope to address a few of the issues related to a historical reading and memory work vis-à-vis family albums and representation of women in the socially produced spaces. The family album is a kind of lived space hovering in between the imagined and the cultural authority of the family in Bengal. Based on two specific moments of the dislocation of the representation of the Bengali woman in family albums and photographs I continue the arguement. Firstly through couple photography and dressing up photographs of women. Secondly through death photographs showcasing women either as deceased or with their deceased spouse in family albums. These are kinds of *impossible* moments in the genre of the family photography in Bengal. Such representations open up the possibilities of thinking newer representations of women, which otherwise might have not been there in the other lived social registers. The performance of the self before the camera makes the work of representation difficult to be held in the boundaries of the expected morals and practiced everyday of the Bengali middle-class family especially with regard to women. Questions of identity and performance overlap in this genre of photographs. On the one hand, it is an attestation of the newly achieved status of the subject and, on the other, it helps to blur, even if temporarily, the stricter everyday demands of marriage. From here the Chapter moves on to the second point and to the last section of the dissertation, to see the location of photographs of death and women in the Bengali middle-class family albums, another moment

which opens up the presumed thinking of women's visual representation. Death's incommensurability as an experience is reviewed through Das (2012) and Derrida's (1993) reading by Thomson (1999). The representation of death of the woman (as deceased and *living*) here instantiates the memory of the body which is also constituted through love and not simply subject to heteronormative orthodoxy and repression.

The Chapter opens up questions and reveals some of the gaps in reading the image of the Bengali middle-class women in the family albums. It also engages with the feminist ways of history but critiques the unproblematic linking of the photograph and the written text cumulatively processing histories which might leave very little scope for the specific enunciations of the image based representation of the Bengali woman. Alongside such reviews and arguments the dissertation also attempts in reading the poststructuralist notion of the archive as a living space and the nature of the work of art in the process of meaning making. These attempts at the same time problematise and relocate the general reception of the photographs of Bengali middle-class women in the family albums and photography from the 1880s to the 1970s.

Chapter I

Grounds of Representations: Shifting Terrains in the Modern

> And in some archive of paper or stone, on some roll of microfilm, we could read a sentence. I read it here, let it be the opening sentence of this introductory address, for example this: "One might say that we represent something *(nous somme en representation)*."
>
> Are we sure we know what this means, today? Let us not be too quick to believe it.
>
> —*Jacques Derrida / Sending: On Representation*

1.1. Representation as the Key Word

In the Introduction to his classic study, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1988 [1976]), Raymond Williams clearly stated his aim in authoring a compendium of words and expressions: 'It is not a series of footnotes to dictionary histories and or definitions of a number of words. …Every word which I have included has at some time, in the course of some argument, virtually forced itself on my attention because the problems of its meanings seemed to me inextricably bound up with the problems it was being used to discuss.' (Williams 1988, 15)

In the context of the beginning of this dissertation on photographic images of Bengali Middle Class Women from the1880s to the 1970s, a survey of the word 'representation' is necessary exercise. The particular word and its other formations such as 'representative', and 'representing' will inform the scope of the work not merely as incidental usage but in its critical enunciations. Representation is a word which has wide and common currency in the English language. A few of the meanings according to the Oxford English Dictionary helps to clear the horizon of the word represent— 'To bring clearly and distinctly before the mind, esp. (to another) by description or (to oneself) by an act of imagination'(meaning number 2), 'To show, exhibit , or display to the eye; to make visible or manifest;..'(meaning number 4), 'To exhibit by means of portrait, sculpture, etc.; to portray, depict, delineate.' (meaning 4 b), 'Of pictures, images, etc. :To exhibit by artificial resemblance or delineation.' (meaning 4 c), 'To symbolize, or serve as a visible or concrete embodiment of (some quality, fact, or other abstract concept)'. (meaning 6), 'Of things: To stand for or in place (of a person or thing); to be the figure or image of something'. (meaning 7), 'To present the figure or appearance of, to resemble'. (meaning 7 b) [2] The usages put down out by the OED tracks the meaning of the word from *c*.1380. The horizon of the word 'represent' is diverse and is common in many fields of the social

---

[2] The Complete Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary: Complete Text Reproduced Micrographically, Volume II, P–Z, Oxford University Press, 1971, p.2498.

such as electoral politics, nation states, identities of groups and communities, cultures and arts[3].

In fourteenth century English usage ' a crucial extension' was noticed when the word represent apart from meaning corporeally presenting oneself 'often to some person of authority' it also began to mean as 'standing for something that is not present'. Although following a trajectory of evolution of its meaning and usages from the realm of political democracy in England, it is from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that the word was 'widely used as an identifying element of REALISM or NATURALISM.' Much later and not probably before twentieth century the word became a standard utterance for exactitude in reproductions, especially in the category of representational art (Williams 1998, 267–269). The prefix 're' enunciates more than one possibility of meaning of the 'present'. I am, in the context of this review, keeping afloat two such possibilities. First is the representation of A (in absence) by B (in presence) where B is taken to be wholly or mostly standing in for A. The second is when A (in absence) is represented by B (in presence) where B is presenting A not in terms of exactitude communicated through sensory experience. I will come back, shortly, to review and argue these and other possibilities of representation.

---

[3] Especially in the arts where representational arts are treated as trying to show things as they really are. A common comparison with the representational forms of art is the abstract forms of art where often unproblematic and analogical meaning making is challenged.

1.2. Narratives of Positivism and Making Meaning of the World

In case of the emulsion based photography, for about nearly one hundred and fifty years, the near exact cognition of the object represented is primary in the process of its meaning making to the onlooker and beholder of the photograph[4]. Further removed from the early developments of photography or the trails for the perfect image making of nature, Auguste Comte (1798–1857) was ushering in the perspective of positivism in European thought in the mid-nineteenth century (Comte 1844). Coeval to other processes of changes in historiography at the time when the shift was towards searching for proof of historical knowledge and tangibility of proof, Comte's argument was that knowledge can be derived from observation and experimentation thus repudiating metaphysics and theology as philosophical sources of knowledge. Of the three stages—a) the theological, b) the metaphysical and c) the positive— of social evolution which he had proposed, Comte wanted to seize upon the moment of positivism. The validity of knowledge or truth per se, according to positivist philosophy, resides in the knowledge derived from sensory experiences and scientific experiments which postulates a scientific knowledge. (Macionis & Gerber 2007; Larrain 1979)

---

[4] In 1839, when Daguerre made public his photographic process, he stressed its potential accessibility to a wide public and its automatic nature. The negative-positive process independently invented by William Henry Fox Talbot in the 1830s gave him the crucial advantage over Daguerre's in that the former produced multiple copies, making mass printing and publication theoretically possible – especially after the invention of the highly sensitive albumen paper in 1850. He patented the *calotype* process in 1841.

Most areas of natural sciences, ethnography, census, eugenics, medicine and historiography in the course of the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries demanded empirical precision in order to arrive at factual knowledge which was regarded as true knowledge about human beings and their orders. The early governmental and colonial use of photography, especially in the colonies, also attests to excesses of a particular kind of knowledge making. (Pinney: 1997) The authoritative drive towards a perspective, through heavy stress on empirics and verificationism, which would put down concomitant intellectual and critical exercises of knowledge about human and being in general, marks the extremes of positivism known as logical positivism (Friedman xiv). The early twentieth century Vienna Circle philosophers[5], refuting a priori principles and metaphysics towards an analytical logical framework, took Comte's positivist philosophy to newer approaches where they were seeking reconceptualization of 'empiricism by means of their interpretation of then recent advances in the physical and formal sciences' (Thomas 2014). Such advances had already begun coeval to the process of colonization which was one of the forming experience of the modern era as we perceive it in historiography.

---

[5] 'The Vienna Circle was a group of scientifically trained philosophers and philosophically interested scientists who met under the (nominal) leadership of Moritz Schlick for often weekly discussions of problems in the philosophy of science during academic terms in the years from 1924 to 1936.' Prominent 'members were the mathematician Hans Hahn, the physicist Philipp Frank, the social scientist Otto Neurath, his wife, the mathematician Olga Hahn-Neurath, the philosopher Viktor Kraft, the mathematicians Theodor Radacovic and Gustav Bergmann and, since 1926, the philosopher and logician Rudolf Carnap.' For more details see: Uebel, Thomas, "Vienna Circle", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/vienna-circle/> accessed on12.4. 2014.

The term 'modern' derives from the late fifteenth century Latin term *modernus*[6] that was used to distinguish a Roman pagan past in the context of Europe. However, the scope of the word 'modernity' evolved in more ways rather than only signifying the present. It referred to modes of social organization that emerged in Europe from sixteenth century and extended its influence throughout the world in the wake of European exploration and colonization:

> "As the European power expanded, this sense of the superiority of the present over the past became translated into a sense of superiority over those pre-modern societies and cultures that were 'locked' in the past — primitive and uncivilized peoples whose subjugation and 'introduction' into modernity became the right and obligation of the European powers" (Ashcroft 1998, 144).

The concept of modernity is significant in the emergence of colonial discourses. In one way of putting it modernity is fundamentally about conquest, 'the imperial regulation of the land, the discipline of the soul, and the creation of the truth' (Turner 1990, 4). Modernity emerged in about the same time that European nations began to conceive of their own dominance over a non-European world and began to spread their rule through exploration, cartography and colonization. "Europe constructed itself as the 'modern' and constructed the non-European as 'traditional', 'static', 'pre-historical'. The imposition of

---

[6] Two models which are competing and are necessary to understand the term. The first of the Jameson (2002) points towards the problematic economy of the word 'modernus'. He points towards two deals with categories of temporality resolving themselves in tenses such as future, past, etc. The second deals the word modernus from the perspective of material signs of the language ie. linguistics.

European models of historical change became the tool by which these societies were denied any internal dynamic or capacity for development" (Ashcroft 1998, 145). Moving beyond the swiping historical models of the conceptualization of modernity, Jameson (2002) quoting Oskar Lafontaine's[7] memoir is of the opinion that the terms such as 'modernization' and 'modernity' have been unproblematically mixed up and have been 'degraded to fashionable concepts under which you can think anything at all' (Jameson 2002, 9). Further, Jameson (2002) states that with the reduction of the concept of modernity to realms of economic and technical categories it has become important and necessary to introduce the term 'modern' 'as part of the fundamental discursive struggle' (Jameson 2002, 9). Modernity as such

> 'means setting a date and positioning a beginning, and it is in any case always amusing and instructive to make an inventory of the possibilities, which tend to move around in chronological time…Descarte's thoroughgoing break with the past constitutes not only the inauguration of modernity but already a self-conscious or reflexive theory of it…This is then also to say that the trope of 'modernity' is always in one way or the another a rewriting, a powerful displacement of previous narrative

---

[7] Oskar Lafontaine (born 16 September 1943) is a German politician who served in the government of Germany as Minister of Finance from 1998 to 1999. Previously he was Minister-President of the state of of Saarland from 1985 to 1998, and he was also Chairman of the Social Democratic Party from 1995 to 1999. URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oskar_Lafontaine accessed on 5.8.2015, 12:13 pm.

paradigms…In my opinion, then, all of the themes generally appealed to as ways of identifying the modern–self-consciousness or reflexivity, greater attention to language or representation, a materiality of the painted surface , and so on and so forth– all these features are themselves mere pretexts for the rewriting operation and for securing the effect of astonishment and conviction appropriate to the registering of a paradigm shift' (Jameson 2002, 31–36).

Marshall Berman (1982) puts his idea of modernity in the following way:

"Here is a mode of vital experience-- experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils-- that is shared by men and women all over the world today. I will call this body of experience "modernity." To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world-and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are (Berman 1988[1982], 15).

Both Jameson (2002) and Berman (1982) provide specific ideological critique of modernity and points towards the production of a range of experiences— cultural, philosophical or national in order to expose the fissures and ruptures within this paradigm of experiences called modernity. The stabilizing and destabilizing processes of modernity, as felt and tangible in the

sphere of the social, concomitantly work towards the production of standards of representation of the Woman and the question of Being into much complex critical enunciation. The production of technology and the emerging fields of exact reproduction of 'reality' as in the field of emulsion based photography has been an integral part of the search for the modern as perceived in a break away from the past. It is also making grounds for spaces of modernity where there is constant harking back to the past to produce 'itself' as modern thereby in ways it is complicating its own stance of being new.

According to Giddens (1990, 6) the advent of various technologies initiated an ever-accelerating pace of change, and the scope of this change came to affect the entire globe. Changes in the intelligibility of the visual in the domain of modernity was, according to Crary (1992, 3), inseparable from a 'massive reorganization of knowledge and social practices that modified in myriad ways the productive, cognitive, and desiring capacities of the human subject'.

In the work of philosophical, scientific and political knowledge, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the debates around understanding representation as to what its essence is and what should constitute it became more central. In the twentieth century it was based around the work of Continental philosophical traditions such as phenomenology, existentialism,

post-structuralism and psychoanalytic theory. Meaning making of the world and apprehending it through senses and perception is a task confronted by the average human being. It is also a kind of common knowledge that perceptions of things are as different as the things to be perceived are. The question to confront is how do we perceive and apprehend the world around us? What are the grounds of representation on which the cognitive capability of the perceiver depends? And how do we think through the problem of representation as something standing for something else?

1.3. Understanding Phenomena, Tracing Being of the *Being*

In his doctoral dissertation titled 'The Doctrine of Judgment in Psychologism: A Critical-Positive Contribution to Logic' (1913), Heidegger argued against the positivist tendency of reducing logical procedures and norms to psychological processes. (Krell 1993, 9) Throughout his early and late works Heidegger engages with 'being in general, or with the being of beings, his analysis of what he initially describes as the problem of the meaning of being, concerns a kind of knowledge.' (Rockmore 1996, 363) Although his phenomenology and theories of Being do not correspond directly to mechanically reproducible work of arts like emulsion based photography, I will partially read through his conceptual formulations, commenting on the nature of

representation and follow it up with one moment of post-structuralist intervention carried out by Jacques Derrida in his 1982 essay entitled '*Sending: On Representation*'. He goes against the grain of metaphysics. From the epistemological point of view, Heidegger's problem, especially in his early works, is 'how to go from beings, or entities, to being' (Rockmore 1996, 364). He was influenced by the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), who was his Professor at the Freiburg University. Husserl discouraged taking into account untested account from the philosophical traditions. His style of phenomenology did away with the natural attitude of philosophy towards establishing the philosophical process as 'distinctive and rigorous science, and he insisted that phenomenology is a science of consciousness rather than of empirical things'[8] (Sawicki 2014). Husserl in his Lecture I of the Idea of Phenomenology was thoroughly critical of the methodology of philosophy:

> 'In contemporary philosophy, insofar it claims to be a serious science, it
> has become almost a commonplace that there can be only one method of
> achieving cognition in all the sciences as well as in philosophy. … In the
> sphere of ordinary inquiry one science can readily build upon another,
> and the one can serve the other as a model of method though to a limited

[8] 'Husserl argued that the study of consciousness must actually be very different from the study of nature. For him, phenomenology does not proceed from the collection of large amounts of data and to a general theory beyond the data itself, as in the scientific method of induction. Rather, it aims to look at particular examples without theoretical presuppositions (such as the phenomena of intentionality, of love, of two hands touching each other, and so forth), before then discerning what is essential and necessary to these experiences.' For more details see: Marianne Sawicki Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: A Peer Reviewed Academic Resource. URL= http://www.iep.utm.edu/husserl/ accessed on 12.4.2014.

extent determined by the nature of the areas of inquiry in question. *But philosophy lies in a wholly new dimension.* It needs an entirely *new point of departure* and an entirely new method distinguishing it in principle from any "natural" science' (Husserl 1964, 19).

In Lecture IV, where he speaks about extension of the sphere of investigation through a consideration of intentionality, the self-givenness of the universal and the philosophical method for the analysis of essence, he argues to set the ground plan for the phenomenological inquiry into the analysis of essence:

'…the whole investigation is an a *priori* one, though, of course, it is not *a priori* in the sense of mathematical deductions. What distinguishes it from "objectivizing" a *priori* sciences is its methods and its goal. *Phenomenology proceeds by "seeing", clarifying and determining meaning, and by distinguishing meaning.* …It does not theorize or carry out mathematical operations, that is to say, it carries through no explanations in the sense of deductive theory' (Husserl 1964, 46).

By taking a route to critically analyse phenomena as accurately as possible, even by repeating it, Husserl began to 'shed some light on the Aristotelian or Greek problem of being, especially on *hos alethes,* or "being in the sense of the true," or as Heidegger would later say "the presence of what is present in unconcealment." Heidegger resisted the conventional paths of philosophy, which asked the question about the being of man and returned to the

being of man as the questioner who will be available whenever such a question arose. Man is aware of his being in the world, even if in a vague way. 'Heidegger called the Being of this questioner who has already some understanding of Being in general "existence" or *Dasein* (Krell 1993, 12–13). In *Being and Time* (1927) Heidegger expounds the concept of *Dasein* within the framework of the question of Being in general. He critiqued methods of metaphysics which has been trying to define the Being of *Dasein* by means of categories which are suited to other entities of the Universe but are not suited for the human being. *Dasein* has the power to manifest and gather and archive things, which are apparent in their Being. Everyday events like turning on a signal while driving a car or driving a nail with a hammer are part of the process of this gathering of a series of activities with which we are tangled towards a series of meaningful relationships. The intricate context of meanings in such activities and choices, which comes to us a priori, is only evident when the car meets with an accident or one hammers at the wrong place instead of the nail. According to Heidegger, such dense, almost invisible contexts of meaning are constitutive of the "world". *Dasein*, as being-in-the-world, 'is the open space where beings reveal themselves in sundry ways, coming out of concealment into the "truth" (*aletheia*) and withdrawing again into obscurity' (Krell 1993, 20–21). Heidegger moves on to discuss the nature of *Dasein* in redefined conceptual framework of hermeneutics which to him is not just a philosophical possibility but it is what is philosophy is about. Heidegger's defines terms such as understanding, interpretation, and assertion. If

one follows Heidegger's conceptual movements, understanding is not something we consciously do, but something we are.

> 'Understanding is a mode of being, and as such it is characteristic of human being, of *Dasein*. The pre-reflective way in which *Dasein* inhabits the world is itself of a hermeneutic nature. Our understanding of the world presupposes a kind of pragmatic know-how that is revealed through the way in which we, without theoretical considerations, orient ourselves in the world. We open the door without objectifying or conceptually determining the nature of the door-handle or the doorframe. The world is familiar to us in a basic, intuitive way. Most originally, Heidegger argues, we do not understand the world by gathering a collection of neutral facts by which we may reach a set of universal propositions, laws, or judgments that, to a greater or lesser extent, corresponds to the world as it is. The world is tacitly intelligible to us' (Bjørn & Kristin 2014).

The 'tacit intelligibility' of the world, a large part of which comes to the experiential domain of the human being via distinctions (or confusions) between reality and appearance is also what Heidegger pushes further by returning to Kant in distinguishing between phenomena and noumena. Kant has argued that we do have some such synthetic *a priori* knowledge, but that it is strictly limited. Kant, in *Critique of Pure Reason*, does not use these terms in developing his own

positive position. Phenomena and Noumena, as those terms were used, refer to the 'the sensible' and 'the intelligible.' Kant has, in the *Aesthetic*, claimed that cognition requires intuition, which for us, is sensible. So he has said that knowledge is, at least for us, necessarily 'sensible.' Consequently, it would seem natural to one familiar with the "Phenomena/Noumena" distinction to express Kant's position as saying that knowledge is necessarily (but merely) phenomenal. One might even express it as the view that we know only phenomena. Again, Kant does not use this terminology is his own direct explanation of his views. Kant says that we know appearances (i.e., phenomena) and not things in themselves (noumena.) But he is here denying that he means this as a claim about which objects we perceive (phenomena rather than noumena), but insisting that it is a claim about how we know objects (as they appear to us through the senses rather than as they are in themselves considered apart from how they appear to us through the senses).

According to Rockmore (1996) Kant addresses phenomena and noumena which seems conflated and cannot be reconciled. He treats noumena as causes and phenomena as effects but moves on to establish a cognitive relation between the two without which a human being comes to a seemingly absurd conclusion of the problem where there can only be appearances without anything that appears (Kant 1781[1961], B xxvi–xxvii, 27).

Herein begins the work of theorizing the domain of representation when like Kant , according to Rockmore (1996) argues for the distinction between appearance and reality. Even if reality comes to cognition through appearances, we should not confuse phenomenon itself with what appears through the phenomenon. In distinguishing between phenomena and appearances, Heidegger says that phenomenon is entirely autonomous and is not scattered around unlike appearance which is acts like a signifier pointing elsewhere or to something otherwise.

> 'Heidegger introduces a four-fold distinction between different senses of "appearance". These include: (1) the announcing but not showing itself, (2) that which does the announcing, (3) the showing itself or the view of the phenomena that he [Heidegger] favors, and (4) finally the view that what does the announcing is never manifest. The latter which later becomes his official view, is captured in the slogan that being in general as present under the mode of absence. (Rockmore 1996, 367)

Through the work of Heidegger in phenomenology the focus from the science of phenomena is shifted to a methodological rigour of phenomenology. And phenomenology does the work of studying the structures of consciousness from the individual and first person point of view towards the intentionality of its experience of or about some object. Heidegger was engaged in arguing out the analytic structures of revelation of the hidden and concealed as the main work of

phenomenology. Heidegger says in the Introduction to *Being and Time*: 'The question of the meaning of Being must be formulated. If it is a—or even *the*—fundamental question, such questioning needs the suitable perspicuity' (Heidegger 1993, 45). Heidegger in the *Introduction* writes that when we ask a question we need to have a previous guidance about what we are in quest of. We might have clues towards the meaning of Being as we are aware of the fact that we are always in the process of understanding the Being. But when the question 'What *is* Being?' is asked we are at a loss to find the answer to the *is*. Therefore a translucent and average understanding of the Being is the best we have and Heidegger points out that it is a 'fact' (Heidegger 1993 [trans.], 45–46). In Section 2, 'The formal structure of the question of Being' of the Introduction, Heidegger formulates and argues the principle question in the understanding of the Being and its nature in and as representations. According to him the primary step lies in avoiding Plato's *mython tina deigeisthai* or 'telling a story'. This is best achieved by not attempting a trace back to the origin of the being in the origin of another being. Generally speaking, this move might be slippery as instead of easy and comfortable fixing of the meaning of being one is trying to arrive at, it will create a falsified statement and closure of the meaning of the being of the thing we are trying to know. This, and I will come back to it in later chapters, might be a problem with photographs and the work of representation it is performing. But for now and shortly, let me again turn back to the phenomenological review of Being.

Almost anticipating the post-structuralist turn well in the early decades of the twentieth century, Heidegger says:

> Being is found in thatness and whatness, reality, the being at the hand of things, [*Vorhandenheit*], subsistence, validity, existence [*Dasein*], and in the "there is" [*es gibt*] . In *which* being is the meaning of Being is to be found; from which being is the disclosure of the Being is to get its start? Is the starting point arbitrary, or does a certain being have priority in the elaboration of the question of Being? ((Heidegger 1993, 47)

1.4. The Work of Representation: The *Thingly* Character of Art

With this brief survey of the meaning of *Being* being laid out, I go back to the epigraph by Derrida (1982) mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. In '*Sending: On Representation*' a 1982 lecture Derrida reviews the scope of representation. He cites the much used arena of representatives as in government to language (and its translatability) and then to the Hegelian and Heideggerian schema of representation and being. Hanna Pitkin (1967) provides, perhaps, one of the most straightforward definitions—to represent is simply to 'make present again.' Derrida in his argument would not accept the structure of representation in such transparent and unproblematic manner:

'We do not "represent something" only as representatives, as delegates and office holders sent to an assembly which is to discuss representation; the problem of translatability that we shall not be able to avoid will also be a problem of representation'(Derrida 1982, 297).

He says that in the 'philosphic use of so-called natural language', the French word 'representation' does not carry the 'same semantic field' as its English, German or other translated variants therefore problematizing the very specific use of the word representation itself across borders and thresholds of usage. Derrida calls for a presupposition of the meaning of representation in its shared discursive fields and *franca lingua* and thus attempt a sending of 'representation' avoiding all possible misunderstanding of the content and destination of the message. He pushes the argument towards contextualization of the word represent and warns the reader of the general trend of 'bad philosophy' where the word will be pushed to its extreme. In doing so, the word will scale off all specific connotations, contexts and use value towards the destination of where the word will be abstract and independent of any 'contextualized function'. If it happens so then what will become of the inquiry into the meaning of Being, of which we all have a vague idea at the least. It is here that Derrida says that philosophical 'common usage always tries to stop the philosphic vertigo' and it was of the form of philosophy against philosophy. The move is, at the same time, of a 'prephilosophical' nature where 'as if one knew what "representation" meant

and as if one had only to adjust this knowledge to a present historical situation, to distribute the articles [*as in the seminar where Derrida was delivering the opening address*], the types of the problems of representation in different regions but belonging to the same space [*of the seminar*]. (Derrida 1982, 300–301) Derrida invokes Greek thought and tries to pose the question:

> 'What is representation in itself and in general? What makes all these representations called by the same name? What is the eidos of representation, the being-representation of representation?' (Derrida 1982, 302)

Even when he tries to put the question in Socrates' mouth, it is as such a futile attempt as the question(s) cannot be asked in the Greek thought as in no way there is available any 'obvious' translatability of the word representation in Greek. Only, unless the specificity of the word representation is learnt and its meaning made through history and interpretation. While signposting problem of language in as being a system of 'representatives or also of signifiers, of place holders (*lieu-tenants*) substituted for what they say, signify or represent…', Derrida argues against a quick closure of 'representation is [*as*] bad' without the rigour of placing the evaluation of the argument in terms of specificities of disciplines and structures. In tracing the Being of representation where he brings in the example of, in an over simplifying (*Derrida uses this expression*) way, the teaching apparatus where acts like seminars and publications attests to the representation of the being. The objective purpose of representation for the subject will be necessary in the process of 'institutionalizing of knowledge'.

Simultaneously, the being of what-is, according to Heidegger, will never be in an object (*Gegenstand*) which is available for human survey. The human subject would possess a representation of it. It is the tradition of Cartesian or post-Cartesian modernity where *what-is* is quantified and qualified by the presence of the object before the subject who tends to analyse it. The act of making present is an act of bringing into presence and also at the same time 'like all "rendering"' would be an act of repetition with a possibility of return' (Derrida 1982, 302–309). Apart from the 're' in re-presentation, there is, also, a 'pre' or 'being-before' in the "present". Derrida says that the rendering available of the human subject allows the work of representation to happen and such 'rendering available' is what constitutes the subject as subject.

> 'If *rendering present* is taken to mean the repetition which restitutes thanks to a substitute, we come back to the continuum or the semantic coherence between representation as an idea in mind pointing to the thing (for instance as the "objective reality" of the idea), as the picture in place of the thing itself, in the Cartesian sense or in the sense of the empiricists and on the other hand aesthetic representation (theatrical, poetic, literary, or visual) and finally political representation' (Derrida 1982, 309–310).

The problems of representation from its being to what-is-present as an object of representation before the subject is layered and has been surveyed here

only to remember, in spite of the further invoking complexities of analyses, while laying its heterotopic grounds, how Derrida ends his lecture 'Sending: On Representations'. Law, as the governing principle of organizing 'pre-supposes' representation, in thematising and becoming theme in the way. But in its way of doing this, Derrida laments that it cannot transgress the 'figure of all possible transgressions' making it all the more difficult to think of an idea which 'conceive at all beyond representation' (Derrida 1982, 326).

Ferdinand de Saussure's (1857–1913) classic and posthumously collected and published study on the linguistics and the nature of signs, *Course in General Linguistics* (translated and edited 1984) is a tour de force and which advantages the post-structuralist turn in critical theory and thinking has negotiated the work as a sourcebook for inspiration beginning with the instability of meaning *per se*. The relationship between the signifier and the signified in the realm of language is arbitrary but packed densely in a network of meanings and utterances in the formal structure of the representation of the language and is difficult to cut open and make meaning in an autonomous way. The often borrowed and influential formulation further complicates the questions pertaining to being and representation. In the Third Course Saussure, via the use of the terms signifier and signified argues the division between the mental/psychological impression of the sound and its representation in the human mind or the meaning it is pointing to or is representative of. While comparing language to a sheet of paper and fixing thought to the front and sound to its back Saussure turns the attention to

the inseparability of the two in the system of the language. Vicki Kirby (1997) argues that if such is the schema there is a problem with the apparent 'divided unity in *time*' of the sign. Even if the signifier and the signified appear as 'contemporary according to this comparison', 'they are nevertheless separated *in space* by the thickness of the paper itself. Thus thought and sound are figured as both amorphous and spatially delimited (Kirby 1997, 11). Kirby also points out to a problem, a slip, in the Course between the words "thing" and "idea" insofar the ambiguous identity of the signified swings between 'notions of "concept" and "reality"'. The signifier, which stands as the sign of something, as Kirby observes, 'is thought to incorporate sound-image and idea, and the referent or reality's substance, and is inadvertently smuggled in as the signified to which it attaches' (Kirby 1997, 12). Derrida in *Of Grammatology* holds that the nature of the written signifier is always of a representative and technical nature. The derivation that such a signifier has no customary meaning is according to Derrida, the 'origin of the notion of the "signifier"'. Contrary to what Saussure argues that the signifier and the signified are 'two faces of the one and same leaf', Derrida holds that the dissimilarity between the signifier and the signified is always disguised in the sign itself. He links the exteriority of the signifier with the exteriority of writing in general and argues that without the notion of exteriority the idea of the sign falls apart. To stop the entire world and language collapsing with it he considers not to do away with or dispose of the sign as term and notion which is placed within an epoch[9], in order to "move on to something

---

[9] By saying 'within this epoch', Derrida points to 'reading and writing, the production or interpretation of signs, the text in general as fabric of signs, allow themselves to be confined in

else" (Derrida 1976, 11–14)   The two-fold model of the Saussurean sign has also been critiqued by Kirby (1997), Ryan (1979) and Ogden and Richards (1956) for 'ignoring the fact of reality by excluding the referent' and for 'turning away from the world, an indulgent abrogation of ethical and social responsibility that revers language as "a sacred and autonomous power"' (Kirby 1997, 12). The grounds of representation—if there is a solid ground at all, seems opaque and beyond a fixity (as conventional represented reality) which it itself promises—is at this stage seems to point to the assertion of, as Kirby observes, 'there is no outside of text'. She further compensates of the problem of language and representation by imagining an "outside":

> This claim is most commonly taken to mean that we are caught in an endless slide of referral that leads from one signifier to another signifier, …in a vertiginous spiral of implication that never quite arrives at its destination. As a consequence, we can never retreat or advance to some natural, prediscursive, or extratextual space in order to test the truth or adequacy of our representations because, as we have seen, intelligibility itself is reckoned through such systems. However, one can insist that there is no getting outside representation while still holding to the view that there is indeed an "outside", but one to which the human condition prohibits access. This "outside" is assumed to be the reality that culture

---

secondariness. They are preceded by a truth or a meaning already constituted by and within the element of logos. Even when the thing, the "referent," is not immediately related to the logos of a creator God where it begun by being the spoken/thought sense, the signified has at any rate has an immediate relationship with the logos in general (finite or infinite), and a mediated one with the signifier, that is to say with the exteriority of writing. (Derrida: 1976, 14–15)

mediates, the substance to which our discourses give form and shape, the ultimate ground of Being (Kirby 1997, 61).

Kirby interprets another notion of approach to the "dictum" of there is "nothing outside of text". She argues that this 'worlding of the world' might come as 'writing in the general sense' which move towards the indivisibility of representation and substance and poses as if as the 'very tissue of substance' and 'ground of Being' writing defines and go beyond the predictable divisions of nature and culture. If it is translated into the matter of the body and in the Derridian sense:

> 'that the contemporary biologist speaks of writing and *pro-gram* in relation to the most elementary processes of information within the living cell. And, finally, whether it has essential limits or not, the entire field covered by the cybernetic *program* will be field of writing. If the theory of cybernetics is by itself to oust all metaphysical concepts… which until recently served to separate the machine from man, it must conserve the notion of writing, trace, gramme [written mark], or grapheme, until its own historico–metaphysical character is also exposed' (Derrida 1994, 9).

The move argues for the non-closure of the system of writing which is going on. As Kirby puts it:

> 'This would mean that the body is unstable—a shifting scene of inscription that both writes and is written—a scenario where the subject

takes itself as its own object, and where, for example, an image could be said to rewrite the image-maker in a movement of production that disrupts the temporal determination of what comes first. The common understanding of materiality as rock-solid "something", that is, as the absolute exteriority that qualifies or limits the efficacy of representational practices, is called into question through such an approach' (Kirby 1997, 63).

Moving backward for now and taking into account the surveys of 'writing in general', 'worlding of the world' and the instability of the corporeal markings in the process of Being, I will now briefly turn again to Heidegger on artwork—which for the time being I am taking as an historical precursor of the photographic visual representative mode that will form the representative archive of this dissertation—and Derrida's negotiations with a point in Heidegger's meaning making in Van Gogh's painting as discussed in his 1978 [1987] essay '*Restitutions of the Truth in Pointing ['Pointure']'*.

In his essay '"*The Origin of a Work of Art" in Poetry, Language, Thought'*, Heidegger raises the fundamental question about the nature of an work of

Figure 1. A Pair of Shoes , Vincent Van Gogh, 1886, Oil on Canvas, 37.5 X 45 cm, Van Gogh Museum

art and what are the marks and manners that distinguish an work of art from plebian displays of things and objects. In the epilogue to the essay, Heidegger clarifies on the nature of Art and the objects of his discussion:

'Aesthetic takes the work of art as an object, the object of aesthesis, of sensuous apprehension in the wide sense. Today, we call this apprehension experience. The way in which man experiences art is supposed to give information about its nature. Experience is the source that is standard not only for art appreciation and enjoyment, but also for artistic creation. Everything is an experience' (G5, 67/79).

In the first *Introduction* to his *Critique of Judgment*, Immanuel Kant, ushers in two different meanings of "aesthetic". The aesthetic is understood to belong to the object which is the phenomenon. This experience is akin to the representational mode where it appeals not to knowledge but to the feeling of pleasure and displeasure. The subject, in this case, understands the aesthetic. In another sense, the aesthetic experience and judgment involves a reflective moment, in the sense of 'looking back from the object to the kind of experience it elicits.' (Harries 2009, 6–7) Heidegger both takes from this and moves away in original thinking about the nature of the work of art. He begins the monograph with an assertion that only the 'study of the Being of the artwork will enable us to comprehend the nature of art.' (Raj Singh 1990, 215) His study of Van Gogh's painting of a pair of shoes towards getting near the Being of the work of art has

been much discussed and commented upon in contemporary philosophy. Heidegger's attempt was to study the Being of the pair of shoes in its pictorial and aesthetic representation. A thick description follows:

> 'From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. …In the shoes vibrate the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain… This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death. This equipment belongs to the "earth" and it is protected in the "world" of the peasant woman' (Heidegger 1971, 33).

Beyond the entity of the usefulness of the equipment—the pair of shoes—Heidegger points to the reliability of the shoes in the world where it forms the part of the peasant woman's world. This world, to Heidegger, is not only the peasants' world but also the earth and world of human beings and also the world in general. This 'worlding of the world' is an act of revealing—the truth, which was done by the Being of the shoe in question. This emergence takes the human subject to the experience of the concealment–unconcealment process of truth or *aletheia*. While he initially stated to *aletheia* as 'truth', of which that is pre-Socratic in origin, Heidegger eventually corrected this interpretation. He writes: 'To raise the question of *aletheia*, of disclosure as such,

is not the same as raising the question of truth. For this reason, it was inadequate and misleading to call *aletheia*, in the sense of opening, truth.' (Heidegger 1972, 70) In the exposition of the Being, even by the work of phenomenology, the problem of what-is –the-being of the Being remains. The question of knowledge, can be, for now, solved only in a provisional way of taking into consideration the apparent and representative dissolution of the differences between work of 'disclosure' and 'truth' but also being aware that the dissolution does not happen. In his thick description of the painting of the pair of shoes, two words, which have critical responsibilities, are kept within quotes—"world" and "earth"—as representative of the wider connotations of the concealment–unconcealment process. If the unconcealment of truth, as evident from the phenomenological discussion, is coupled with a concealment of truth, and which cannot be separated in its general being, then, Heidegger argues that the "world" must have a concealed aspect. This concealment of the "world" is located in the "earth". Discussing further the truth of an entity as evident in it, Heidegger comes up with the example of the Being of Greek temple as a form of non-representational art where there is almost nothing left beyond its structure and its visible enunciation of meaning. The unity of paths and relations that contribute to the establishment of the temple is what Heidegger would like to call the unity of the world of the people who crafted this work of art. Human realities such as birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline are defined by the unity of various directions and relations which constitute the world as such. The art work performs an ontological function for the people

responsible for the work of art in exposing the world of a (historical) people and simultaneously showing the nature of human being's (worlding) world. A general critique of Heidegger here has been that at this point he might have been moving away from the earlier object of investigation "the world" in *Being and Time* and was showing more interest in several worlds constituted and inhabited by specific people (Nwodo 1976). While Schrag (1985) argues that the one 'needs to think of the world in plural.' Raj Singh (1990) reads that the problem lies in the use of the world in common language where the word is used interchangeably as denoting a specific totality and as well as for the world in general. He cites a passage from the artwork essay where Heidegger's view of the world in *Being and Time* is revealed with more insights:

> 'The world is not a mere collection of the countable or the uncountable, familiar and unfamiliar things that are just there. But neither is it a merely imagined framework added by our representation to the sum of such given things. The world worlds, and is more fully in Being than the tangible and perceptible realm in which we believe ourselves to be at home. World is never an object that stands before us and can be seen. World the ever-nonobjective to which we are subject as long as the paths of birth and death, blessing and curse, keep us transported into Being. Wherever these decisions of history that relate to our very Being are made, are taken up and abandoned by us, go unrecognized and are rediscovered by new inquiry, there the world worlds' (Heidegger 1971, 44 cited in Raj Singh 1990, 219).

In the beginning of his essay, *The Origin of the Work of Art*[10], Heidegger says that beyond the immediate presence of the artist and the work of art produced there is a third thing, which is prior to both and which holds the artist and the work in their interrelationships, namely—art. While saying that art is the originator of the two, he asks whether art at all can be origin, and how and where does art occur. Holding forth that art is not the thing which corresponds to us, Heidegger says that art can exist on the basis of actuality of the work and the artist. He further argues that the question of the origin of the art cannot be answered from the definiteness of corporeal cognition of the work of art but can be done with the raising of the question about the essence of art. This can achieved, according to him, by going back to the actual work of art and inquiring about the how and why of it. As most works of art are things and have the 'thingly character', Heidegger possess yet another question about how would it be without the 'thingly character'? While saying that the artwork is something beyond just simply being a thing, the aim is to know the thing-being (thing= res= *ens*= a being) of thing from its widest connotations to just 'mere' things which are not works of art but which are simple things and nothing more , in 'pejorative sense'. The traditional knowledge of the things gives the subject answers to the question "What is a thing?" in such a familiar manner that 'we no longer think anything questionable behind them.' But as the bearer of the physiognomies of the thing, the thing concept is applicable not only to the mere things but also to

---

[10] This is the 1971 translation by Albert Hofstadter, in *Poetry, Language and Thought*, New York, Harper & Row, 1971, 17–87. This includes the 'epilogue' and 'addendum' of 1956. I am using the text, Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1924), Revised and expanded edition. Edited, with general introduction and introductions to each selection by David Farrell Krell, Harper San Francisco, New York, 1993.

any being whatsoever. Heidegger also refutes the generally and loosely formulated theories of the matter (*hyle*)–form (*morphe*) divide which is said to register the specifities of the work of art. The matter–form distinction can subsume possibly anything and everything extending 'far beyond the field of aesthetics'. Also leaving the 'thing be to just the thing it is' is definitely a much more complex problem wherein 'such an intention—to let a thing be as it is—represents the opposite of the indifference that simply turns its back upon the being itself in favor of an unexamined concept of Being'' The traditional thing–concepts about thinking about the thingly substructure does not provide the answer to the essence of things. Thinking of the Being of beings can be a way (and strategy for Heidegger) to 'come closer' to the understanding of 'what is workly in the work, equipmental in equipment, and thingly in the thing' and in so doing also come closer to the essence. In a way, also, we come closer to the survey of *aletheia,* the unconcealment of beings discussed earlier in this chapter but only be again problematised by the refutation of the post-Cartesian concepts of truth oscillating between certainty and correctness in representation (Heidegger 1971, 143—209).

Here, at this stage, and before I come back to *Restitutions*, I will attempt a basic survey into the nature of the ontic and ontological which forms a major contribution of Heidegger into the meaning of Being and which also critically punctures given for meanings of representations. Generally speaking there can be two levels of the analysis of *Dasein* and which are both. The first is the

material, specific, confined matter as facts open to reflection which is the ontic level which is also called by Heidegger as *existentiell*. The second is the ontological level which is a kind of deep structure (existentiale) where the ontical matter is instantialized and provides a phenomenological description working towards the analyses, in the Heideggerian way, of the general conditions of existence. This in Heidegger's thought *(in Being and Time)* is the provisional priority of *Dasein's* ontico-ontological distinctiveness.[11] The ontic and the ontological and the ontico-ontological levels, seemingly fresh from the distinctions derived at are immediately problematised. Das (2012) speaking about the hierarchical constitution of subjects in the ambit of the notion Power argues by citing Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak that how the 'catachrestic *naming* (as Power) of an ensemble of processes *immanent* to the being of the self' is implicated in the 'processes in the thinking of the ontic.' Spivak shows trough the close engagements that both Michel Foucault and Derrida had with Heidegger, where

> 'the notion of power is one attempt to think the ontico-ontological
>
> difference—how relations of force operate at pre-ontic level to constitute

---

[11] "By indicating Dasein's ontico-ontological priority in this provisional manner, we have grounded our demonstration that the question of Being is onticoontologically distinctive." (Heidegger, 1927, Being and Time.) 'Dasein is a simple German term that takes on monumental proportions in Hegel and later in Heidegger. It means literally to be(*sein*) there (*da*). …The concept of Dasein relies on the fact that its existence is an issue for it. That is, Dasein is able to take a stand its own existence, to have some perspective on it, to see itself as in some specific time and place, at a "there" where it need not necessarily be, where it someday will not be (hence the focus on death in Heidegger's early "existentialism". The senses of contingent existence and spatio-temporal location might not be there in other beings (like primates) other than Dasein's. As Derrida points out in Chapter 1 of Choreographies, about Dasein is that it was used by Heidegger exactly to avoid the realm of hierarchical oppositions such as mind/body, human/non-human which according to him were definitive of the metaphysical approach. (For more see Holland 1997, 11–12)

the power laden-laden ontic to be understood in the disciplinary matrix of ontology.' (Das 2012, 11)

With this basic note on the ontic and the ontological, which will come back specific to the world of images I am to survey in following chapters, I will now return to Derrida's negotiations with Heidegger's arguments about equipment (the pair of shoes in case of the Van Gogh painting) and the question of being that it deals with the revelations—*unconcealment*.

Meyer Schapiro (1968) concludes that the shoes[12], in Van Gogh's painting and which are cited by Heidegger, are of the well-travelled artist who is

---

[12] "But why a pair of peasant shoes? Why not something that speaks more of the world in which we today live? An airplane or a radio, today a computer, might serve the discussion better! To be sure, the example chosen by Heidegger was timely: the critique of the metropolis and its rootless existence, the celebration of peasant life, were very much in the air and helped shape the art and the intellectual climate of the thirties. Heidegger, too, as we have seen, liked to think of himself as someone out of place in metropolitan Berlin, at home with peasants, in the province. Already in 1923 he wrote his student Karl Lowith: "For years a saying of van Gogh's has obsessed me: 'I feel with all my power that the history of man is like that of wheat: if one is not planted in the earth to flourish, come what may, one will be ground up for bread. Woe to him who is not pulverized.'" (Harries 2009, 83–84)

Meyer Schapiro in his 1968 essay *The Still Life as an Personal Object* is of the opinion that Heidegger's use of Van Gogh's is erroneous in the process of unconcealment: 'Professor Heidegger is aware that van Gogh painted such shoes several times, but he does not identify the picture he has in mind, as if the different versions are interchangeable, all disclosing the same truth. A reader who wishes to compare his account with the original picture or its photograph will have some difficulty in deciding which one to select. Eight paintings of shoes by van Gogh are recorded by de la Faille in his catalogue of all the canvasses by the artist that had been exhibited at the time Heidegger wrote his essay. Of these, only three show the "dark openings of the worn insides" which speak so distinctly to the philosopher. They are more likely pictures of the artist's own shoes, not the shoes of a peasant. They might be shoes he had worn in Holland but the pictures were painted during van Gogh's stay in Paris in 1886-87; one of them bears the date: "87".' (Schapiro 1968, 136)

by now 'a man of the town and the city' and its rendering as the shoes of the peasant is hampering the work of truth for Heidegger. The critique by Schapiro of Heidegger is well known since and I will see here how Derrida negotiates the critique. Derrida (1978) says that Schapiro 'simplifies matters by saying that Heidegger interprets a painting to illustrate the nature of art as unveiling the truth' (Derrida 1978, 434). Heidegger, as Derrida argues, makes it the project of looking at the shoes and making its meaning a denser network than what Schapiro claims based on just general historical facts:

> 'The product [*Zeug*], for example the shoe product, [*schuhzeug*] rests, ready [*fertig*, finished] in itself as the thing pure and simple. … On the other hand the product also shows an affinity [*Verwandtschaft*] *with the work of art, inasmuch as it is produced*…by the hand of the man. In spite of this, the work of art in its turn, by its self-sufficient presence, … resembles the thing pure and simple, referring only to itself …and constrained to nothing…[…] Thus the product is half a thing, determined by thingliness, and yet more than that, at the same time it is half work of art, and yet less than that'(Derrida 1978, 436–37).

The complexities of representation—which is always in general terms tied up with the simple cognitive/historical moment of interpretation/description/fact finding such as that done by Schapiro and practices history as such— is laid bare by Heidegger, as Derrida (1978) points

53

out, in doing the work of pricking and pointing [*par piqure et pointure*] of both the leather [of the shoes] and the canvas, thus moving the trajectory of reference and meaning making divided and multiplied. Insofar, the shoes, belonging to the genus clothing and now [in the painting] abandoned, it is 'invested, inhabited, informed, —haunted' and therefore can have the possibility of a restitutive movement to be reattached to the owner, the body, the embodiment from which it now lies detached and in a state of unused. Even if it is painted i.e. represented—the pair of shoes is a known product to everyone, even if the specific pair of shoes represented is different from other pairs and their representations. The being-product, its usefulness and belonging to the world and the earth are evident in the Heideggerian sense. These points, crucial to the understanding of the problem, as Derrida says in the essay, were never of interest to Schapiro. The truth expounded by Heidegger is that the relationship was not between a particular pair of shoes to an individual owner and it could have easily moved from village to the town. The point is not about an exact imitation *(which will problematise the question of exactitude in photography in the following chapter[13])* of the shoe and about copying the 'real', or as the pair of shoes belonging to a 'real' subject. Schapiro's interpretation is locked within the aesthetics of representation and empirical deductions therefore missing the work of Being altogether. Derrida is also critical of Heidegger as bringing up questions of truth even before laying down questions of 'representation' and of his arguing about the shoes in the light of 'preventative truth' and he warns of dealing with preinvestment be it in the forms of 'fantasmatic', 'ideological' etc. The definitive

---

[13] Emphasis mine.

uncertainty of the picture of the pair of shoes and the 'whether and within what limits Heidegger wanted to speak of the 'famous picture' remains (Derrida 1978, 432–449).

The above survey, chiefly a reading into the modern (Cartesian and post-Cartesian) nature of representation through the enunciations of Being, aspects of phenomenology, representations and truth problematises the field of representation. The post-structuralist turn in the later decades of the twentieth century—the point where I end this survey of the grounds of representation—negotiated and advanced upon the work of the phenomenology, in making the nature of the text open ended and heterogenous permeated with history (not the linear historical traditions) and desire and pointing toward the general instability of the human sciences.

The area of family photography and photographs of women that I will be reading into in the scope of this dissertation, will be informed by this survey of representation where the horizon of the representation often will be a problematic rather than a given static meaning. The processes of truth making with regard to a photograph moves toward a complex network of meaning beyond general historical facts. The 'facts' of history can be found in images of women unmistakably. Overlaps with cultural nationalist trends and patriarchal social norms of Bengali middle-class families in Bengal fashion the macro scope of the photographic representation of women in Bengal. Given that and which

has been dealt with in detail in this dissertation, the argument moves on toward finding photographic representations which might not form the usual horizon of expectation in the description of the Bengali middle-class woman. The problematic capacities of such photographic representation and its possibilities can be thought of through this review of the nature of the sign and representation. At the same time, such a review will keep afloat the rigor of the historical ideological dimensions that have produced definite economies of photographic representation of the Bengali middle-class women without attempting closures of thinking the woman inside representations. Furthering this survey of signposting the necessary theoretical contributions about the thorough instability and contingent nature of the structures of representation, I will move on from here. In the following Chapter, and before I go into the historical specificity of the archive which I am going to discuss in the scope of this thesis, I will critically survey the context and concept of the image and visuality in/as representation.

Chapter II

Interactions around the Photographic Image

2.1. The Age of Technical Reproducibility of the Work of Art, Enunciations of Meaning

The camera, as in the form we have received it in contemporary times, especially in the age of emulsion based photography, has a long history of development. The camera sought to develop 'itself' as part of the 'human' desire for correct and exact likeness. The strive toward perfecting the machine which will capture moments in exact and will probably have a natural tactile quality was a thing achieved in nineteenth century. Walter Benjamin's 1936 essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' discusses the change in the domain of perception and reception as one meets the camera and the photograph. His ideological critique of the work of art and its mediation through mechanical reproduction as compared to the traditions and ritualistic forms of art and ownership will form my beginning critique of the form of the photograph and its content. Benjamin's style of writing has been debated as not always carrying the explanative element or linear coherence. In fact Benjamin was critiqued by his close friend and contemporary thinker Siegfried Kracaeur in a 1928 essay as representing a kind of thinking which has fallen into oblivion in Benjamin's own contemporary time.[14] But since the 1970s Benjamin's thought and his works

---

[14] Siegfried Kracaeur, 'On the Writings of Walter Benjamin', *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans and ed. Thomas Y. Levin, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995, p. 264 cited

gained much critical attention form the English speaking world through translations. The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction[15] (1936) is one of his works that has been received and used by various contemporary disciplinary and interdisciplinary spaces such as art history, film studies and women's studies. Attempting a prognostic critique and evaluation of Marxism at the turn of the century from the nineteenth to the twentieth, Benjamin (1992), finds photography and the camera to be one of the starting points for thinking of the 'revolutionary demands in the politics of art'.

Beginning from the premise that the work of art in principle has always been reproducible, Benjamin arrives at the notion of the radical newness of the mechanical reproduction of the work of art. He can be called to be one of the foremost philosopher and cultural theorist who took the 'new' world of photographic visuals and its aftermath, the cinema, as a vantage point to grapple with the formulations of relationships, political and social, between the reproducible and non-reproducible works of art and its consumers, owners and receivers. To Benjamin, principally, any work of art is potentially reproducible. But however perfect the reproduction is, it will always carry with it the lack of the spatio-temporal presence. This however changes with the coming of the technique of photographic reproduction. The 'aura' as in Benjamin's

---

in Noah Isenberg and Walter Benjamin, The Work of Walter Benjamin in the Age of Information, New German Critique, No. 83, Special Issue on Walter Benjamin, (Spring - Summer, 2001), pp. 119-150.

[15] 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit'.

formulation, and encountered in the 'original' work of art before the age of perfect photographic reproduction, was found in the 'unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it might be'(Benjamin 1992, 217). This 'unique distance' might be achieved in more than one ways of finding the artwork's authenticity in ritualistic processes, ownership and class (as in the case of Western painting). Photography, in its contemporary nineteenth and twentieth century perfections, does away with concepts of 'aura' or 'cult value' of essentially 'non-reproducible' art works. According to Benjamin although the cult value in the work of art is replaced by the exhibition value in case of the photograph, the cult value tries to cling to the very early photographic genres of the 'human countenance' as the 'cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture' (Benjamin 1992, 219). Benjamin's formulations on the doing away of the cult value and aura in case of the mechanically reproducible photograph has also been critiqued as claiming to be *liquidationist*—a platform on which much of the reading of the essay have happened in recent decades. (Zusi, 2013, 370) According to Zusi (2013), Benjamin's reclaims the term aura from a long theological tradition and applies it to the field of aesthetics. [16] Benjamin uses the concept of 'aura' in his essay only

---

[16] Zusi (2013) furthers his argument by locating Benjamin's involvement with movements in the inter-war years in Europe: "Benjamin's theory of the decline of auratic art thus took fundamental inspiration from the waves of revolt against aesthetic autonomy produced by the historical avant-garde movements before, during, and immediately following the First World War. While the importance of these precedents is conspicuous, commentators rarely seem concerned by the time-lag between the precedent and Benjamin's essay itself. Yet given that Benjamin's account of the decline of aura as a result of technological reproducibility has been traced back to sources from the early 1920s or mid-1910s (if not earlier), it is clear that the originality of Benjamin's claims in 1935 cannot lie in the liquidationist moments of the essay, as is so often maintained. Attempts to deepen our understanding of Benjamin's interest during the mid-1920s in the European avant-garde, and its effect on the shape of his work, offer some clarification here, since they reveal that

to do away with it. He reads into the meaning of aura from the point of view of a philosopher who is seeing chances of a radical changeover from the earlier forms of art, the value of which rested on ownership, singularity, distance, magic and aura as opposed to the plurality of the mechanically reproducible art forms of lithograph and photograph. To quote 'It is rather the inter-war avant-garde movements such as Dada, Constructivism, and Surrealism, with their exploration and celebration of the non-auratic tendencies of the modern work of art, that appear more plausible an influence on Benjamin' (Zusi 2013, 372). But there have been many critiques of the over-simplified critical reception of Benjamin's notion of aura as he uses it in his 'Work of Art' essay. Costello (2006) argues that trying to read and make meaning of the concept of aura in Benjamin just by following his popular 'Work of Art' essay will lead to erroneous inferences as to its meaning and use. He cites Douglas Crimp (1980) to unfold the argument:

> 'the aura is not an ontological category as employed by Benjamin but rather a historical one. It is not something a handmade work has that a mechanically made work does not have. In Benjamin's view, certain photographs have an aura, whereas even a painting by Rembrandt loses its aura in the age of mechanical reproduction. The withering away of the aura, the dissociation of the work from the fabric of tradition, is an *inevitable* outcome of mechanical reproduction' (Crimp 1980).

Benjamin was himself active (albeit peripherally) in some of the movements that inspired his later essay. (Zusi, 2013: 373)

Crimp (1980) gives the example of the painting *Mona Lisa* whose aura has been depleted considerably by reproducing it a thousands of times. According to him however much a spectator concentrates on the singular painting, she will never be able to find the original uniqueness of the *Mona Lisa*. Crimp argues for a historicity of aura that is subject to withering with time. Benjamin in Little History of Photography sets forth the ground for a more nuanced understanding of the aura where he argues for the aura of the photograph itself. According to him, before the 1850s—before the commercialization and popularization of the photographic technique—photographs, particularly portraits of human beings had an aura about themselves. It grew not out of the anxieties of reproducibility but the very early and close association between the subject in front of the camera and the photographer. Benjamin cites the David Octavious Hill's[17] photograph of the title *Newhaven Fishwife*. [18]

Figure 2. Newhaven Fishwife, Photo by David Octavious Hill, Medium Calotype print, size 19.40 x 14.80 cm, 1843-1846.

---

[17] David Octavius Hill (20 May 1802 – 17 May 1870) was a Scottish painter and arts activist. He formed Hill & Adamson studio with the engineer and photographer Robert Adamson between 1843 and 1847 to pioneer many aspects of photography in Scotland. URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Octavius_Hill accessed on 14.8.2015 at 8:57 pm.

[18] The National Galleries Scotland in its website introduces this photograph as "The fishwives of Newhaven were famous for both their beauty and confidence. They carried the fish their men had caught in baskets on their backs up to Edinburgh to sell it. Whenever storms at sea made the fishing especially dangerous and the price of fish rose, they were heard saying "It's no fish ye're buying, it's men's lives". The phrase became internationally known after Sir Walter Scott used it

Although the exact provenance might not be clear the photograph was part of a series of photographs of Newhaven Fishwives and fishergirls that were produced by the studio owned by Hill and Robert Adamson (1821-1848), his partner. Benjamin looks into the aura of this particular photograph:

'With Photography, however, we encounter something new and strange: in Hills Newhaven fishwife, her eyes cast down in such indolent, seductive modesty, there remains something that goes beyond testimony to the photographer's art, something that cannot be silenced, that fills you with an unruly desire to know what her name was, the woman who was alive there, and who even now is still real and will never consent to be wholly absorbed in "art"' (Benjamin 2008, 277).

Long exposures which actually transformed the subjects before the camera into images and the mostly unmediated relationship between the sitter and the photographer were two elements of the pre-popularization of photography that appealed to Benjamin's reception of aura in it. It also might be that he was looking for the micro-elemental details of the human form, gaits and postures of which one is generally oblivious or just remembers broadly. With the coming of photography, the modern subject also learns of the optical

---

in his novel, 'The Antiquary'. URL: https://www.nationalgalleries.org/collection/artists-a-z/a/artist/robert-adamson/object/mrs-elizabeth-johnstone-hall-newhaven-fishwife-pgp-ha-301 accessed on 14.8.2015 at 9.15 pm.

unconscious through the medium of photography[19] (Benjamin, 2008: 279).

Given this backdrop of Benjamin's epochal engagement with the modern technological medium, Benjamin could not but have knowledge of the colonies and its developments through various aspects of governmentality such as the camera, throughout the nineteenth century. Benjamin develops his argument on a conceptual foundation. In the beginning, at least, of the "Work of Art" essay, Benjamin doesn't allude to specific regional histories of the development of the photographic art but engages from the point of an ideological critique—reason why Benjamin's work have triggered multiple responses from disciplinary backgrounds of art history, film studies, cultural studies or gender studies in the recent decades especially after the late 1960s when his works were first being translated into English. Benjamin's relation with the aesthetic and the politics was explicit in the German social atmosphere of the 1930s. (Melberg, 2013: 93) At the same time his complex enunciation of the aura reaches to the core of modern thought and artistic activity as being part of the capability of the negative. This negative, as can be thought through literary works, especially in the case of lyric poetry, gives birth to another kind of reality by the negation of the real reality. The negative auratic returns to form a horizon of experience in the field of aesthetics. In his treatise 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire' Benjamin

---

[19] To quote further from Little History of Photography: " …photography reveals in the material physiognomic aspects, image worlds, which dwell in the smallest things—meaningful yet covert enough to find a hiding place in waking dreams, but which, enlarged and available for formulation, make the difference between technology and magic visible as a thoroughly historical variable." (Benjamin 2008, 279). Benjamin was in a way acting as a precursor to Roland Barthe's formulation of the 'punctum' in the photograph wherein lies one of the most dense path of entering into the meaning making of the photographic image.

further complicates the realm of experience in which he locates the presence of the aura[20] while discussing the habitus of the information as found in the newspaper and the scope of the reader's imagination. Benjamin separates information from experience as the former—in case of the newspaper—doesn't relate to the "tradition" of the reader. In the process of Benjamin talks about the 'atrophy of experience' and sets the contrast between all 'such forms' and the story:

> "…the story, which is one of the oldest forms of communication. A story doesn't aim to convey an event per se, which is the purpose of information; rather, it embeds the event in the life of the storyteller in order to pass it on experience to those listening. It thus bears the trace of the storyteller, much the way an earthen vessel bears the trace of the potter's hand" (Benjamin 2006, 174).

The negative auratic in the work of art haunts the experience of the reader or the spectator toward a complex training of her sensorium subject to the technologies. It has been a practice among artists and photographers to name their works of art as *untitled*. It might be move to describe or illustrate a position when one is trying to describe an image, which is non-representational. If some words are put to the description of such an image it might either limit the possibilities of reception and interpretation or misguide the process of reception (Price 1994, 71). The aura of the work of art/photograph in such a case is also

---

[20] Although Benjamin doesn't mention aura at this stage of the essay.

informed by the language and alphabets and pours out of the domain of the visual. What happens if there are no linguistic coordinates to describe the photograph, let alone a title? In the span of my fieldwork and putting together the archive of photographs for this dissertation, I have come across thousands of photographs that lie in the family albums or collections but have, over the time, lost its own linguistic memory—no date, no place, no names of photographers or identification of the subject of the photograph is possible. In order to attempt a reading and re-visiting of such photographs the Benjaminian survey of aura is necessary that complicates any easy reception of the photograph, especially of those photographs which were originally meant for private circulation or photographs that have a private history but are now part of researches, reproductions, exhibitions, catalogues, digitalization, and dissemination. Here an implicit move happens in generally connecting the photograph in the family albums or collections with a verbal or written linguistic cue as general work and purpose of history. The process of deciphering the image, if dependent on the word, caption or sentences, we immediately arrives at the problem of meaning making. The arbitrary relation between the spoken/written word and the thing it refers to have been debated and well received in critical thinking especially that of post-structuralists in the latter half of the twentieth century.

The arbitrary nature of the sign was argued by Ferdinand de Saussure (26 November 1857 – 22 February 1913) in his posthumously published treatise 'Course in General Linguistics' (1916) which was a compilation of class notes by his students Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye from lectures delivered in

Geneva. One of the central arguments of this seminal work is that language is central to human beings and speakers do not carry with them the history of the language but merely uses it to communicate with each other. Placing diachrony against synchrony, de Saussure discusses the relationship between the systems of language (langue) juxtaposing it with authorities of the spoken language (parole) in the way exposing the differences between the two. Saussure's formulation, although in the context of language, provides the synchronic unfreezing of the fixed structure of meaning. Saussure saw the centrality of a 'linguistically articulated existence' of the human subject where the separation between the sound and thought are inseparable:

> Linguistics, then, operates along this margin, where sound and thought meet. *The contact between them gives rise to a form, not a substance.*
>
> (*Cours de linguistique generale* 155–7)

Saussure's view of the realm of the linguistic activity, especially that of the structure of the *langue*, is general to the extent that it is a part of the mental operations of the individual who is exercising it and it is also part of the structure of the communicational processes by which a community tasks as a cultural being.

> "So *langue* is ultimately supra-individual in the sense that it is vested in society and depends for its existence on external social relations; yet it presupposes in each individual the mastery of an internally represented system of linguistic signs. More precisely, each individual member of the

linguistic community must be in possession of a system which approximates to that of the community as a whole: for *langue,* Saussure insists, 'is never complete in any single individual, but exists perfectly only in the collectivity' (*Cours* 30 cited in Harris 1997, 211).

And in taking the synchronic perspective of the analysis of language Saussure argued against the evolutionary or diachronic analyses, as there were no possibilities of diachronic arguments without the synchronic standpoint. Saussure in general did question the entire basis of linguistic philosophy and analysis undertaken in the nineteenth century that more or less followed the Darwinian evolutionary and 'fittest of the thing' model *per se*. And the identity of the linguistic sign, by now pronounced by Saussure as inhabiting a space of arbitrariness between the signified and the signifier, is determined by the sum total of the syntagmatic and associative relations it shares with other linguistic signs in the same structure of the *langue*. Saussure's move in opening up the meaning making process synchronically makes the issues of identity, representation, and truth (as in the case of the linguistic sign) looks into its own otherness in order that it might arrive at its identity, which is again destined to change. In his own words:

"(1) something *dissimilar* which can be *exchanged* for the item whose value is under consideration, and

(2) *similar* things which can be *compared* with the item whose value is

under consideration.

These two features are necessary for the existence of any value. To determine the value of a five-franc coin, for instance, what must be known is: (1) that the coin can be exchanged for a certain quantity of something different, e.g. bread, and (2) that its value can be compared with another value in the same system, e.g. that of a one-franc coin, or of a coin belonging to another system (e.g. a dollar). Similarly, a word can be substituted for something dissimilar: an idea. At the same time it can be compared to something of like nature: another word. Its value is therefore not determined merely by that concept or meaning for which it is a token. It must also be assessed against comparable values, by contrast with other words. The content of a word is determined in the final analysis not by what it contains but by what exists outside it. As an element in a system, the word has not only a meaning but also—above all –a value. And that is something quite different. (*Cours* 159–60)

The exchange potential of the value of the word is another radical move that work towards an understanding of meaning not only variable over social changes but also at the same time keeping intact its own politico-historical survey. Saussure brings into question the Western surrogationalist attitudes towards language as it takes words as units that are proxies for something of a general non-linguistic nature. Thereby arriving at the meaning, relationships and

kinds of unchallenged identity. In the process it leaves aside taking into account the dense structure of the langue, the outsides and otherness that creates its boundaries of meaning.

> "For Saussure, therefore, there is no contradiction between systematicity and arbitrariness unless we overlook the basic fact that all values are established contrastively; that is, in virtue of differences between co-existing elements. This was what led him to formulate the view that is perhaps best summed up in the following quotation: 'A linguistic system is a series of phonetic differences matched with a series of conceptual difference' (*Cours* 166 cited in Harris et al 1997, 220).

Such an understanding and reception of the experience mediated by modernity complicates the relationship between the reader/onlooker and the photograph in front of her. If the experience of aura in case of the photograph (early photographs from the 1850s in case of Benjamin) lies in the matter of light reacting in more ways on the photosensitive plate than can be envisaged by the photographer and creating a complex register of reality on the photographic print, it can be, for the moment, accepted that the aura remains. Likewise but contextually removed, the realm of the linguistic philosophy has been central to the criticality of understanding human purpose and her social in the twentieth century. Saussure while attempting a structure for his system of languages at the same time is critical about it to the extent that he argues about the difference between the absolute arbitrariness and relative arbitrariness of the sign. In *Cours,* he illustrates his points via *vingt* (French word for twenty) which can be read as

absolutely arbitrary but if one takes *dis-neuf* (French word for nineteen), one arrives at two different French word—*dis* (ten) and *neuf* (nine). Here, the meaning is arrived at the relative arbitrariness of the word *dis-neuf* where there are already two known words *dis* and *neuf*—a combination of which is giving birth to athird word. The move might be argued as related to Benjamin's formulation on the nuanced understanding of aura that can be found in the moments of a photograph's reception.

Benjamin while doing away with the aura in case of technical reproducibility in his "Work of Art" treatise, leaves traces of the aura in art forms in ways differing from ownership or singularity. It might have been a conscious move for Benjamin to choose the word 'aura' as the history of reception and evolution of the specifics of the social have remained entwined with it. It doesn't stop at the objective loss of ownership, class or singularity and becomes completely non-auratic but generates a new kind of aura.

Theodor Adorno's reception and discussion of this aura via Benjamin takes the reader to explicit understanding of the phenomena. To Adorno, following from romantic lyrical poetry and modernism, the dynamic character of the auratic art forms provides the chance for a critical reception. The criticality of the auratic romantic art is a necessary part of Marxian dialectic and not opposed to it. He further argues that the simplistic denunciation by the anti-aesthetic movements of the aura contribute to the production and loss of critical responses. Adorno re-reads the premises of the reception:

"auratic art for Adorno stands not so much for bourgeois subjectivity and false consciousness as for the new critical possibilities made available by a kind of art and aesthetic experience that, precisely in its relentless dedication to the aesthetic, para-doxically winds up being *anti-aestheticist.*" (Kaufman 2006, 123-24)

Adorno distinguishes between aesthetics and aestheticization on grounds that:

"Adorno contends that the aesthetic allows for the experimental development of a protocritical consciousness whose aesthetic play or felt spontaneity mimes social labour insofar as artistic making and aesthetic experience tend processively to discover aspects of the social that have been obscured by *status quo* conceptualizations of the latter; aestheticization, meanwhile, is for Adorno the proper name of an unreflective acquiescence to reification. The claim is that, despite the ways in which auratic art courts and sometimes falls into aestheticization, auratically invested artworks nonetheless make possible the exercise of those faculties whose development contributes invaluably to sociopolitical critique and praxis. The *intentional* abandonment of aura, Adorno believes, is what yields true (truly baleful) aestheticization (in the form of 'culture-industry' reifications designed to inculcate conformism rather than critical agency). The *intentional* abandonment of aura actually serves to efface and ratify, rather than to recognize, contest, or refunction, the phenomenon of reification (Kaufman 2006, 124).

For both Benjamin and Adorno, the negative effort in re-inventing the aura in the modern which have contributed to the doing away of the aura leads to complex reception and scopes reading the art work in its otherness. The otherness of which is mediated and reflected upon in large ways through social realities and reflects the realities of labour producing the artwork. Adorno discusses *Ershiitterung* or *shaking* of the subject where by the charged distance created by the aura, it resists the 'petrification of the subject' in 'his or her own subjectivity', in a way establishing a possibility that the subject 'I' can look beyond its 'limitedness and finitude' toward a critical 'experience' of thinking its own otherness (Kaufman 2006, 124). Citing Adorno's conceptualization of the aura and its function serves more than one purpose for my argument. Firstly, it stabilizes and sums up, without giving up the nuances of Benjamin, in terms of the social the work of the aura in artwork. The conceptualization of the aura as a key category of difference, reading and cultural politics has been left in a multifarious interlock if I take Benjamin's 'Work of Art', 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire' and 'Little History of Photography' taken together to the extent that each of the treatises thinks about aura and its loss and return through the worlds of technological reproducibility. Secondly, it widens the scope of the thesis intending to read photographic representations of Bengali middle class women from the 1880s to the 1970s in finding multiple ways to look into the production, exhibition, and reception of the photograph. While acknowledging the proliferation of stereotypes universally and in specific histories of representation

of women, the puncture of the aura opens up spaces for arguments for, in specific contexts of production of meaning, thinking of otherness. This will be a move through which I will be able to see ruptures in the continuum of family photographs and albums, within the boundaries of photographic form placing them in contexts of history, social and the criticality of the other in forming ideas about women. Thirdly, Benjamin in his "work of Art' essay discusses that unlike other art forms photography has the power to magnify via the close-up. This move of the reproducible technique and the camera radically changes the scope of vision for the modern subject, in so far that

> 'the moment of the close-up bursts open the prison-world of the everyday metropolis, the milieu of the proletariat - the bars and city streets, offices and furnished rooms, railroad stations and factories that 'seemed to close relentlessly around us ... so that now we can set off calmly on journeys of adventure among its far-flung debris'' (Mertins 2006, 157).

The camera and the work of the light often go beyond the voluntary control of the photographer to produce corners and crevasses in the photograph that might attest to its particular aura, as I have already shown in the case of Benjamin's critique of David Octavious Hill's photograph of the Newhaven Fishwife. In such a move Benjamin, recognizes the prospects of synchronic reading along with its diachronic possibilities. Potentially, it opens up spaces for the individuality of the image to account for a history of itself. Benjamin refers to Hungarian photographer and painter Laszlo Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946) in saying that the task of determining the limits of photography is not possible.

73

"Whether we accelerate the growth of a plant through time-lapse photography or show its form in forty-fold enlargement, in either case a geyser of new image worlds hisses up at points in our existence where we would have least thought them possible" (Benjamin 2008, 272).

With this survey of the nature of the photographic image in the modern let me now briefly trace the history of the technical evolution of the photography as a large part of the time span of ninety years from 1880s to the 1970s that I will be representing, albeit in a non-linear manner, is also innately linked with the dynamics of the camera. The thesis, beyond this point, will not have got the scope to portray the changes in the technologies in the camera from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. But, I will, mention any radical changes in the camera as a technology that informs the kinds of spaces and places it has travelled, captured and produced images in Bengali Hindu and Brahmo societies.

2.2. The Camera and the Evolution of Photograph

The search for the camera obscura[21] has been with us for quite a long time beginning from Aristotle in 350 BCE. The German astrologer Johannes

---

[21] "The camera obscura (Latin; "camera" is a "vaulted chamber/room" + "obscura" means "dark"= "darkened chamber/room") is an optical device that projects an image of its surroundings on a screen. It is used in drawing and for entertainment, and was one of the inventions that led to photography. The device consists of a box or room with a hole in one side. Light from an external scene passes through the hole and strikes a surface inside where it is reproduced, upside-down, but with color and perspective preserved. The image can be projected onto paper, and can then be traced to produce a highly accurate representation." URL: http://a-l-ancien-regime.tumblr.com/post/12903988819/camera-obscura-the-camera-obscura-latin accessed on 16 August 2015.

Kepler was among the first to use the term camera obscura in 1604. In the late eighteenth century Leonardo da Vinci was interested in the camera obscura, and proof of his experiments appears in several of his notebooks published in 1797, almost three hundred years after his death. He spent a considerable amount of time trying to understand human eyesight, and regarded the camera obscura as an 'artificial eye'. Frenchmen and brothers Joseph Nicephore Niepce (1765-1833) and Claude Niepce (1763-1828) in 1798 for the first time engaged in trying to fix the photo image produced by the camera obscura.
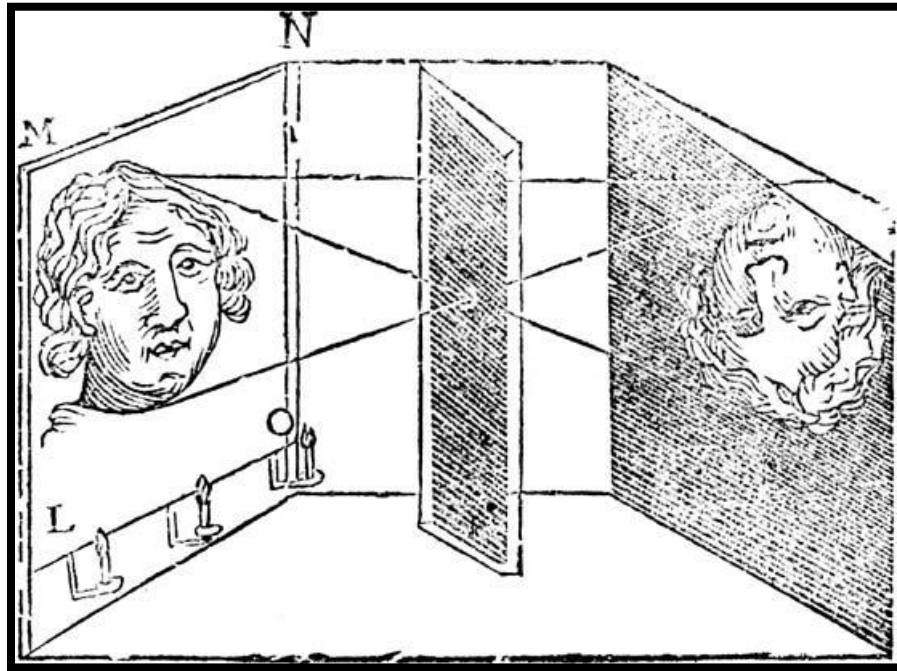
Figure 3. Illustrations of the Principles of Camera Obscura, 1671. [22]

---

[22] *camera obscura*, Photograph, from *Britannica Online for Kids*, accessed August 16, 2015, http://kids.britannica.com/elementary/art-123074.

.

Figure 4. Flyer Advertising improved Camera Obscura for Artists. 1819/1820. London.

The beginning of the nineteenth century witnessed multiple attempts to fix the image on the light sensitive silver nitrate solution. In 1802, Thomas Wedgewood published about his efforts to do the same in the Journal of the Royal Institution. In 1826, the first effective photograph was taken by Nicephore Niepce on a pewter plate, using his professionally- made camera supplied by the Parisian optician Charles Chevalier (Gernsheim, 1986). In 1829 he entered into a partnership with L. Daguerre for perfecting the process of heliography and by 1837 Daguerre has produced his much popular process the 'daguerreotype'. 1839 can be marked, if necessary, as the official birthday of photography when Deputy

Francois Arago of the French Government announced details of the first practical method of photography at a joint meeting of the Academies des Sciences and Beaux Arts at the Institut de France. At the same year, the first photographic camera went on sale to the public through a London based optician, Francis West, for photogenic drawing. By 1841, British photography pioneer, William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877) "invented the salted paper and calotype processes, precursors to photographic processes of the later 19th and 20th centuries. His work in the 1840s on photomechanical reproduction led to the creation of the photoglyphic engraving process, the precursor to photogravure."[23] By the 1880s many more developments in the perfection, printing and the physical dimensions of the camera helped the process to reach people and slowly make it affordable.

The coming into foray of the Eastman Company in Rochester, USA, was the first of the great photographic manufacturing companies to cater to the needs and stimulate demand through advertising such as 'A collection of these pictures may be made to furnish a pictorial history of life as it is lived by the owner, that will grow more valuable everyday that it passes'.

---

[23] Willam Henry Fox Talbot, Wikipedia entry. URL:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Fox_Talbot accessed on 17.8.2015.

Figure 5. Eastman Dry Plate & Film Co. Advertisement from the British Journal Photographic Almanac, 1887.

Here briefly, I will cite John Tagg (1988) on the 'evolutionary' stages in the development of photography. Predecessors of the camera like *Physionotrace* invented in 1786 by Gilles Louis Chretien, traced the profile of the sitter and engraved it via an armature on to a copper plate. It could only limitedly satisfy growing demands for images among the newly dominant middle class, at a stage of economic growth in Britain and France when organized industry was displacing traditional patterns of manufacture and laying the basis for a new

social order. In 1839, when Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre (1787-1851) made public his photographic process, he stressed upon its potential accessibility to a wide public and its automatic nature. The ideological conception of the photograph as a direct and natural cast of reality was present from the very inception and, almost immediately, its appeal was tapped in portraiture (Tagg 1988, 41).

> 'In a 'daguerreotypemania', the middling people flocked to have photographs made, soon outnumbering the factory owners, statesmen, scholars, and intellectuals amongst whom photographic portraiture was first established. Shopkeepers, lesser functionaries, officials and small traders of all kinds – these were the sectors of the middle class which found in photography a new means of representation commensurate with their economic and ideological conditions' (Tagg 1988, 43).

The negative-positive process independently invented by William Henry Fox Talbot in the 1839 gave him the crucial advantage over Daguerre's in that the former produced multiple copies, making mass printing and publication theoretically possible, especially after the invention of the highly sensitive albumen paper in 1850. He patented the *calotype* process in 1841 (Tagg 1988, 44-45). In 1851 both daguerreotype and *calotype* were rapidly overhauled by the introduction of another process like *calotype*, but which required much shorter exposures for its finely grained glass plates. The *colloidon* or *wet plate* process

was made available at a time when demand for pictures had escalated and a price war had cut the cost of daguerreotypes. The *wet-plate* technique brought prices even lower and raised quantities even higher. As much as it stimulated a burgeoning picture industry, it also fostered private photographers like Lewis Carroll and Julia Margaret Cameron. The daguerreotype survived until the arrival of *carte-de-visite* photographs, patented by Andre Adolphe Disderi in France in 1854. These were paper prints from glass negatives, mounted on card and produced by use of a special camera with several lenses and a moving plate holder. The unparalleled growth of Disderi's business in France followed the Grand Exhibition of Industry in 1855 in which photography was made known for the first time to a wider public, just as it had been in England at the Great Exhibition of 1851.

Carte-de-visite photographs were made to a formula. Posing was standardized and quick, and figures in the resultant pictures were so small that their faces could not be studied. In 1864, a colloidon dry plate was developed which could be manufactured and used by the photographer ready-made. A bewildering array of hand-held cameras appeared in the market in 1880s, including cameras loaded with several plates so that dozen or more exposures could be made without reloading. George Eastman, a Rochester dry-plate manufacturer, introduced the most famous of these in 1888. The name he chose for his camera was Kodak. Eastman originated not only a camera but also a radical reconceptualization of the boundaries of photographic practice, through

the promise of photography being democratized for a wider public. With the introduction of half-tone plates by the 1880s, the entire economy of image production was recast. First used in the New York Daily Graphic in 1880, they rapidly displaced drawn illustrations and by 1897, were in regular use in New York Tribune. In1900 Kodak introduces their first Brownie, a very inexpensive user-reloadable point-and-shoot box camera. The advertisement caption 'You Press the Button and We do the Rest' took photography to millions of people through a completely industrialized process of production. Gradually instead of going to the studio, people, not well versed in the techniques of exposure took pictures, often ill composed or otherwise technically lacking, which they began preserving in the family albums meant for a limited display economy. (Tagg, 1988:54) It was followed by introductions of different formats of films including colour film for motion picture photography. In 1925 Leica, the German manufacturer introduces the 35 mm format to still photography that again radically changes the scope of the camera and its consumers. Fast shutter speed, better aperture controls, automatic focus systems, usability, better control of light with changing film speeds and single-lens reflex focus cameras by 1949 were the dominant features of the economy of photography and the camera throughout most of the twentieth century. In the mid-1970s the transference of technology from the analogue camera and emulsion based prints to the digital pixel based medium started getting grounds. By the end of 1990s professional digital single lens reflex cameras have produced both by Canon and Nikon, camera-manufacturing giants and Adobe's industry standard raster graphics[24] editing

---

[24] A raster graphics editor is a computer program that allows users to create and edit images

software Photoshop has been launched.

The scope of my thesis, located in the context of West Bengal (broadly speaking 'Bengal' till 1947 when it is partitioned into forming West Bengal and East Pakistan. East Pakistan matured into Bangladesh in 1971 following the war of liberation.) will limit itself till the 1970s. Removed from the Northern history of the dissemination of the photographic technique and popularity, the context of Bengal was relatively different. Although the number of people who took up camera as profession or hobby increased in the span of the twentieth century, the practices of the family photography and photograph taking were more often than not bound to the neighbourhood studios or photographers from such studios visiting households on occasions such marriage or initiation rites ceremonies. This is not say, a point to which I will come back later, that amateur photographers as in members of the family, relatives or close friends were less in numbers. The mixed participation of the professional studios and the amateur enthusiasts' camera produced the milieu of family photographs in the region. One of the reasons of limiting my thesis on the photographic representation of women in Bengal to the 1970s is that from the 1980s the mass introduction of the 'hot-shot' point and shoot cameras by Indian companies such as the Goa Optics Limited[25], wide availability of the colour negative film and cheaper developing

---

interactively on the computer screen and save them in one of many popular "bitmap" or "raster" formats such as JPEG, PNG, GIF and TIFF. URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raster_graphics_editor accessed on 15.3.2014.

[25] "The Company was incorporated on 20th January, 1983 under the name of Goa Optics Pvt. Ltd., as a private limited company. Photophones Ltd., together with Moorad Fazalbhoy, Abdullah

costs was opening a rather different type of the photographic world compared to that of the much 'controlled' world of the monochrome images, slightly bigger cameras and the preponderance of the professional photographer. The world of photography as it came into being in the scope of the thesis i.e. from the 1880s to the 1970s covers a wide continuum and ruptures within the spectrum of experiences that I might call modernity. The range of experiences in the spheres of representation in modernity while being informed by the technological processes, have simultaneously dealt and grown and intervened in the scopes of nationalism, identity, body and its representations. These are contested provinces in which the technologically reproducible forms such as photography, newspaper, cinema or the form of the novel have intervened and produced narratives affecting lives and communities. After having laid a basic plan of the technological reproducibility and technological advancements throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, I will now briefly trace the scope of photography in modernity thereby arriving at an ideological-historical understanding of the lives and bodies of photographic works that constitutes this dissertation.

Fazalbhoy, Indovest Holdings Pvt. Ltd., Alliance Consultancy Services Pvt. Ltd., and Gulmohr Trading Co. Pvt. Ltd, promoted it. The Company's objects are to manufacture photographic cameras, photographic and cinematographic film laboratory and photo-finishing machinery, accessories and spares, audio-visual sound equipment and photosensitive material and chemicals. In 1985 the name of the company was changed to Photophone Industries India Pvt. Ltd. and on 8th February, and it became a public limited company on 27th March. The Company manufactured a complete range of 110 mm and 35 mm format cameras and they are marketed under the brand name of "HOT SHOT". In 1987 the Company launched the mini hot shot cameras. The Company entered the instant photographic business with the introduction of the "In a snap" system. Three new models of cameras of contemporary design were introduced and the company developed the country's smallest size 110 mm format camera for low end of the market. Konica brand of photographic colour paper offered in different finishes such as glossy, lustre and silk were received in the market." URL: http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/kore-foods-ltd/infocompanyhistory/companyid-13289.cms accessed on 21.6.2015

2.3. The Scope of Photography in Modernity

According to Tagg, a more far-reaching pictorial revolution had taken place: the political axis of representation had been entirely reversed (Tagg 1988, 47-59). Being photographed was no longer a privilege. Beyond the apparent democracy of the medium, it was soon to become a new kind of power on the social body, generating new kinds of knowledge and newly refined means of control. This could be better understood by the Foucauldian theorization of 'power' in the capillary sense. Foucault argues the investment of power in the social is not linear as often taken to be but is invested in a complex grid of apparatuses. It is also not an abrasion point between the powerless and the powerful in the absolute sense but negotiations between the more powerful and less powerful. The new world of representation via the photograph opened up hitherto unknown spaces of representational consumption for a wider section of the people in Europe. The *carte-de-visite* photographs which Disderi in France patented in 1854. The Great Exhibitions of Industry held in England in 1851 and in France 1855 disseminated the medium of photography to the public and helped photographic business grow at an unprecedented rate. Tagg (1988) describes Disderi's booming business—representative of the others in England— of photography in the following way.

> "Disderi opened his doors to whole class of middling people eager to measure themselves against their social superiors. His studio at the centre of Paris became known as 'Temple of Photography', a place unrivalled in

its luxury and elegance; but behind this façade was a factory whose turnover from portrait revenue and the sale of pictures of celebrities approached 4,000 francs a day. Disderi's entrepreneurial methods were subsequently taken up in an international scale by photographers who were no more than skilled technicians; yet their efforts engendered a veritable 'cardomania' in France, America and England, where Mayall sold 100,000 copies of his Royal Family set and where 70,000 portraits if the Prince Consort were sold in the week following his death. Photography had become a great industry resting on the base of a vast new clientele and ruled by their taste and their acceptance of the conventional devices and genres of official art" (Tagg 1988, 49-50).

This was a time, potentially the first in the history of modernity, when the public was also able to share the representative space of photography in a way that was not usually found in the otherwise race and class divided society. At the same time, it did not mean that the coloured people in Europe also had similar 'democratic' chances to participate voluntarily in this 'cardomania'.

It has been such that the history of the modern subject and the social has also been simultaneous histories of erasure, of violation of rights and privileges, birth of new technologies of control. Keeping this in mind, to which I will come back at a later point while reading the photographs and conventions of the

Bengali middle class woman, I will now review a few debates on the scope of the photographic image as poised historically in nineteenth and early twentieth century. The concise reading will thicken the historical and critical debates regarding photographic image within scope of modernity.

Martin Jay in the beginning of his essay 'Scopic Regimes of Modernity' suggests that beginning with Renaissance, modernity has been normally 'considered resolutely ocularcentric' (Jay 1986). 'The invention of printing, according to the familiar argument of McLuhan (1964) and Orig (1967), reinforced the privileging of the visual abetted by such inventions as the telescope and the microscope….' (Jay 1986, 32) The scopic regime of modernity may be understood as a contested terrain, rather than a harmoniously integrated complex of visual theories and practices. The dominant visual models of the modern era can be identified with Renaissance notions of perspective in visual arts and Cartesian ideas of subjective rationality in philosophy. 'The abstract coldness of the perspectival gaze meant withdrawal of the painter's emotional engagement with objects depicted in the geometricalised space' (Jay 1986, 4). In the Cartesian model, according to Jay, where he cites Richard Rorty's Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature (1979) the intellect inspects entities based on retinal images and following Rorty (1979), Jay argues that in the Cartesian model, it forms the basis of modern epistemology where the mind is informed by representations. Such a model was also a success as it valorized the scientific worldview of natural sight. (Jay, 1986, 5) To quote Jay:

"Cartesian perspectivalism was thus in league with a scientific world view that no longer hermeneutically read the world as a divine text, but rather saw it as situated in a mathematically regular spatio-temporal order filled 'with natural objects that could only be observed from without by the dispassionate eye of the neutral researcher" (Jay 1986, 9).

The natural experience of the modern in the nineteenth century, the starting point of the popularization of photography, was heavily dependent on this dispassion and proof of the knowledge it created. I have already discussed this need for tangible exactitude of knowledge from the perspective of positivism in the nineteenth century. The Cartesian move of producing the ahistorical, disembodied subjects have been critiqued. But Jay (1986) also reads into the possibility of thinking contradictions between the hard perspectivalism of the Cartesian thought.

"Equally problematic is the subject position in the Cartesian perspectivalist epistemology, For the monocular eye at the apex of beholder's pyramid could be construed as transcendental and universal— that is, exactly the same for any human viewer occupying the same point in time and space—or contingent—solely dependent on the particular, individual vision of distinct beholders, with their own concrete relations to the scene in front of them. When the former was explicitly transformed into the latter, the relativistic implications of perspectivalism could be

easily drawn, Even in the nineteenth century, this potential was apparent to thinkers like Leibniz, although he generally sought to escape its more troubling implications. These were not explicitly stressed and than praised until the late nineteenth century by such thinkers as Nietzsche, If everyone had his or her own camera obscura with a distinctly different peephole, he gleefully concluded, then no transcendental worldview was possible" (Jay 1986, 11).

In spite of his fleshed out arguments on Cartesian perspectivalism and its critiques which goes via Svetlana Alpers (1983) model of comparing the intrusiveness and tactility of Italian art against the outer performative theatrical gestures of the Northern Art in the latter half of the essay, Jay (1986) closes his argument in a way of trying to choose a balance between various forms of scopic regimes of the modern vis-à-vis acknowledging its multiplicity.   He raises Georg Lukacs's critique of naturalist description in literature as only alike scratching the surface of reality. Georg Lukacs in his 1938 essay 'Realism in the Balance' defends realism but altogether with a new perspective of the politico-economical with regard to the experience of capitalism.

Lukács comes out with a dialectical opposition between two elements that he believes are intrinsic to human experience. The dialectical relation occurs between the "appearance" of events as subjective, unregulated experiences and their "essence" as triggered by the objective totality of capitalism. Lukács

explains that good realists such as Thomas Mann, succeeds in creating a contrast between the consciousness's of their characters (appearance) and a reality independent of them (essence). The downsides of trusting immediacy are various, according to Lukács as the injustices instilled by the capitalist system are so subtle, that they cannot be escaped without the abandonment of subjective experience and immediacy in the literary sphere. Realist authors who "abandon and transcend the limits of immediacy, by scrutinising all subjective experiences and measuring them against social reality", can only surpass it (Lukacs 1977). These statements, although from a different representational field of literature, problematises the burgeoning field of photography and its call to exactitude and "truth". In a way it also haunts back to Benjamin's complex articulation of the problem of aura in his work and with reference to the new art of photography. If going beyond the surface is the task that might unmask layers of meaning of representation other than the immediate descriptive one (e.g. the title of an work of art), one should problematise the relations between modernity and the world of 'exact' images. Benjamin, like Lukacs, was alluding to the Paris arcades that he proposed to be the shrine of the commodity culture capitalism in its embryonic form. The new modes of production of capital can be interpreted if only the reader/the onlooker critically tries to look into the realism with her subjective being in the position of beholder. The 'beholder', according to Benjamin, learns of the optical unconscious through photography, as laid out in photography's abilities of slow motion and enlargement. This act of coming in contact with a kind of unconscious is temporally a modern moment of experience

such as the psychoanalysis. In his 'Little History of Photography' Benjamin cites Alfred Litchwark (1907) who argues that in the present age no artwork is more closely looked at than photographs of closest relatives and friends or the lover. In such an act of looking, Benjamin writes that the realm of inquiry has moved out of the realms of aesthetic distinctions to that of social functions (Benjamin 2008, 287).   Benjamin's wish was that the 'dreaming collective' of human would wake up from their 'as if uniquely personal commodity-dreams' to a kind of 'political awakening'. The dialectical-image that would have helped human beings arrive at the moment of truth was a rather an ideal image. As Susan Buck-Morss shows that at the turn of the century there in the modern

> "…was a fundamental contradiction in capitalist-industrial culture. A mode of production that privileged private life and based its conception of the subject on the isolated individual had created brand new forms of social existence—urban spaces, architectural forms, mass produced commodities, and infinitely reproduced "individual" experiences—that engendered identities and conformities in people's lives, but not social solidarity, no new level of collective consciousness concerning their commonality, and thus no way of waking up from the dream in which they were enveloped" (Buck-Morss 1993, 318-19).

Benjamin's attempt at the revolutionary awakening of the masses through the working of a modernity that is particularly occularcentric is a general conceptual argument where the image is not part of the realm of the imaginary but of the "real". The "real" of the images to Benjamin were parts of the

90

materialist and the metaphysical traditions of critical thinking from which he borrowed. (Buck-Morss 1998, 334) From emanating an ideological critique of the work of art at the turn of the century, his critical engagement with the new found worlds of technological reproducibility made him think of the radical possibilities of the social-political change, which can be possibly visualized through the work of the photographic image and later with film. At a later stage, and within the conceptual rubric of post-structuralism, feminist readings of photography per se and representations of women in the spheres of domestic photography will be informed by the early twentieth century critical thinking but only to turn to the realm of the language as it unfolds the conditions of existence and problematises questions about "truth" and subjectivity.

Although by now, I have situated the greater comparative importance of the synchronic study of photography, it will be rather difficult, at times, to completely forgo the diachronic developments of the systems of representation to a 'mere symbolic and ideological instrumentalism' and which is simultaneously lined with the 'rise of bourgeois power' (Burch 1990, 8). Erwin Panofsky (1953) suggested that anatomy, as a science was not possible without the graphic records and a three dimensionality. The invention of the perspective and the coeval development of the various forms of multiplying art have marked beginnings of periods of which the invention of the photography belonged to the third period (Panofsky 1953). As Burch (1990) reads through Panofsky's (1953) argument of the hand in glove nature of the dialectical links between

developments in the artistic and scientific practices toward an understanding that the development of the photographic technique objectively helped the descriptive sciences such as botany, zoology, astronomy, physiology. According to Burch, in nineteenth century, through a series of distinct and spectacular stages, a way was cleared for the bourgeois ideology of aspiration. Burch calls it the 'Frankensteinian dream' of a feudal-turned-bourgeoisie class, a dream throughout the nineteenth century of having an apparatus that will represent depth and time-space continuum in a frame with utmost élan.

Going back to the Cartesian schema of thought very briefly where the participatory involvement of more absorptive visual modes was diminished, if not entirely suppressed, as the gap between spectator and spectacle widened. The bodies of the painter and the viewer were forgotten in the name of an allegedly monolithic, absolute eye. Although such a gaze could, of course, still fall on objects of desire, for example, on the female nude in Albrecht Durer's print of a draftsman drawing her through a screen of perspectival threads. It did so largely in the service of a reifying male look that turned its subjects into stone. Only much later in the history of Western art, with the nudes in Manet's *Dejeuner sur l'herbe* and *Olympia*, did the crossing of viewer's gaze with that of a subject finally occur. By then rationalized visual order of Cartesian perspectivalism was already coming under critique.
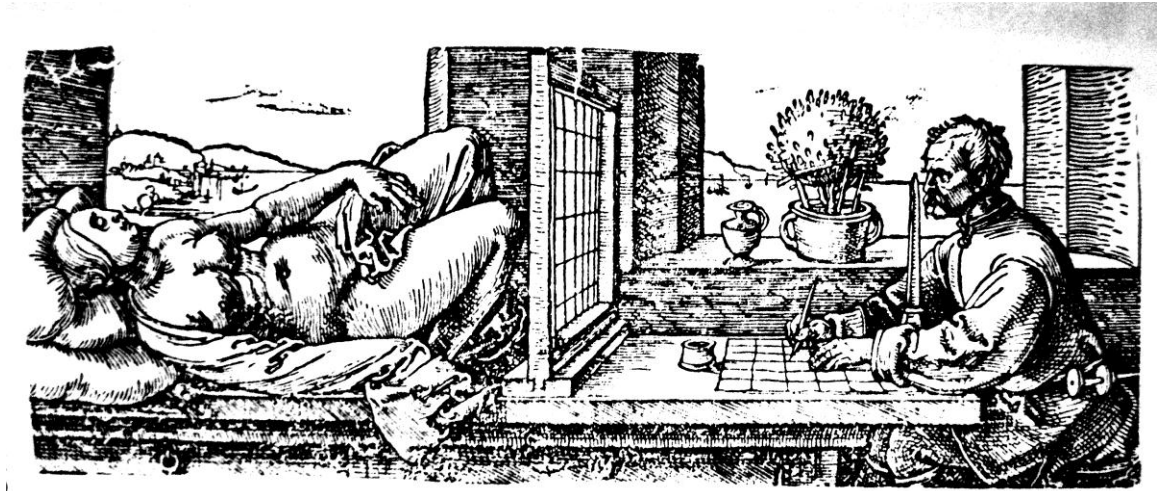
Figure 6. Man Drawing Reclining Woman. Albrecht Durer (1741-1528).

In addition to the effort to de-eroticize visual order, it had also fostered de-narrativization or de-textualization. That is, as abstract, quantitatively conceptualized space became more interesting to the artist than qualitatively differentiated subjects painted within it. Cartesian perspectivalism has been the target of a wide spread philosophical critique, which has denounced its privileging of an ahistorical, disinterested, disembodied subject. Cartesian perspectivalist epistemology is also problematic for the monocular eye at the apex of the beholder's pyramid which could be construed as transcendental and universal. It is exactly the same for any human viewer occupying the same point in time and space or contingent on the particular, individual visions of distinct beholders, with their own concrete relations to the scene in front of them. In the nineteenth century, however, Nietzsche had the opinion that no transcendental worldview was possible and a breaking away from this privileged tradition began in the hands of different practitioners.

Each of the steps was aimed towards the recreation of reality, towards realization of a perfect illusion of perceptual world. Burch argues that from around 1910, the blossoming of the Institutional Mode of Representation (IMR) satisfied the aspiration for three-dimensionality. In the words of Burch :

'Photography was invented just as painting, with Turner in particular, was 'changing spaces', as in Francastel's words, it ceased to give the patron 'a view of a piece of land to dominate'(1977, p.170). This 'proprietary' dimension of the representation of space emerging in the quattrocento is unquestionably taken over by photography throughout the second half of the 'bourgeois century' in the portraits, still lives and genre pictures denounced by Baudelaire (1965, p.153), even if, as Francastel also emphasized, photography helped, through its impact on innovatory artists, in the gradual destruction of the system of representation inherited from the Renaissance' (Burch 1990, 8).

Andre Bazin in his 'Ontology of the Photographic Image' argued about photographs as the preservation of life by a representation of life. The quest for a near perfect reproduction of reality within the grasp of the commoners had found a near complete model in the realm of photography. To quote Bazin :

'No one believes any longer in the ontological identity of the model and image, but all are agreed that the image helps us to remember the subject and to preserve him from a second spiritual death. Today the making of

images no longer shares an anthropocentric, utilitarian purpose' (Bazin 1992, 10).

The debate over realism in art comes from the misunderstanding between true realism and pseudorealism. In realism the need was to give significant expression to the world both concretely and in its essence, and in pseudorealism, of a deception aimed at fooling the eye. Bazin is of the opinion that photography has freed plastic arts from their obsession with likeness. Photography and cinema are discoveries that satisfied the obsession with realism (Bazin 1990, 12). The painter's work will always be, however much nearer to real it may appear, infected with an inescapable subjectivity. The fact that a human hand intervened casts a shadow of doubt over an image. Bazin went on to write that the essential factor in the transition from Baroque to photography is not the perfecting of a physical process, as photography will long remain inferior to painting in the reproduction of colour. Originality in photography as distinct from the originality in painting lies in the essentially objective character of photography.

He argues that the lens, the basis of photography, is in French called the "objectif", a nuance that is lost in English. The photographer's personality enters the process of making a photograph only in his selection of the object and technical conditions of light and other specificities that she will use in rendering the image. This objectivity of photographic process lends it a mass credibility within structures of visual modernity. To quote Bazin again:

'Only a photographic lens can give us the kind of image of the object that is capable of satisfying the deep need man has to substitute for it something more than a mere approximation, a kind of decal or transfer. The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it. No matter how fuzzy, distorted or discoloured, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is reproduction; it *is* the model' (Bazin 1990, 14).

To illustrate his formulation Bazin cites the case of family albums. Old, grey, sepia shadows and almost undecipherable old family portraits are no longer what they used to be but rather a disturbing presence of lives halted at moments in their duration, freed from their destiny; not, however, by the prestige of art but by the power of an impassive mechanical process. For photography does not create eternity, as art does, it embalms time, rescuing it simply from its proper corruption. The aesthetic qualities of photography are to be sought in its power to lay bare realities. He concludes the essay with a comment that photography being the most important event in the history of plastic arts, it is a kind of liberation and a fulfillment; it freed Western painting, once and for all, from its obsession with realism and allowed it to recover its aesthetic autonomy. With Bazin's review, there emerges clearly a shift with the advancement of the photographic image through the passage of nineteenth century. But Bazin might

have been looking into the photographic image as a precursor to the moving image and therefore stops at a kind of resolution of the nature of the photograph and it's being in itself as contained within its frame and form. The exchange value between the onlooker and the photographer cannot be subjected to closures pertaining to the form. The exchange that happens will be dependent of the space (not of the photographic print) and time of the onlooker also which problematises the ways in which reception happens of all art forms. The mythical truth-value of the photograph depends on its own nature. That it is 'an utterance of some sort' whose meaning is polysemic in nature and one has to acknowledge the floating chain of significance, which underlies the signifier. This move he borrows from Roland Barthes 1964 essay 'Rhetoric of the Image'. To quote Sekula (1982), the meaning making process remains at the contextual exposition of the image:

> '…the photograph as it stands alone, presents merely the possibility of meaning. Only by its embededness in a concrete discourse situation can the photograph yield a clear semantic outcome. Any given photograph is conceivably open to appropriation by arrange of 'texts', each new discourse situation generating its own set of messages'   (Sekula 1982, 91).

Sekula (1982) argues for the historicist placing of the photograph in so far that he claims that the meaning of the photograph to a large extent lies beyond itself. This is a reading strategy employed while looking into photographs, especially when we look at photos of human beings. We are, as

mentioned earlier, looking for the verbal or written cue as to get on with the photograph; make our consumption of the thing complete without errors. Coeval to this, we on the plain of the everyday are haunted by difficulties of distinctive sorts while looking at photos of which we do not have the shortest information or the context network is completely absent. The process of history writing is harmed by the lack of information and metadata. We seem to be lost and an urgency of responding to the lack arises. In the space of the archive that I have consulted for the purpose of this dissertation, wherever I have met such 'cueless' photographs (of the subjects in the photograph), and the numbers are many, I have written down 'unidentified'. It, on the general pragmatic scale, gives you a sense of the finitude but at the same time it is a move with many slips. It might be that the photograph might remain 'unidentified' for a particular period of time before being contextualized again by a different onlooker. The latter problem is also partially and strategically resolved by trying to gather data as to general perceptions of the genre of the photograph, the type of subjects, age, posture, sartorial presentation, studio or photographers insignia etc. This can only be a temporary strategy for the standard archival practice only to be laid bare in the question of the photographic representations of women where women have been generally stereotyped to the extent that intra-cultural readings of photographs without verbal cues would reinscribe the body of the woman with genre-markings and stereotypical nomenclatures from the social milieu. A photograph of a woman with a child might be called 'mother and child', a photograph of a woman in the kitchen might invoke in the response of the onlooker, if not

informed otherwise, that this part of the middle-class domesticity. We can go around and round trapped in the being of representation in case of a 'pure image'.

I borrow the concept of the 'pure image' from Roland Barthes essay 'Rhetoric of the Image'. In the essay, he analyses the advertisement photograph with its textual and linguistic cues intact and then he strips the photograph of its immediately available indices to arrive at the nature and the scope of the 'pure image' per se. Barthes argues that in the contemporary world of mass communication, a fair share of which is based on images, a linguistic message attaches itself with the image as in the case of the caption and title of the press image, the film dialogue or the balloon of the comic strip. Further, such a culture of describing the image with language deflates the popular twentieth century claim that it is primarily a civilization of images. To Barthes, contrarily, it is more a world of the writing where the governing principles are writing and speech than a world of images in its own terms. Since in the social and semantic structures of the contemporary, the unmediated and the 'floating' signifieds can pose a threat to the stability of meaning making in a gendered society, and in a bid to plug such a threat of otherness sipping in, every society develops its specific techniques of fixing the 'floating chain of signifieds' to counter the 'terror of uncertain signs'. The text functions as the denotative process of deciphering and anchoring the image in a social historical context by simply identifying the objects in the photograph and guiding the reader through a series,

some of which is received by the reader and some of it is lost in the process. It also 'remote-controls' the reader 'towards a meaning chosen in advance'. Barthes here is pointing towards the dominance of accepted structures of cognition in which the modern world of images generally operates. (Barthes 1977, 38-41) This is a special requirement of photographs—but not exactly of family photographs in case of this dissertation—in various contexts that they should remain explainable in terms of a simple truth and an exposed representation of the being. Without the charm of explanation and resolution of the anxieties that might a part of the image, photographs as extra-linguistic documents seem to lose its general appeal and context. Here is fraught ground of the reception of the photograph. Again, the nature of the photograph might be varied pertaining to its use and contextual value. Questions of representation and truth value, as I have discussed in Chapter One, the contested terrains of the technological reproducibility of the photographic form in its retaining of a particular kind of aura through the work of the photographic realism and the structures of reception and production of meaning in the modern problematises any straight jacketed narrative flowing out from photographs of the family album. The contact with real lives, lived experiences, subjective narratives and histories impacting and informing lives through reading of photographs in family albums and collections become part of the problematic of the project of history writing through visuals itself. It has already been problematised by Barthes when he, in case of literal meanings photographic images, points to the fact that:

'…this intelligibility remains virtual by reason of its very poverty, for

everyone from a real society always disposes of a knowledge superior to the merely anthropological· and perceives more than just the letter. Since it is both evictive and sufficient, it will be understood that from an aesthetic point of view the denoted image can appear as a kind of Edenic state of the image; cleared utopianically of its connotations, the image would become radically objective, or, in the last analysis, innocent.

This utopian character of denotation is considerably reinforced by the paradox already mentioned, that the photograph (in its literal state), by virtue of its absolutely analogical nature, seems to constitute a message without a code. Here, however, structural analysis must differentiate, for of all the kinds of image only the photograph is able to transmit the (literal) information without forming it by means of discontinuous signs and rules of transformation' (Barthes 1977, 42-43).

Barthes furthers his point by claiming that photographs involve an unprecedented consciousness that which involves a feeling of *having-been-there* and not simply *been-there* giving way to a new space-time configuration of spatial immediacy and temporal anteriority where the photograph is matrixed upon the a certain contradictory conjunction between the *here-now* and *there-then*.

"…its unreality is that of the *here-now,* for the photograph is never experienced as illusion, is in no way a *presence* (claims as to the magical

character of the photographic image must be deflated); its reality that of the *having-been-there,* for in every photograph there is the always stupefying evidence of *this is how it was,* giving us, by a precious miracle, a reality from which we are sheltered" (Barthes 1977, 44).

Franz Kafka (1883-1924), however, as one of the major figures of the modern habitus, was drawn photography and argued for the necessary textual supplementarity of the image as the photographic image was to him an incomplete image of reality. Kafka with his penchant for the new medium of the modern, labeled "himself as an 'Augenmensch' ['visual person', literally 'an eye man'] and his closest companion Max Brod stresses that Kafka's access to reality was primarily visual rather than analytical" (Duttlinger 2007, 3). However, Kafka's textual engagement and narrativization of the photographs have not really reduced the form of the photograph to a thing in itself that can be exhausted of its meanings by supplementing the image with a text. This work can further complicate the meaning baring capability or communicability of the photograph especially in the early twentieth century as that was a turning point when photography was constantly being compared and analysed to other forms of art such as painting. Kafka was attracted to the form of the portrait photography and it forms the majority of his textual interventions. Duttlinger (2007) describes the historical time of such exchanges between Kafka and photography:

'Since its popularization in the mid-nineteenth century, such images had

become a vital tool for the rising bourgeoisie in its quest to define for itself a social identity. As early as 1865, photographs had been described as 'the bourgeoisie's ancestral portraits', that is, as an equivalent to the painted portrait enabling the middle classes to document their own status. Yet this stabilizing and assertive role of portrait photography relied on a highly codified iconography of bourgeois subjecthood' (Duttlinger 2007, 7).

In spite of being charges of reifying the bourgeoisie and their subjecthood, even in case of India, though slightly differently, the photographic medium was presenting itself as a new insight into realism. The newness, with its radical probabilities, might be achieved through a Benjaminan optical unconscious/shock or Siegfried Kracaeur's fragmentary realist depiction that photographs present. Broadly speaking, the novelty of the form and technique did epistemologically stir up the effects and affects of the domain of the representational arts on the human condition. Before I move onto the specific use of the early colonial photography let me for the last time go back to Barthes in his last undelivered lecture 'Proust et la Photographie' (1980) where he like in most of his works is dealing with the problems of authorship and reading. I am borrowing here from Kathrin Yacavone's (2009) essay 'Reading through Photography: Roland Barthes's Last Seminar "Proust et la photographie"' where Yacavone looks again at the complex relationship between the real, imaginary and photography. She argues that photography in relation to Proust and Barthes's

discussions around it points to the double function of the photograph as the evidence of the real and the beginning point from where imagination 'on part of its beholder, that foregrounds an engagement with literature for which Barthes' reading of *La Recherche* pragmatically stands' also provides the reader with the capability to engage with the photograph as a biographeme (Yacavone 2009, 98-112). For Barthes it is an autobiographical exercise intended at approaching an author through a succession of *punctum*-biographemes, be they textual or photographic.

'With this definition of a *"science of the unique being"* evoked in *Camera Lucida* (71), Barthes theorises a practice probably shared by a majority of readers if we consider the fascination inherent to the photograph and the proper name, which are finally nothing other than graphic signs, resistant to meaning. According to Barthes, the Roland Barthes *per se* that any reader can approach through *punctum*-biographemes represents the ultimate autobiographical content (*for him*). The Roland Barthes *studium* is not really of interest autobiographically speaking' (Arribert-Narce 2009, 249-50).

The work of Marcel Proust (10 July 1871–18 November 1922) gives an insight in understanding of a different realism and the point of involuntary memory. According to Proust:

'…unusual image of a familiar object, an image different from those that we are accustomed to see, unusual and yet true to

104

nature, and for that reason doubly striking because it surprises us, takes us out of our cocoon of habit, and at the same time brings us back to ourselves by recalling to us an earlier impression. For instance, one of these 'magnificent' photographs will illustrate a lay of perspective, will show us some cathedral which we are accustomed to see in the middle of a town, taken instead from a selected vantage point from which it will appear to be thirty times the height of the houses and to be thrusting out a spur from the bank of the river, from which it is actually at some distance' (Proust 1981, 896).

Here Proust like Barthes and at the same time removed from Barthes specific contexts of winter garden or his mother's photograph taken at the age of five takes up the questions of *having-been-there* and unusual images of familiar objects in case of photography. Advancing a few more decades, Walter Benjamin's formulations do help to understand the uniqueness of reproducibility of representations in an age of technological reproducibility as I have explained in the Chapter 2.1. But let me, at least for now, wind up the varied assertions of the reception of the exact image based visual economy at the turn of the century from the nineteenth to the twentieth. Benjamin shows that mechanical reproduction of   a work of art represents 'something new'. The techniques of reproduction detach the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique

existence (it replaces a 'unique existence' by a plurality of copies). In permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in her/his particular situation, it reactivates the object produced. These processes according to Benjamin lead to a tremendous shattering of tradition and adjustment of reality to the masses and of the masses to reality is a process of unlimited scope, as much for thinking as for perception. According to Benjamin, works of art are received on different planes. Two polar types stand out. With one, the accent is on cult value; with the other, on exhibition value of the work. In photography, exhibition value begins to displace cult value. But cult value resists any attempt to be done with. He is of opinion that cult value retires into the form of the human countenance. To Benjamin it is no accident that portrait was the focal point of early photography. But soon the focus of the camera began to change and Benjamin cites the example of Atget, who, around 1900, took photographs of deserted Paris streets and picture magazines were shortly due on the scene. To quote Benjamin:

> 'The nineteenth-century dispute as to the artistic value of painting versus photography today seems devious and confused. This does not diminish its importance, however, if anything, it underlines it. The dispute was in fact the symptom of a historical transformation the universal impact of which was not realized by either of the rivals. When the age of mechanical reproduction separated art from its basis in cult, the semblance of its autonomy disappeared forever. The resulting change in the function of art transcended the perspective of the century; for a long time it even escaped that of the twentieth century, which experienced the

development of the film. Earlier much futile thought had been devoted to the question of whether photography is an art. The primary question - whether the very invention of photography had not transformed the entire nature of art – was not raised' (Benjamin, 671).

Benjamin lays bare the features of the responses of modernity towards mechanically reproduced forms of art where there is no concept of the 'original', which may have been retrogressive as it alludes broadly to privileged ownership. Berman's (1982) theoretical generalizations do come in the context of understanding nuances of modernity as felt in Europe and in the colonies. According to Berman :

> 'There is a mode of vital experience – experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils- that is shared by men and women all over the world today. I will call this body of experience "modernity". To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world – and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are' (Berman 1982, 31).

Almost in a performative stance, Berman puts forward the implications of an errant modernity as lived experience. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology. In a sense modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But,

he mentions, that it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity. It pours all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish (Berman 1982,15). Berman, is sweeping in ways, when he tries to crystallize the network of the experiential domain of the modern but in a way he establishes the social where the Cartesian perspectivalism, occularcentric scopophilia, debates around questions of pseudorealism in photography and representation per se, reception of the human countenance in the photographic traditions of early twentieth century and processes of signification are laid bare.

Crary shows that invention and dissemination of photography and other related forms of "realism" in the nineteenth century have been foregrounded together as part of the continuous unfolding of a Renaissance–based mode of vision in which photography, and eventually cinema, are simply later instances of an ongoing deployment of perspectival space and perception. Crary argues that it is not enough to attempt to describe a dialectical relation between the innovations of avant-garde artists like Manet and writers in the late nineteenth century and the concurrent 'realism' and positivism of scientific and popular culture. It is crucial to see both these phenomena as overlapping components of a single social surface on which modernization of vision had begun decades earlier. He suggests that a broader and far more important transformation in the makeup of vision occurred in the early nineteenth century. Modernist paintings in the 1870s and 1880s and the development of photography after 1839 can be

seen as later symptoms or consequences of this crucial systemic shift, which was well under way by 1820 (Crary 1992, 5).

The early work of Jean Baudrillard details some of the conditions of this new terrain in which a nineteenth century observer was situated. For Baudrillard, one of the crucial consequences of the bourgeois political revolutions at the end of 1700s was the ideological force that animated myths of the rights of the man, right to equality and happiness. In the nineteenth century, for the first time, observable proof became necessary in order to demonstrate that happiness and equality had in fact been attained after watershed struggles that gave birth to a possibility of an essentially non-elite culture. 'Happiness' had to be measurable in terms of objects and signs (Baudrillard 1970, 60). Developing on later twentieth century advancements in the sphere of mechanical reproduction techniques, which eventually would gather colossal potential in reshaping the economy of the visual representation and other forms of representation as such ,Walter Benjamin argues about commodity in generating a 'phantasmagoria of equality', but unfortunately, with all the promises about 'equality' it was destined to emerge as a phantasmagoria of representation within the quick fledging of capitalist modes of economy. Hence modernity was inseparable from the project of remaking of the observer.

Baudrillard's account of modernity reveals a destabilization and mobility of signs and codes beginning in the Renaissance; signs previously rooted to

relatively secure positions within fixed social hierarchies. His notion of modernity is bound up in the capacity of newly empowered social classes and groups that overcome the exclusivity of signs under control of the more privileged. Modernity initiates a proliferation of signs of reproduction and consequently laces them intrinsically with processes of industrialization.

From here I will move on to the historical description of the work of the camera, especially in the hand of the colonial regime, in India. It is also a modern experience, with conceptual likeness with the structural thinking about photography, but at the same time, the intervention of early photography led a different register of signification for the colonized.

2.4. The Colonial and the Camera: From the Master's Archive to the Family Album in Early Photography
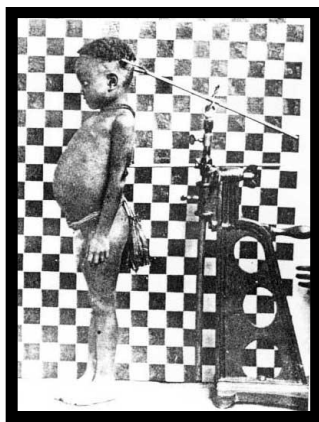
Figure 7. Maurice Vidal Portman. Ilech, a young Andaman child, 1890s.

This section of the Chapter will deal with the acts of the colonial governmental camera, its uses in the formation of the colonial stereotype, the exotic tribes and communities of the Orient and the proliferation of the popular printed photography in casting various identities of caste, trade, gender and religion. The identities of subjects created over a considerable span of time beginning roughly in the mid-nineteenth century, were constituted in the index of difference from the colonial masters.

In Conan Doyle's novel, *The Sign of Four*, Sherlock Holmes summarizes the evidence:

> "…consider the data. Diminutive footmarks, toes never fettered by boots, naked feet….What do you make of all this?' 'A savage!' Watson exclaims … and Holmes continues his explanation— 'Some of the inhabitants of the Indian Peninsula are small men, but none could have left such marks as that. The Hindu proper has long and thin feet. The sandal- wearing Mohammedan has the great toe well separated from the others, because the thong is commonly passed between. … Now, then, where are we to find our savage?" (Doyle, 1890: 185-186)

Holmes solves the mystery of the Andamanese fugitive from the 'first volume of a gazeteer', which was then being published and was looked upon 'as the very latest authority.' What found its place, as a highly stylized anthropological/criminological referencing in an English detective fiction from

the 1890s was in fact part of a large corpus of knowledge and politics associated with the body of the colonized. Among other emergent occularcentric technologies throughout the nineteenth century it was made possible by devices such as the camera, daguerreotypes and emulsion based photography and its comparatively wider circulation in the colonies and across the seas. With the shift of history from the speculative to the factual, the coupling of evidence and photography in the second half of the nineteenth century was tied with the growth of new institutions and newer practices of observation and record keeping. The value of photography to anthropology was also emphasized by the greater contact between the European and aboriginal races.

Following Christopher Pinney's (1997) argument, throughout the nineteenth century, two rather different photographic idioms emerged in India: a 'salvage' paradigm, which was applied to what were perceived to be fragile tribal communities and a 'detective' paradigm, which was more commonly manifested when faced with a more vital caste society. In the 'salvage' paradigm a scientific and curatorial imperative was dominant where 'fragile' and 'disappearing' cultures and communities had to be recorded before their extinction. The 'detective' paradigm, by contrast, presumed the continuing visuality of sections of Indian society and stressed the value of anthropological depictions and physiognomic observations as future identifying guides.[26] The

---

[26] The 'detective' paradigm, by contrast, presumed the continuing visuality of sections of Indian society and stressed the value of anthropological depictions and physiognomic observations as future identifying guides. Works like Edward Tuite Dalton's *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*, J.W. Breek's *An Account of the Primitive Tribes and Monuments of the Nilagiris*, and W.E.

'Indian' experience was difficult in many ways for the colonial regime to negotiate. The following quote from John William Kaye's preface to William Simpson's portfolio of lithographic prints summaries the difference and difficulties:

> 'To represent India by mere word painting is almost an impossible task. The most graphic writing falls far short of the mark of faithful description. Only a vague, unsatisfactory idea of the objects, represented by the printed page, is left on the reader's mind…It is only by the great exponents, form and colour, appealing to the fleshly eye, that truthful impressions can be derived of a country, which differs so essentially from all that is known to us by the teachings of European experience. The pen may do much to assist the successes of the pencil; but without the pencil the efforts of the pen, when objective description is aimed at, must be feeble and insufficient' (William Simpson 1862 cited in Pinney 1997, 17).

Chaudhary (2012) refers to a letter written in 1869, by Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1898), to the secretary of the scientific society at Aligarh that can be read as a question from the colony as to the patterns of representation widely acknowledged at the point of the colonial-modern. The letter was published in Urdu and in English translation in the *Allygurh Institute Gazette*. The letter

---

Marshall's *A Phrenologist amongst the Todas, Typical Pictures of Indian Natives* (1897) attested to the dominant close-ended configuration of contemporary photography. (Pinney, 1997)

expresses the ways Indians were treated by the English:

'In the India Office is a book in which the races of all India are depicted in pictures and in letterpress, giving the manners and customs of each race. Their photographs show that the pictures of the different manners and customs were taken on the spot, and the sight of them shows how savage they are—the equals of animals. The young Englishmen who, after passing the preliminary Civil Service examination, have to pass examinations on special subjects for two years afterwards, come to the India Office prepara- tory to starting for India, and, desirous of knowing something of the land to which they are going, also look over this work. What can they think, after perusing this book and looking at its pictures, of the power and honour of the natives of India? One day Hamid, Mahmud [Khan's sons], and I went to the India Office, and Mahmud commenced looking at the work. A young Englishman, probably a passed civilian, came up, and after a short time asked Mahmud if he was a Hindustani? Mahmud replied in the affirmative, but blushed as he did so, and hastened to explain that he was not one of the aborigines, but that his ancestors were formerly of another country. Reflect, therefore, that until Hindustanis remove this blot they shall never be held in honour by any civilized race."

The book(s) referred to by the author of the letter is the widely known

The People of India (1868–75)[27], an album originally conceived by John Forbes Watson and John William Kaye compiled an eight-volume study entitled *The People of India* between 1868 and 1875. The books contained 468 annotated photographs of the native castes and tribes of India. I will cite a few examples from the series, later in the chapter. The photographs rarely had descriptions beyond the generic divisions, which I have mentioned, just at the beginning of this chapter.

Very briefly, I would like to mention at this point that till now, I have discussed conceptual moorings which have informed the space of photography as such. But at the beginning of narrating the specificity of the colonial Indian situation, let me signpost it that the photography as regulatory, classificatory and more often than not discriminatory apparatus was not unique in the experience of the colonies in the nineteenth century. The diffusive microphysics of power regulating everyday lives in the Foucauldian conception was in operation in England too. The necessity of more effective patterns of surveillance and specific knowledge about the body of the subject in question was mediated and archived amongst other ways through the use of photography. Tagg (1988) shows how photography was used to depict the growth of urbanity and to register changes other urban 'problems' such as the slum emanating from the lives of

---

[27] In the albums the sitters, mostly nameless, are described in incredibly derogatory language by the accompanying letterpress. Among several examples, we learn that the character of a Kashmir Musulmani 'is not very respectable…', but that by contrast, the women grasscutters of Madras are, 'a very industrious and useful race". URL: http://www.tasveerjournal.com/the-people-of-india/ accessed on 10.8.2015.

economically backward people in turn of the century Quarry Hill area of Leeds. It was part of the new techniques of governmentality in advanced capitalist countries. In India, apart from the work of governmentality in case early photography, the task of production of knowledge of the Orient was a major theme.

In a paper titled 'On the applications of photography in India', presented before the Photographic Society of Bengal in October 1856, Reverend Joseph Mullins itemized the diverse subjects to which photographers of that body should address themselves: with discerning thoroughness he advocated the use of photography in fields of police work, medicine, astronomy and for the recording of the progress of public works. The greater part of his talk, however, was devoted to outlining a comprehensive programme of photography to capture all the varieties of Oriental Life. The scope of Mullins' proposals was far-reaching: photographers should build up portfolios of native dress and manners, make genre studies of trades, industries and occupations, and depict representative samples of housing and transport. (Falconer, 1984:9)
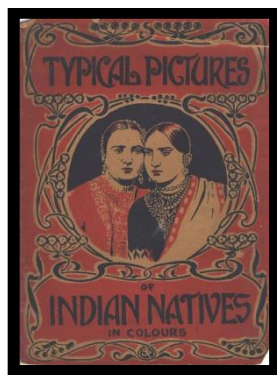
Figure 8. Typical Pictures of Indian Natives, Bombay, 1897(1st edition)

Figure 9. Bengali Hindu Women in Prison in Alipore , Kolkata, 1856.

By now, as marked here I am discussing the historical-political background of photography without directly referring to the conceptual formation. The history of colonialism and the kinds of knowledge it produced of the colonial subjects have been placed within the power/knowledge paradigm of Michel Foucault. Apart from documenting 'essential' Indian types of people from the *fakir* to the ornately dressed high caste Hindu woman intended for the conspicuous consumption of the colonial regime, the indigenous elites and people in Europe, the photographic camera also with acute sincerity mapped the other of the Indian respectable classes. Green (1984), Lalvani (1996), Pinney (1997), Chaudhary (2012), Ryan (1997), Tagg (1988) and Anderson (2004) have dealt in different ways, through which the body of the colonial subject has been tamed, classified, criminalized, and disciplined in the visual realm of early colonial photography. Anderson (2004) argues that while stereotyping and creating various social groups or landscape photography in the purview of colonial visual praxis, a different mode emerged simultaneously that which zeroed in on the specific bodies of criminals toward an enhanced visibility of

117

individual. By 1856, Norman Chevers[28] had noted that the British Officers in India were using photography to record repeat offenders and criminals in India. By 1870s, as Chevers' notes that photography was used being used widely in medico-legal cases in India. By the 1910s, however there were reactions against this early trend. The cumbersome process of photographic technique, costs, fading of the photographs, the presence of a large number of offenders in India compared to the little pool of photographic archive that was produced, imaginative recognition by Indians who were not generally accustomed to remembering photographic likeness, changing of facial features over time and other causes led to the waning of the early popularization of the photography in mapping offending bodies. Notably, female offenders were generally exempted from being photographed. Anderson argues that as a general rule it was pursued because of the unacceptability of women being touched or getting to her in close proximity that might have been a necessity for perfecting the posture before the camera or unveiling. And due to the low number of women being transported the Bengal police exempted women from anthropometric measurements. (Anderson, 2004: 141-149) This might have been the case a generally but I have located a

---

[28] Norman Chevers (1818-1886) was an English physician. He joined the Indian Medical Service in 1848. Most of his work in India was done in Bengal; he became Principal and Professor of Medicine at the Calcutta Medical College and President of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Calcutta. He published numerous papers and monographs on tropical medicine, public health, and even medical jurisprudence. He was co-editor of the Indian Annals of Medical Science for almost twenty years. He rose to the position of Deputy Surgeon General, and on his retirement returned to England. He died in 1886 soon after completing his magnum opus "Commentary on the Diseases of India". For a detailed account of his professional work and publications see NORMAN CHEVERS: A DESCRIPTION OF CONGENITAL ABSENCE OF PULMONARY VALVES AND SUPRAVALVULAR AORTIC STENOSIS IN THE EIGHTEEN-FORTIES, Ivan A. D'Cruz and Robert A. Miller, *Br Heart J*, 1964, 26, pp. 723-725.

few photographs of Indian women 'offenders/criminals' (see Figures 9 and 11) in settings that cannot be verified now. One photograph (Fig 9) shows a group of 'Bengali Hindu Women' huddling together. The caption refers to 'Alipore' and in all probabilities it was the jail in Alipore that was being referred to. However, the photograph generally doesn't exhibit any of the tendencies of anthropometric tendencies. It is a group photograph. I can only conjecture about the possible identity of these women. Here, again, for the purpose of a documentary evidential urge so strong in the realist tendencies of photography, I am in a way coerced to turn back from the specificity of the photographic print toward a generic understanding of the bodies that have been photographed. Coming back, the group appears more like vagrants or beggars who were often put to the care of the correctional homes for some time. In the process, I have lost their histories pertaining to their subjective lived lives in order that I retrieve another history which is more generic in nature and closed. As if, my purpose as a researcher properly closes at this point of cognition bereft of the conceptualization of the representative category of woman in the context of representation. I am at best arriving at a possible history *sans* history pertaining to the specific which will always be lost in some ways in case of the photographic image. The 'tacit intelligibilty' of the phenomena of the group of women sitting on the doorstep of an opened grilled gate comes to us as a difference or confusion between appearance and reality. Although we have 'definite' knowledge about the photograph, it has the chance of slipping away into confusion if the textual/historical is lost. I am pointed toward arriving at a conclusion of a

119

phenomenon by knowing beforehand through knowledge what the phenomenon actually is. In a way, one is repeating the exercise of knowledge of history without taking into consideration the nature of representation itself in the arts of technological reproducibility.

The second photograph (Fig. 11) from the Eastman Kodak online archives shows an Indian woman probably from the Northeastern part of the country. A few points in the case of this photograph needs to be observed. One, the photograph was not exactly a product of the offender genre. Two, the woman was choreographed with a dagger in her hand, which I might presume was not a voluntary choice but a choice on part of the photographer/author to designate signification of her body with marks extraneous that will on the surface of visuality prove beyond doubt the authenticity of the title 'a Darjeeling thief'. This is a function of the photographic image that I have discussed as contributing to a supplementarity of proving 'hard facts'. Three, the basic truth telling nature of photography can be questioned in this case as the setting up of the supposed 'Darjeeling thief' in front of the camera lays bare the involuntary nature of studio photography. The well-controlled directional lights accentuate the hard expressions of her face and her powerful hands and the dagger. Four, the absence of any backdrop, a necessary part of studio photography, pushes the meaning further toward the acceptance of the fact that this was an 'official' photo of a criminal. Five, also as per the tradition of anthropological photography, there is the absence of a proper name of the individual. The viewer/reader of the

photograph and I am taking this viewer/reader as a general partially transcendental entity who could be present both *then* and *now* to look into the photograph. The viewer/reader might have been—through a series of explicit signs—such as the dagger, the linguistic description built into the frame of the photograph. At the same time the semantic field of the photograph is full of implicit points and punctures such as the lighting, dress, the apparently disheveled hair of the woman which readily sets her apart from the respectable women found in the genres of early Indian photography, the frowning which might have come from the alien machine which she was facing, maybe the behavior of the studio staff was not conducive to a smiling pose, or she might have been struggling hard against strong directional lights. The stiff, powerful and 'unwomanly' character of her fisted hands one of which is clutching the dagger is also a marker of her belonging to the more 'industrious' tribes. And maybe, true to all photographic genres, this photograph could have been just a part of the staged nature of photographic realism. Such a realism, bordering on naturalism and essentialism of the human face in case of the anthropological discourses doesn't hold much ground in fixing identities or pushing the viewer/reader to contemplate via explicit signs of the body and its extensions, in this case the dagger which kind of marks the closure for the scope of photograph to be interpreted. Also in a way, I am reopening the closure set forth through this discussion but it's mostly an impossible task to prove otherwise. The photograph, as a process of exactitude, perpetrated by the writing, by virtue of it being marked, classified, kept, reused, seen, discussed have made the limits of

meaning making more rigid. Or to comment in a rather unformed way, the photograph's intended 'stern fidelity' paves way for the following possible task— (1) to rethink its catalogued meaning, (2) what lies beyond the frame and the print in an effort to gather, speculate or think the impossibility of such a photograph as the document of the real. I will come back to these questions in later chapters where I will be dealing with the specificity of the family photographs. For now, I am going back to the colonial production of the photographic anthropology.

The proctologic historical process in which this genre of photography developed, studied the masses, the inarticulate, the deprived, the dispossessed, the exploited and such categories as passive and not in the proper historical focus. They were either treated by historians as background figures and benefactors of the march towards civilization or as 'unruly and unwashed, who posed a continuing threat to a fragile and hard-won civilizing process' as Bernard Cohn (2004) observes. He argues for linkages between history, sociology and capitalist economy, which usurp the particular knowledge for its own perquisites. Cohn describes his formulation of proctological history that in ways forms the backdrop of this study:

> 'In the elitist historical tradition, the lower orders became the background figures who among liberal historians were seen as the benefactors of the march toward civilization and among conservative historians as the unruly and unwashed, who posed a continuing threat to a fragile and

hard-won civilizing process. These groups, classes or categories—women, the lumpen proletariat, blacks, ethnics; in general the dispossessed—are difficult in any society to study since the conventional organization of source materials, generally speaking, leave them out' (Cohn 2004, 39).

As Cohn (1998) also observes that between 1860 and 1900 the British in India were creating official projects 'to document the past and present of India'.

'These included the establishment of the Archeological Survey, the search for Sanskrit manuscripts, the establishment of schools of arts and crafts to preserve artisan sills, the Linguistic Survey of India, the establishment before 1900 of fifty museums in India, and the decennial census of India. The findings of these investigative agencies were digested and normalized and appeared in dictionaries of industrial products, the Statistical Survey of India, the Imperial Gazetteer, and Recruiting Handbooks for the Indian Army. They were also exhibited live and in photographs and models in the periodical International Exhibitions and World's Fair' (Cohn 1998, 35).

2.5 Early Developments in India with Special Reference to Bengal

"The photograph is not a magical 'emanation' but a material product of a material apparatus set to work in specific contexts, by specific forces, for more or less defined purposes. It requires, therefore, not an alchemy but a history,

outside which the existential essence of photography is empty and cannot deliver what Barthes desires: the confirmation of an existence; the mark of a past presence; the repossession of his mother's body.

– John Tagg (1988)

The capacity to govern was created and normalized via this huge amount of information and efforts in documentation in which women were a prime exhibit, not as the advanced women of the West and a lot that was downtrodden and vulnerable. In a way, such documentation in early Indian photography, contrarily upholds the spirit of James Mill's 1840 observation on the reciprocal relationship between condition of women and standards of civilization.

> 'The condition of women is one of the most remarkable circumstances in the manners of nation…As society refines upon its enjoyments, and advances in to the state of civilization,…in which the qualities of the mind are ranked above the qualities of the body, the condition of the weaker sex is gradually improved, till they associate on equal terms with men and occupy the place of voluntary and useful co-adjutors' (Mill, 1840: 445-447).

Photographic representations of the colonized Indian women, segregated into the double burden of colonized and of being woman, faced further representational violence in the canons of colonial photography. The colonial photographic albums contained pictures of high caste respectable ladies or rural,

Figure 10. Portrait of three women, probably a mother and her two daughters - Eastern Bengal 1860's

Figure 11. A Darjeeling Thief, 1875. Unknown British Photographer. Courtesy: George Eastman Archive.

vulnerable looking, malnourished women from the famine years. The albums

also had a distinctive liking for nautch girls, bazar women and courtesans. The

albums generally illustrated the categories of Indian women in ways that were divided such as the exotic, respectable and vulnerable. The historical-social excuse for last category (see Fig. 10) was not the responsibility of the colonial regime. At least thirteen major famines happened in India between 1769 and 1900. Studies have shown that women are affected by famines in many ways of added malnourishment, renewed trafficking, or sexual vulnerability. As if greater the visibility of such women, the greater burden of civilizational responsibility was deployed on part of the colonizers, at least in the process of contemporary critical historical thinking.

Bernard Cohn has suggested that the British till a point of time in 'nineteenth century felt most comfortable surveying India from above and at a distance – from a horse, an elephant, a boat, a carriage or on a train…Indians who came under the imperial gaze were frequently made to appear in dress and demeanour as players in the British-constructed theatre of power, their roles signalled by their prescribed dress, their parts authored by various forms of knowledge codified by rulers who sought to determine how loyal Indian subjects were to act in the scenes that the rulers had constructed' (Cohn 2004,10). Even if this was not true in cases of pictorial/photographic representation, the British photographers carefully chose sitters for the photographic albums, composing them into suited backdrops, which will largely form one of the popular ways through which the notion, if at least physical and sartorial, about Indian women and their 'Indianness' permeated. It reified as shock the already existing divides

of class and caste in India. By bringing respectable women, at least in the early stages, out of their veil, and making their photographic image available for a wide public, it reified the deification of certain classes of women in the social economy of gender.
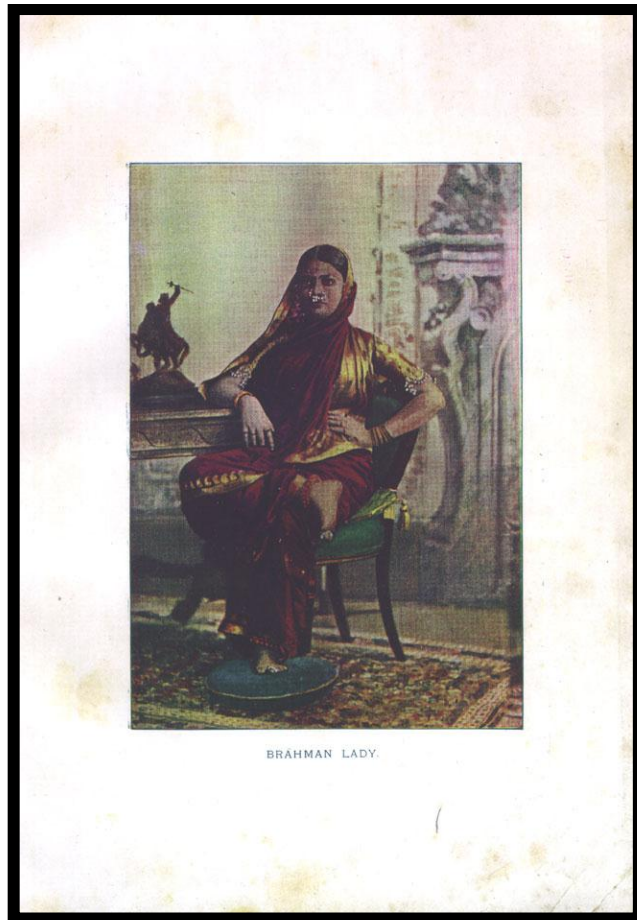
BRÁHMAN LADY.

Figure 12: Brahman Lady from *The Typical Pictures of Indian Natives* **(hand coloured print)**

One of the most time-tested representations of Indians in the colonial iconography was the high caste graceful saree-clad woman (Fig.12). The highly organized photographic compositions would always locate the lady as

respectable, fleshed out in her performance, which involved a dense matrix of the luxurious dress and jewelry, posture, the backdrop and the marital insignias. Unmarried Hindu women were rarely seen in early printed colonial photographic albums.

Gradually in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century pictorial/photographic representations of the stereotypes of Indian womanhood began to be distributed through the popular picture postcards. Here many more typified representations of women engaged in various kinds of work were published. Always, such as the early representations in colonial albums, the picture postcards relied on social difference. The more plebian and unwelcome sisters of the Brahmin lady such as the ayah and the sweeper (Fig. 13 and 14), nautch girls and the Hindoo lady from the became subjects of picture post-cards.

Figure 13. Indian Nanny, White Children, Toy Poodle Dog. Cabinet Photo. (left) Figure 14. Collecting Bullock Droppings. c.1880's. (right).

Figure 15. Studio portrait of young woman with basket and broom, India, c. 1921 (left)

Figure 16. Nautch Girl. Calcutta. Picture Post card from Roessler & Co. This picture probably derives from a photograph by Samuel Bourne taken in 1860. (right)

Ceylonese women, Tamil women, scavenger women, Parsi women, Maharashtrian women, 'Bengali Beauties', couples depicting various regional types, 'Gentoo Dancing Girls', 'Cooly Woman', 'Group of Famine Stricken', 'Lucknow Beauties', nude photos of tribal women and 'beauties' and a range of such others formed the corpus of the picture post-card commerce. Another point of interest for institutional photography was to identify possible individuals and communities whose practices wandered at the threshold of the Indian societies such as the sannyasis, fakirs, dacoits, thugs, pastoralists, herders and entertainers; people who could not be fitted in the established schema of the modern ideated by the colonizers. Dressing and specific trades with strict enunciations of the gendered division of labour found its visual representations in line with Victorian notions of modesty and culture.

Within two to three decades after its arrival in India, photography was taken up by the colonial state. In 1861 local governments in India were issued with an instruction to collect photographs of tribes and castes under their jurisdiction. This was reinforced at the end of the year by a further request for 'photographic likenesses of … races and classes' to be sent to the Central Committee of the London Exhibition in Calcutta. As C. A. Bayly observed that the British empire of information even in India did not always have a firm foundation. 'Despite new institutions designed to hoard and preserve information – the science of statistics, trigonometrical surveys, revenue records and oriental societies – much of the deeper social knowledge the European conquerors had once possessed withered away as expatriate society became more hierarchical…despite the accumulation of the records of rights and agricultural statistics after 1830, networks of information beneath the level of the district office remained tenuous. In 1857, much of the British system of espionage and control was swept away in a matter of days and had to be reconstructed from scratch' (Bayly 2007, 365). The diffraction was created as photographs filtered through various sections of the colonial bureaucracy imposed a distance between the voice that spoke about the images and the images themselves. Consequently, the viewer/reader is invited to share a superior knowledge that is denied to the photographed subject. In the process, subjects and individuals are transformed into illustrations of a general thesis. The scientific and the curatorial thrust of the salvage paradigm though followed with rigour in the late-middle decades of the nineteenth century was lost in portions when popular reproductions such as the

picture postcards emerging from similar canons of colonial photography began to transpire from various parts of the colonial state.

With the emergence of cheaper and easier means of exact reproduction at the turn of the century, imitations, copies, counterfeits and techniques to produce them were all challenges to the aristocratic monopoly and control over signs, which were part of traditional patriarchy. The question of mimesis here is of a social power founded on the capacity to produce equivalences. Baudrillard further writes that it is clearly in the nineteenth century, beside developments of new industrial techniques and new forms of political power, a new kind of sign emerges. These new signs, "potentially identical objects produced in indefinite series", herald the moment when the problem of mimesis disappears – "The relation is neither analogy nor reflection, but equivalence and indifference. In a series, objects become undefined simulacra of each other…" (Baudrillard 1976, 86).

As observed by Parayil (2003), within the context of colonialism, photography as one of the technologies of memory supplemented the nostalgic remembrance of the individual by the reproduction of her own past as a sign of difference. The colonized body and a desire to possess a new individuality and an unconscious obsession with tradition signify the new social formation of colonial modernity. It is also significant that the camera intervened within private sphere of the family and thereby went towards a representation of public within

131

private. The reciprocity between public and private spheres and an emergence of public spaces within private domain is a major area of colonial photography. Mentality of people remains connected with past. A rejuvenation of the past and an identification of modernity in tradition became a chief characteristic of colonial modernity. Colonial modernity, in which the rise of the family album was witnessed, was not an antithesis to tradition. It is in mutual coexistence with tradition. It can at best be a twofold representation of the bourgeois ideology and tradition (Parayil 2003, 97-120). It is in this specificity of the historical, women have been subjected to representations, within the rubric of colonial modernity in Bengal. Hitherto 'private' modes of domesticity, deified repression of the women and the peace in the family could now be technologically reproduced and preserved as documents of indigenous progress with the new technology simultaneously keeping intact the 'honour' implicated in Hindu and Brahmo women in Bengal. Gendering could actually be played out in front of the camera with regard to positioning, dressing and choice of co-sitters for the women. The conquered space of domesticity could now be put into closer inspection of the male gaze of the colonial modern.

A few months after its innovation and development in Europe, photography was first used in India in 1840. In January 1840, *Thacker, Spink & Company* of Kolkata advertised imported daguerreotype cameras in the daily *Friend of India*. (Pal et al, 1986: 182) *Victorian India in Focus*, a collection of photographs from India published in nineteenth century, records how 'exciting'

photographs of Indians, animals, architectures and landscapes were photographed by the British and how obstinate natives oddly behaved during posing and photographic sessions. In the collection, only one native photographer featured and without acknowledgement. He was Ali Ahmed Khan, a police official from Hosenabad, well known as *Chhota Mir*. Ali Ahmed Khan's area of photographic practice was Lucknow, just before the sepoy mutiny in 1857. The 'India Office Library and Records' archives more than hundred salt prints by Khan.[29] He even led a force of mutineers in 1857. In 1841, the Bangla newspaper *Sambad Bhaskar* was advertising the willingness of an English resident of *Armani Bazar* to make daguerreotype likenesses. (Pinney, 1997) The first photographer in India was Mons F.M. Montairo, a resident of Kolkata, he advertised in *'Englishman'* on 6 July 1844 – 'Mons F.M. Montairo, No.7, Wellington Square begs to inform the public that he is prepared to take likeness by the daguerreotype process. He visits private residences when 'required'. Nothing much more is known about him. (Ghosh, 1988:19)

Photography entered colonial space of India, where the visual already had an articulated role in traditional practices of Hindus mainly, where stress was on the aspect of *'darshan'*[30]. Early Indian photography became a dominant tool for representing regional identities in India in frame of the 'other'. These were areas

[29] For more detail on Ali Ahmed Khan see Siddhartha Ghosh, *Chobi Tola : Bangalir Photography Charcha* (Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Private Limited, 1988).

[30] Generally meaning seeing, vision. As a word of Sanskrit origin, it is a widely used word in Hindi and Bengali, referring to multiple usage. As a philosophical category *Darshana* of the deity refers to a certain privilege for the looker in the Indian context. Christopher Pinney uses the word to depict and enter into the world of Indian visuality. He points to a primacy of seeing in the Indian cultures, but does not build on it. The concept of *Darshan*, even if informed heavily by the looking, doesn't stop at that. It can also mean, in specific contexts, seeing without looking.

of targets where justification for imperial drive could be settled and arguments about civilizing drive of European colonisers could be justified. The process started quite early through pictorial / photographic representations. Like blacks, Indians, especially females in India, faced a process of double othering. Reproduced generally as effeminate, the Indian male was portrayed as finite sections of workforce, traders, criminals, lawbreakers, superstitious mass without the capacity of reason. Women were deferred another step back vis−á−vis their already veiled representations inside Indian societies. Broadly speaking early Indian photography, attested the stereotyping and gendering of women inherent in various Indian traditions of representation.

Joseph Mullins in his talk 'On the Applications of Photography in India', delivered to the Photographic Society of Bengal in October 1856 stressed its anthropological value in capturing "all the minute varieties of Oriental Life; of Oriental Scenery, Oriental nations and Oriental manners'.[31] G. Thomas in his copious work narrates that in 1861 local governments in India were issued an instruction to collect photographs of tribes and castes under their jurisdiction. This was reinforced at the end of the year by a further request for 'photographic likenesses of … races and classes' to be sent to the Central Committee of the London Exhibition in Calcutta. Soon, in the works of Captain W.R. Houghton and Lieutenant H.C.B. Tanner 'environmental portraiture', in which a homology between the sitter and the background is invoked, led the way towards

---

[31]Cited in John Falconer 'Ethnographical Photography in India: 1850−1900', *Photographic Collector*, 5 (1984), 16.

'anthropological' images. Captain Fitzmaurice, Lieutenant R.H. De Montmorency, T.T. Davies, Captain Allen N. Scott, Linnaeus Tripe, Robert Gill and others were part of the official brigade of photographers on behalf of the Government. They photographed natives, tribes, monuments, temples and murals. William Johnson's *The Oriental Races and Tribes, Residents and Visitors of Bombay: A Series of Photographs with Letterpress Descriptions* (two volumes, 1863 and 1866), depicts Johnson's anthropological quest for a difference. As Pinney records, Johnson signaled out that one of his concerns was with systems of identification that included physiognomy, and, in the case of Hindus, bodily marks, and, among Parsis and Muslims, costumes. Johnson also provided short notes on how best to recognise Christians, Bene Israel, Chinese, Malays, Arabs, Persians and Africans.

Evidence of the quick spread of the photographic apparatus throughout India can be retrieved from a report of an exhibition in Nagpur in Central India in 1865. The comments on Section B (Fine Arts, Class III – Photography) recorded: 'The collection under this class was very large, some thousands of photographs being contributed by Amateur and Professional Photographers from all parts of India.'[32] Although with phenomenal use and spread of photography, not always did photographs remain individual in the sense that they can be properly distinguished with a subjective identity that has been part of the critical thinking of modernity. Proving of ethnographic points came to occupy a vast

---

[32] Cited in Pinney, *Report of the Nagpore Exhibition of Arts, Manufacturers and Producer* (Nagpur, 1865), 97.

portion of the domain of official photography. To illustrate this point Pinney (1997) cites the Haddon Collection in Cambridge University's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (Pinney 1997, 45). The majority of images contained in the archive have certain blankness about them: poses and expressions frequently memorialize indifference and bafflement in the face of the photographer's attempts to visualize categories (Pinney 1997, 48).

The documentation that began in the hands of the state machinery, did not always confirmed to strictest benchmarking. A sort of visual intimidation precipitated in arranging the sitters, positioning them, arranging their props, choosing the backdrop. Even if it became a bit out of the 'naturalness', sitters were destined fit into colonizer's categories, which were moulded already into regions of production of knowledge within the discourse of Orientalism. This process has been argued as 'textualization' by Edward Said, in which the fluid reality of life is converted into volumes collated in libraries, material artifacts in museums and other registers of documentation; it is underpinned by a 'citationality', a continual invocation of parallel proofs in these other registers (Said 1985, 23). Said problematises by saying that there is never a single Orient to depict. There has been no such thing as a pure unconditional Orient. The conceptual categories and structures of signs that came to the erection of the colossal amount of knowledge from indigenous people were only turned towards them in process of subjugation. Photographs became essential signs for both colonizer and researchers/knowledge producers in different ways. To quote Foucault (2002):

'The sign, since it is always either certain or probable, should find its area of being within knowledge. It was not knowledge that gave them their signifying function, but the very language of things. From the seventeenth century onwards, the whole domain of sign is divided between the certain and the probable, that is to say, there can no longer be an unknown sign, a mute mark. This is not because men are in possession of all the possible signs, but because there can be no sign until there exists a known possibility of substitution between two known elements. The sign does not wait in silence for the coming of a man capable of recognizing it: it can be constituted only by an act of knowing … The constitution of the sign is thus inseparable from analysis. Indeed it is the result of it, since without analysis the sign could not become apparent. But it is also the instrument of analysis, since once defined and isolated it can be applied to further impressions; and in relation to them it plays the role of a grid, as it were. Because the mind analyses, the sign appears' (Foucault 2002, 65-67).

The analysis and meaning making of the Indian traditions of photography and its impact in the Indian domain, as Judith Mara Gutman (1982) has shown, can be traced through interventions by Raja Ravi Varma, a prolific painter, who aimed at mass picture production through oleographs and chromolithography. Pinney differs from Gutman in this regard. According to him, historical conjunction of different media, at a particular moment, provides a more

137

satisfactory framework in which to understand emergence of new forms of visuality than the culturally reduced forms as spoken by Gutman. It was evident in early photographic practices of Indians that retraining of court painters as photographers led to direct overlaps between painterly and photographic practices and imagery. Pinney, however, mentions that "such observations need to be situated historically" (Pinney 1997, 62).

The emergence of a new visual culture towards the turn of the century made a direct appeal to traditional motifs and concerns but Pinney's stress is on the historical context through which these were mediated. He comments that unlike Gutman's version of the eruption of an unchanged Indian psyche, they are highly complex and modern attempts to formulate visual identities under specific historical and political conditions.

I have tried to trace briefly major developments and shifts in photography in India, both in the hands of the colonial state and indigenous practitioners. This has been partially done to enter into the photographic scene of Bengal, to be more precise, that of Calcutta, as most developments were centered on this growing metropolis, capital of colonial India till its shifting to Delhi. This overview would also help us analyse women's photographs in private collections/family albums in Chapter 3. To situate and analyse women's photographs in private collections and albums, I need to historicize the historical and political contextualization of photography before going into questions of

138

gendering and representation of women in photography. In the second section, I will briefly trace the regional developments and patterns emerging in Bengal. It has been mentioned that beginnings of photography in Bengal were more or less synchronous with that in India. In fact, much of early important activities regarding photography were centered on Calcutta. Here, I will draw on some early milestones and patterns of engagement with the medium in Bengal.

In the time and space of colonial modernity, as discussed earlier in this dissertation, the conscious approach towards mechanically reproduced real by the emerging new urban middle class was growing in leaps and bounds. The elite practices of owning reproductions through landscape and portraiture painting, was fairly out of reach of the upcoming middle class. They sought a gratification of the new desire in a medium much cheaper and more accurate than previous other techniques. Consequently having a feel of the reproduced real in the private domain.

Malavika Karlekar (2005), in her pioneering survey of photography in Bengal argues that to add a visual element to a history, context, or even relationship, that may have been written about, discussed, and analysed is not merely to slip in 'pretty or telling' images. Rather, she argues, 'reading' photographs is to introduce another dimension to the experience of colonialism in Bengal. With the advent of colonial modernity and its institutions of education, professionalism and commerce, it led to a 'controlled fuzzing of the

limits of racial divide' (Karlekar 2005, 4). Among the few-shared public spaces after 1860s, photographic studios emerged as one. Karlekar argues that studios emerged as a democratic space where the 'pourousness' of colonialism was acted out. To quote:

> "Where control over access to physical space was a marker of racial and colour difference, the studio acquired a curiously powerful status. The white rulers and their subjects shared the same physical ambience sequentially in a social regime where access to clubs, railway compartments and even benches was determined strictly on the basis of colour and racial origin." (Karlekar 2005, 4-5).

From 1870s to the early decades of twentieth century, photography played a significant role in construction of the social and family history of the region. The *bhadra samaj* in Bengal accepted photography as a useful innovation that fractured the public/private dichotomy without too much dislocation. The varied degree of exposure of public in private and private in public through photography also helped, to some extent, the project of reformers and English educated middle class and babus to make a controlled exposure of their women (mostly wives and relations and even in some cases mistresses). It was necessary to prove the teleological point of being a *bhadralok* who shares a social space with the *bhadramahila* in nineteenth and early twentieth century with some

differences from the figure of the *babu*—the nineteenth century figure of the Bengali dandy.

While studio photography continued to occupy an important place in the hierarchy of photographic images, by 1915 domestic photography by amateurs grew in popularity. For the literate, middle class Bengali *bhadraloks* mostly employed in salaried jobs*,* photography was useful in depicting family life and the professional roles that they had newly acquired. To quote Karlekar:

> 'The photographs recorded individuals for prosperity; it also portrayed the emergence of the conjugal unit, the child and the woman who was no longer expected to observe the rigours of parda' (Karlekar 2005,4).

Structures like evolution of family, progress of girl's education, women's emergent roles and other similar / dissimilar discourses were, to a large extent, helped by the dynamics of the new visual space. The debut of photographs into Bengali middle–class homes from the 1870s onwards can be seen as an affiliation between colonized and colonizer, where the technology of photography went inside Bengali homes in a spirit of assimilation. Nineteenth century Bengal witnessed a period of transformation and conflict both among the middle–class *bhadra samaj* and the colonizers. Changes in the sphere of the social began to materialize at many levels. Sections of *bhadra samaj,* which

were increasingly moving away from land-based occupations to professions such as government service, law, medicine and teaching, were simultaneously redefining their lifestyles. The foregrounding of the rational outlook was important to such changes in the process of refiguring in which women emerged as a primary exhibit. Shifts in patterns of visual representation were one among many. Changes in lifestyle, family arrangements, in modes of dress, demeanour and social relations were going hand in hand but fettered with conflicts and in a variable pace with regard to class positions. The exposure that women began to receive (through photography in this context) was largely determined by the traditional patriarchal discourses. As an illustration, it can be mentioned that a woman from a Brahmo family with more liberal outlook was expected to get a richer share of public space than a woman from an orthodox Hindu-Brahmin family. With the selective coalescing of the public and the private, a colonial hybrid, to use Homi Bhabha's formulation, emerged and in the transformation of which questions of originality and mimicry subtly merged. Ruptures between tradition and modernity were evident in debates pertaining to acceptance or resistance to changes in spheres of identity formation brought in by colonial modernity.

The history of photography in Bengal was in many ways linked with the growth of Calcutta as the presidential city of the Raj and the emergence of *bhadra samaj*. The region was vital to the British and it is estimated that in 1856–57, Bengal, with Calcutta as the focus, contributed forty-four per cent of

142

the British Indian revenue. Beside this, Calcutta was the focus of a growing public sphere, location for cultural interactions beyond the family and witnessed emergence of the new white-collar worker. The home too, became an arena for change and adjustment; and the camera was a vital tool for recording roles and relationships. Photographers gradually replaced portrait painters. Beside studios and professional photographers, early pioneers in Bengal were Birchandra Deb Barman Manikya, the Maharaja of Tripura, Manmathanath Ghosh, Samarendrachandra Deb Barman, Nilmadhav Dey, the founder of The Bengal Photographers (1862)**,** Charuchandra Dey. The Calcutta Art Studio established by Annadaprasad Bagchi (1878), Motilal Nag (father of Kalidas Nag), Gaganendranath Thakur, Upendrakishore Ray, Kuladaranjan Ray of the same Ray family, Hemendromohan Basu, more popularly known as H. Bose, Abinash Dhar, Parimal Goswami, Ramananda Chattopadhyay of *'Prabasi'* and *'Modern Review'* fame, D. Ratan and Company, Charuchandra Guha (C. Guha studio at Albert Hall, College Street , Kolkata) and others were pioneers of photography in this region. Siddhartha Ghosh in *Chhobi Tola: Bangalir Photography Charcha,* traces a detailed history of photography in the city and the path-breaking developments in photography in Bengal.

As a last detour before Chapter Three, I will briefly mention the women photographers, both of foreign and Indian origin, who began to work concurrently with these developments in the nineteenth and early twentieth century in Calcutta. It will also provide the gender-scape from the producer's

perspective and how women from orthodox societies negotiated themselves as subjects before the camera. Evidently enough, and without any official records, it will be not any great risk to mention that the number of men photographers and owners of studio were far more greater. Siddhartha Ghosh (1988) in his meticulous survey of photography in Bengal has provided detailed commentary on major Bengali women photographers.

Mrs. E. Mayer was one of the earliest professional women photographers in Calcutta. In 1863, at the address, *7 No. Old Court House Street Corner,* she opened a studio especially for women clients. Although success of the studio is doubtable but one portrait done by her was published in December 1864 issue of the *Journal of Bengal Photographic Society.* In 1857, *Photographic Society of Bengal* had eighty-eight members of whom four were women and all of them were whites. Among women pioneers, Gyanadanandini Debi, wife of Satyendranath Thakur of the illustrious Thakur family took to photography in the nineteenth century and was probably the only female in the family to do so. Ghosh has traced a few professional women photographers in late nineteenth century Kolkata who were employed in various studios in the city. Mrs. V. N. Bibra and Miss Nickels were employed at *Hop Singh & Company* at *Chowringhee Road*. In 1885, at the *Westfield and Company*, a photographer named Mrs. Allen was employed. *Mitter & Company* was the first Bengali run institution to have employed women photographers. Miss S. Ballah, plausibly

Indian in origin worked as a photographer at *B. Dutta and Brothers* situated at the *Chitpur Road*.

The first Bengali professional women photographer to open a studio in late nineteenth century was Sarojini Ghosh. There is confusion about whether she is the same person as Aurobindo Ghose's sister of the same name. Her *The Mahila Art Studio and Photographic Store* at *32 Cornwallis Street*, earned much repute as is evident from a report of January 10, 1898 published in the *Amritabazar Patrika* with the title 'A Lady Photographer'. It appreciated her 'finish'; asked for more support from the citizenry so that she can take more photographs of women in *antahpur* and mentioned that she produced bromide enlargements and *platinotypes* at competitive prices. In an advertisement published in the same newspaper on 16 February 1899, we also get to know that the store produced photographic likeness on silk and even dealt in photographic emulsions.

Ghosh traces another woman photographer who started working as a full time photographer from the 1920s. Annapurna Debi (1894–1976), met with phenomenal success as a photographer during 1930s and 1940s. She had not established any studio, but worked from home and went out to take photographs. She did printing, finishing and every part of the photographic process including developing. Many Muslim families accepted her as 'family photographer'. Well-known public figures like Hasan Surabardi, poet Jasimuddin, Abbasuddin

Ahmed, the prolific folk singer of Bengal were among her clients. She was close to the family of famous sociologist and ethnographer Dineshchandra Sen. Later in her life, when she left the photography business, she started a society for women called the *Azad Hind Bag Mahila Samiti*.

During 1930s, the most well-known professional women photographer was Edna Lorenge. Competing with her was Chanchalabala Dasi of *5 No. Bibi Rosio Lane*. Curiously enough, Chanchalabala's studio address falls within the map of a very old red light area in Calcutta, commonly known as *Harkanta*. Prostitutes presumably were the bulk of her clients. Their way of living itself demanded them to be photographed. Probably these women were the first to enter a studio. They credibly also used photography as a marvel of modern enjoyment as did the literate and *bhadra samaj* of Bengal. Actresses of the Bengali Stage and early cinema used to showcase their photographs with men of social standing in their parlours. To Ghosh, probably these acted as socio–legal documents, as most of these early women were not from the *bhadra samaj* being literal outcasts. Whether, Chanchalabala, the photographer, wanted only them as her sitters is unknown.

Two more photographers, sisters, are noted by Ghosh: Mira Chaudhuri and Indira Debi. Born in 1905, Mira Debi and her sister Indira, got the first inspiration in photography from their father Dr. Dwijendranath Moitra, a close associate of Rabindranath. Dwijendranath himself was a photography buff. Mira

started taking photos from the age of twelve / thirteen with a Browny 2 Box Camera. She photographed her days in Darjeeling and her travels abroad, especially to England, where she went with her husband Prabhat Chaudhuri, just after marriage. She also photographed Rabindranath and captured him in 8 mm movie, parts of which have been used by Satyajit Ray in his documentary on Rabindranath. Her sister Indira, although not having such an extensive career like her elder sister, was also an expert in tabletop photography and in abstract compositions.

Annapurna Goswami's career in photography has a different trajectory, which cannot be simply termed 'amateur'. Born in 1916, her father Nitischandra Lahiri was a reputed advocate and general manager of *Columbia Pictures*. She was also a writer. Her photographs like her writings portrayed the downtrodden and life at lower rungs of society. Her subjects ranged from women of refugee families, children in search of warmth beside railway stations, abundant sacks of rice lying on railway stations in times of famine. Her oeuvre also captured the scenic beauty of nature. She learned photography, for some time, from Parimal Goswami in the 1930s. Her literary works were well received and Goswami was conferred upon with various honours and prizes, mainly for her literary deliberations. She passed away, untimely, only at the age of forty-one.

Another couple of sisters made a mark in photography in the early decades of the twentieth century. Monobina Sen Roy and Debolina Roy (nee

Majumder) appeared in between 1937 and 1940. Their photographs were regularly published in the *Illustrated Weekly*. The only women photographer to have published her work in 1951 volume of *Twenty Five Portraits of Rabindranath Tagore* was Monobina. Debolina Roy had a fecund career in photography. Her works are widely published and she majorly photographed foreign lands. In 1988, when Ghosh was doing his researches for his book on photography, she was the president of the *Photographic Society of Bengal*. She lives in Kolkata now. From the 1937 / 1938 issues of *Sachitra Bharat*, a Bengali language periodical, names of other women photographers like Ila Mitra, Kananbala Chattyopadhyay, Pakhila Kalita (from Gouripur in Assam), Bithi Roy, Baby Chaudhuri, Renu Dutta Majumder, Renu Majumder (from Delhi), Apu Chatterjee (from Gauhati), Bubu Roy and others can be traced, but their works are not archived. A last mention must be there of the Maharani of Maharaja Birchandra Deb Barman Manikya of the royal family of Tripura. The Maharaja supported the Maharani's in practice of photography.

In the above section, I have tried in brief to lay out early women practitioners of photography in Bengal. Coeval to this process, an equally complex area of family photography began to develop roughly from the 1870s. Like other urban centres in India, it was hugely popular in Bengal and was chiefly practiced by the newly established studios in the city of Kolkata. In the following section I will converge from the greater Indian experience to Bengal

which in many ways was symptomatic of the genres of domestic photography simultaneously unfolding in other urban centres and princely states of India.

The rise of modernity in various spheres of life conditionally redesigned existing norms of representation in which the visual appeared as a primary category where shifts began to happen. The development of photography, its skyrocketing popularity, the emergence of compact families and changing roles of women are interlinked in a mesh of macro and micro changes in the realm of the social and the technical. Like other changes in the process of production and labour since the nineteenth century, the camera, and the dominant modes of representation pertaining to it, was controlled by a patriarchy more hegemonic than overtly repressive.

What Walter Benjamin called 'cult' value of the picture was effectively abolished when photographs became common as to be unremarkable; to be consumed and thrown away. Being photographed was no longer a privilege. Beyond the apparent democracy of the medium, it was soon to become a new kind of power on the social body, generating new kinds of knowledge and newly refined means of control.It was also significant that the camera intervened within private sphere of the family in the region by the late decades of the nineteenth century and thereby went towards a representing of what was public within private. The reciprocity between public and intimate spheres and an emergence of public spaces within private domain is a major arena of domestic

photography. Within the context of colonialism, photography as one of the technologies of memory supplemented the nostalgic remembrance of the individual by the reproduction of her/his own past as a sign of difference. The colonised body and a desire to possess a new individuality and an unconscious obsession with tradition signified the new social formation of colonial modernity. Colonial modernity, in which the rise of the family album was witnessed, was not an antithesis to tradition but rather was in mutual coexistence with tradition (Parayil 2003, 97-120).

`The ambiguous sign of science, as a multivalent sign 'traversed a vast arena, encompassing fields from literature to religion, economy to philosophy, and categories from elite to popular. Such divisions overlook and conceal how politics and religion, science and the state run into each other, how it is precisely through spill-overs and transgressions that modernity penetrates the fabric of social life'(Prakash 2000, 7). It is in this specificity of the historical, women have been subjected to representations, which mostly have been the handiwork of a predominantly male gaze within the rubric of colonial modernity in Bengal. Hitherto 'private' modes of domesticity, deified repression of the women in the family could now be copied and preserved as documents of indigenous progress with the new technology simultaneously keeping intact the 'honour' implicated in women. Gendering and power could actually be played out in front of the camera with regard to positioning, dressing and choice of co-sitters for the women. The conquered space of domesticity could now be put into closer

inspection of the institutions of conjugality and notions of romantic love which were rather facilitating than coercively restrictive among the middle-class milieu in Bengal.[33]

From the 1870s to the early decades of twentieth century, photography played a significant role in construction of the social and family history of the region. To Malavika Karlekar, adding a visual element to histories, contexts, or even relationships, that may have been written about, discussed, and analysed is not merely to slip into 'pretty or telling' images. Rather, she argues, 'reading' photographs is to introduce another dimension to the experience of colonialism in Bengal (Karlekar 2005, 4). The *bhadra samaj* accepted photography as a useful innovation that fractured the public/private dichotomy without too much dislocation. The varied degree of exposure of public in private and private in public through photography also helped, to some extent, the project of social reformers, the educated Bengali middle class and the *babu* to make an exposure of their women in respective ways. For the *bhadrasamaj,* photography was useful in depicting family life and the professional roles that they had newly acquired.

Structures like the evolution of the family, progress of girl's education and women's emergent roles were, to some extent, helped by the dynamics of the

---

[33] For a detailed account see Tapan Raychaudhuri. 2000. "Love in a Colonial Climate: Marriage, Sex and Romance in Nineteenth-Century Bengal" in *Modern Asian Studies* Vol. 34, No. 2, pp. 349-78; and Sambuddha Chakraborti. 2003. "Conjugal Relations in Early Nineteenth-Century Bengal: Conditions before the Growth of a Private Relationship" in Anuradha Chanda, Mahua Sarkar *et al*. eds. *Women in History*. Kolkata: Progressive Publishers, pp. 95-129

new space of the studio and the camera. The debut of photographs into Bengali middle-class homes can be seen as an affiliation between colonised and coloniser, where the technology of photography went inside in a spirit of assimilation. Since the mid decades of the nineteenth century, sections of *bhadra samaj,* which were increasingly moving away from land-based occupations to professions like the government service, law, medicine and teaching were simultaneously redefining their lifestyles. The foregrounding of the modern rational outlook was important to such changes in the process of refiguring in which women emerged as a primary exhibit. Shifts in patterns of visual representation were one among many. Changes in lifestyle, family arrangements, in modes of dress, demeanour and social relations were going hand in hand but were fettered with conflicts and in a variable pace with regard to class positions. And for the evolving nationalist paradigm in the nineteenth century it was necessary to cultivate the material techniques of western modern civilisation while retaining and strengthening what was projected as distinctive spiritual essence of national culture. The emergence of such a woman involved not only adjustments in traditional mindsets but also appropriate education, training in household-management skills, dress reform and increased visibility in social spaces (Karlekar 2005, 93–94).

As Karlekar observes, 'With changes in family dynamics, it became imperative for [the] woman to visit the studio as well. Public viewing through the photograph so to speak, of mothers, wives, and sisters, was integral to the

152

affirmation of emerging identities and an engagement with gender relations. In a formerly parda society, visibility of woman became a metaphor of their changing status. And as Calcutta increasingly afforded the opportunity for new definitions of the household, family, conjugality, parenting and childhood, the camera was available to record them' (Karlekar 2005, 94). In most formal or informal couple photographs from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the couple was seen blissfully separated from the complex and restrictive formation of the joint-family system. Newlywed couples made best use of photography and the studio space 'to create public and formal representations of the bourgeois couple from among themselves' (Majumdar 2009, 127). The romantic freedom in everyday lives and the ideals of the couple formation that were not so easily found in the space of the reconstituted joint family at the turn of the century, established a place of representation in the widely popular photographic images of the conjugal couple.

Even if the nationalist and other concomitant discourses in Bengal tried to devise a monolithic identity for women, identity remained ruptured. Performances of the self before the camera can make representation go beyond the grasp of normative economy of visual framing. As representational spaces, studios and photographs opened up possibilities of identity formation and performance of the subject in the changed historical context. Economic, social and political events in the region and related forms of knowledge in turn produced new sensibilities for the people within parameters of social spaces. It is

where the inter-subjective communication and negotiation is made possible for the subjective refashioning and invention of the modern self. Rational or imaginative emotional histories also shape perceptions of the people through its workings in social spaces.[34]

The case of the early photography in the region, whether the official anthropological drives or the emerging domestic genre, made use of the figure of the woman either to showcase the unfortunate or the exotic found in the Oriental stock of women or in a different context of history bring forth the women in the family as markers of progress and modernity. The history, in a way, begins here and into the decades of the twentieth century, when the representations of women would negotiate in complex ways the apparently easy definitions of themselves that were offered in the region of early photography.

---

[34] For a detailed account, see Henri Lefebvre. 1991 [1974] *The Production of Space*, Donald Nicholson-Smith trans., Oxford: Basil Blackwell. According to Lefebvre (1991, 33, 73, 26) social space can mean a subjective space where the subject's actions are intertwined with negotiations and "In reality, social space 'incorporates' social actions both individual and collective who are born and who die, who suffer and who act." It is the consequence of past action and coevally it permits novel actions to take place, while suggesting others and forbidding some...Among these actions some serve production, others consumption. "(Social) space is a (social) product [...] the space thus produced also serves as a tool of thought and of action [...] in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power…"

Chapter III

Situating the Archive, Locating Bengali Women in Photography

3.1. Introducing the Digital Photographic Archive

…And yet, and yet, there is a future for the Archive, perhaps, and there is, perhaps, an archive for the future…

Dragan Kujundzic
Archigraphia: On the Future of Testimony and the Archive to Come

…This is the landscape closest to us, the world most immediately met. But with this quantifiable meaning creeps another, never far behind: the everyday as value and quality – everydayness… Here the everydayness of everyday life might be experienced as a sanctuary, or it may bewilder or give pleasure, it may delight or depress. Or its special quality might be its lack of qualities. It might be, precisely, the unnoticed, the inconspicuous, the unobtrusive…

Ben Highmore
Everyday Life and Cultural Theory: An Introduction

In this Chapter, I will introduce the archive which informs the scope of the thesis. After which I will move on to a conceptual analysis of archive as a place of storage, knowledge production and epistemological intervention. This will be done mainly through the reading of the concept of archive as a political-historical construct, critiquing it though post-structural and feminist thinking about the nature and scope of the archive. With the context of the archive as an active backdrop, I will move on to discuss the specificity of the colonial Bengali Hindu and Brahmo women in the context of family photographs and albums.

From 2008 to 2010 in over a span of little more than two years, I had been engaged in collecting photographs of Bengali middle-class women mainly

from the city of Kolkata and its suburbs as in the North and South 24 Parganas districts. On one occasion in 2009, I had visited, along with a technical team, to Santiniketan in Bolpur, Birbhum district, West Bengal to access a few family albums and digitize them onsite. The objective of the field work was to collect family photographs and albums mostly on a random basis due to the near ubiquitous presence of family photographs and/or albums in middle-class households.

I have not used the strictest sociological control categories for defining the middle-class rather I have tried to define it culturally. The middle-class in the Bengali conception arises roughly from the nineteenth century. Rather than being a class defined traditionally by its income, the middle-class in Bengali social life has come about to be informed by formal education, salaried profession, hetero-normativity, genteelness in public transactions, continuing practices of traditional rituals, familial morals and the importance of hetero-normative domestic life. Training in the literary sensibilities and arts, interest and participation in political activities such as white collar unionism, specific reading habits, use of places and spaces of homo-sociality such as the drawing room in case of older households (*baithakhana*), the library, neighbourhood clubs and associations and a number of other such criteria can be brought in define the mentalities, the cultural construction and the emotional histories of the middle-class in Bengal. As evident, this list is neither exhaustive nor the standard for the formation of the middle-class in Bengal. This umbrella term, middle-class is a cliché in daily

usage of the language and often in various aspects of the social it is referred to as a pejorative epithet to signify stagnation, mediocrity, unimaginativeness or lack of courage.

Historically, the middle-class in Bengal has been the dominant constituency of people, who have shaped the milieu and its sensibilities of a kind of overdetermined *Bengaliness*. It often spills out of demography, census, and professions to signifieds in the sartorial presentation of the body, choice of language, demeanour, choice of food or love of particular sports such as football. As we generally receive it, the Bengali 'middle-classness' lies more in choices of cultural tropes rather than belonging to a sociologically defined income-band. It can also be defined as a heterogeneous community whose concern, efforts and social aspirations with the use of Bengali and English languages has played important role in defining itself as different from the other Bengali societies divided across class, caste or religion. I had, while planning the collection and the field-work, kept open all the possibilities of the broadly cultural in visiting families, setting up appointments, digitizing the collection and harvesting metadata. I followed a random branching out method while approaching families and individuals for their family photographs. All photographs—other than which had been censored by the owner in whose name the collection remain—in the family albums or collections were digitized and the physical copies returned. No financial exchange happened between the researcher and the donor. A few times I have come up with resistance and money in exchange for the photographs. In

most cases, the donors understood the non-commercial aspect of the research. They were willing and happy to share the photos. Where, there were justifiable reasons for monetary remuneration in exchange of photographs, I had back out. I will now briefly, in a discontinuous way, signpost the major ways in which this sample size of more than 12,000 photographs was digitized.

The process of building the Archive has taken to me to many families and individuals in the region. Barring a few initial glitches and dead ends, response from donors and the families had been warm and enthusiastic. Without the sincere help from the people out there, the digital archive could not been a reality in 2010. On one hand the donor families and individuals became related to the Archive in a certain way, as its' *'their histories and memories'* the archive chose to preserve digitally, on the other, I feel that only a layer of that history lies here while many other layers remain to be looked at critically at the level of collection and information gathering. With the ever broadening horizon of the possibilities of interpreting the archive as a backdrop for various kinds of analysis, I have, in two years, archived 12,000 images and metadata in the digital format. In course of the intense field work from 2008 to 2010, I came across individuals especially women whose memories and recollections of peoples, places and incidents while identifying photographs, could be a potentially untapped source of social history of Bengali urban middle class women in the twentieth century.

As with all other archives and set of data, there is the essential question of inclusion and exclusion. To begin with I had the idea of collecting only photographs of women, as the title of my research suggested. Soon this became a problematic. Similar to the lived reality throughout the twentieth century in the socio-historic context, frames in which women appear all-in-self were few. So the initial plan was changed to initiate digitization of complete family albums. It was an effort not to disrupt the almost unconscious narrative that each collection had to tell. Exclusion had not been an easy process for me and the more we went deeper into collecting, the predominance of the family form in the region, its sacred and profane everydayness, its sorrows, joys of family life, the little excesses in domestic spaces that women created for themselves – an afternoon session of *adda* or an informal session of *Atulparasadi*[35] songs accompanied by the family harmonium – captured in celluloid confronted me with much life.

Refigurations of women in the dichotomized private and public spaces found in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century iconography of the figure of women began to change through the advancing twentieth century. The unyielding look in the formal wedding portraits and couple photography, were giving way towards acknowledging the mundane. Facilitated by the facts that the

---

[35] Atulprasad Sen (20 October 1871 – 26 August 1934) was a Bengali composer, lyricist and singer. He is principally remembered as a musician and composer. His songs centred on three broad subjects- patriotism, devotion and love. The sufferings he experienced in his life found their ways into his lyrics; and this has made his songs full of pathos. Atulprasad is credited with introducing the Thumri style in Bengali music. He also pioneered Ghazals in Bengali, composing about 6 or 7 ghazals. URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atulprasad_Sen accessed on 13.1.2013.

camera was getting more mobile with the years and the growing number of amateur shutterbugs among family members and friends, photographic representations of women began to take note of the profane moments of daily lives while not leaving out formal occasions at home or in neighborhood studios. A large part of the sample photographs attest to such changes in the representational spaces of the middle class family in urban Bengal. In invoking everyday lives, I felt, I was invoking precisely those practices and lives that have been traditionally left out of the general historical accounts, swept aside by the onslaught of big events.

Photographs, especially from the decades of twentieth century, can raise the question the very nature of the apparent transparency of the daily lives. Photographic representations might render it as problematic and contested given the highly gendered implications of the socio-historical contexts from which the visuals emerged. Therefore the interpretative possibilities of the photographs will vary according to the perspectives of the user. Regardless of its content, the archive as an ideological space works to contain, organize, represent, render intelligible, and produce narratives. The archive has long occupied a privileged space in affirmative culture, and as a result, the archive has been revered from afar and aestheticized, but not always understood as a potential object of critical practice. For Freud and for Marx, the everyday is both real and unreal, both actuality and the disguise of actuality. The birth of the disciplinary self, modernity, the family, the woman in the family and outside the physical

160

boundaries of the domestic, the surveilling camera, stereotypical poses before the camera reminiscent of the emerging popular cinema cultures in India are a few elements among many that has contributed towards a somewhat different type of historical narrative on a general level in the photographic image based production of the pastiche. Such lives of women have been otherwise quite often forgotten in other more real registers of the social. In that sense, as Ben Highmore (2002) argues that its starting point could be the idea that the everyday presents us with a recalcitrant object that does not give up its secrets too readily. The archive provides the time and space to think through. The complex relation between photography and formation of subjectivities, between gender and cultural milieus can be sourced from the photographs. Can it be done without the seeming problems of signification? Conventional uses of photographic archives are of an illustrative character subordinate or add-on to writing. Quite often it argues for 'visual histories' of women. I will also question such approach to understanding representations of women through photographs.

How can we envision the archive as a site of ethics and/or politics? Is it at all a possible task given the archives' long and strenuous history as institutions that marks knowledge emanating from it with specific politics of gender and language? These are also questions that confront almost every archival practice including mine. Besides the archive simply representing a place and space to amass resources, it can represent a site to make visible a history of the present. In short, what happens when we move beyond the archive as merely a collection

161

and begin to theorize it as a site of constant renewal and struggle within which the past and present can come together? Although sharing the commonalities of the universal visual, the resources of this archive, speaks a more idiomatic language, the nuances of which lies in the Bengali milieu. This is not to demand a Bengali essentialism with regards to visual representation of Bengali women but to point out the importance of marking and reading differences from specific regions and cultures. The emotions, the workings of the memory, the sublime in the frames, the fine details, the corners, and the background all have the mediation of a language no less literary or colloquial than the written one. Leaving the general speculations, for later questioning, let me again come back again to the questions of the orgainsing the collection of photographs. These probable spaces of investigation as I was going through the collection process, meeting people, talking to them and would often return without what can be called 'fruitful' information about the photographs. These were points when the structured readings of the photographic representations of Indian women, in literatures such as Malavika Karlekar's (2006) could not have dealt with the representations of common middle-class women. Especially when historical analogy or histoy to the pictorial depictions is absent or silent. Here it should be mentioned that Karlekar (2006) chose exclusive women of the nationalist historical period and photographic moments of pertaining to imagining and building the nation. This is not say, that such lives and histories did not affect lives of the comparatively more plebian middle-class women who had as such no participation in dominant episodes of national histories. Nonetheless, Karlekar's

account remains one of the pioneering works of visualizing Indian women in the space of national history from the late nineteenth to till India's independence from colonial rule in 1947.

Simultaneous to the process of collection of photographs the work of identification of photographs by the donors and harvesting of metadata went on. As most donors were elderly people who gave us time in identifying photographs and narrating anecdotes regarding the photographs, I had to always give preference to their time and often failing health. Most of this work went beyond the scheduled working hours of the University and stretched from any time between early in the morning and late at night. With this survey of the process of collecting of data I will now discuss the problem of the nature of the archive itself, especially when it emanates knowledge about the colony and the post-colony and about women inhabiting real and imagined places and imagined spaces within this umbrella rubric.

3.2. Possibilities of the Archive as the Sensorium of the Social: Terrains of Contestation

It is a basic understanding of the technical nature of the archive—a technologically reproducible digital archive in the case of this dissertation—that it is a place which will produce particular kinds of information for its various

receivers leading to production of knowledges. The inferential production of knowledge from the archive supposedly presupposes a kind of knowledge that the archive already exists. Without the archive how can the intellectual and the scholar move in ways of thinking about knowledge? With this question, I will begin by reading through Dominick LaCapra's (1992) 'Intellectual History and Its Ways' where he argues for a complex coming together of history and theory while critiquing Russell Jacoby's work on critical theory and the intellectual. This will provide me to the tool to begin avoiding historical reductionism and at the same time arguing for a history which will try its best to 'represent' the woman in the context of the dissertation—i.e. family photographs. But for now, let me go back to LaCapra's argument.

LaCapra (1992) underlines the importance of the stressed contact between empirically based reconstructions of the past and dialogic exchange involving the 'intellectual in the intellectual historian' and the scholar. He critiques the general scientism in positivist tendencies that reduces the problem to a generalized solution which effects in the great objectification of the other. In such a process the position of the researcher is generally sealed or accepted as resolved. LaCapra (1992) argues for a requirement of

'a certain combination of "objective" reconstruction and dialogic exchange in which we check our tendencies towards projection and narcissistic enclosure in order to understand the other as other and enter

into a non-invidious having both normative and cognitive dimensions'
(Capra 1992, 429).

Towards the end of the essay he argues that the apparently easy relationship between text and contexts cannot be taken for granted as contexts can be thought of as mutually involved in contestations furthering the problem of situating the text in it. The greater the emphasis on an unproblematic realist history of the object and on 'clarity' as opposed to understanding without the schematic closures of methodology of the disciplines, there is more chance of reifying the nineteenth century 'realism' akin to the natural sciences. On the other hand, according to White (1975)

> 'But what a 'realistic' conception of history might consist of was as much a problem as the definition of such similarly illusive terms as "man", "culture" and "society". Each of the most important cultural movements and ideologies of the nineteenth century—Positivism, Idealism, Naturalism, (literary) Realism, Symbolism, Vitalism, Anarchism, Liberalism, and so on—claimed to provide a more "realistic" comprehension of social reality than its competitors' (White 1975, 46).

The work of photography and possibly for any archive dealing with 'texts' of photography can be easily seduced by the 'realistic' modes where both the object of research—literally the 'realistic' photograph—and the researcher

patch with each other in an often seamless way of history writing. This can be a strategy but only limited to the extent that this will, in its choice of syntax, and methodological boundaries, might end up producing what has already been produced as 'knowledge' about women. This is again, not to say that every work of the archive will produce 'new' knowledge of women or must produce such knowledge. In so far the process might end up in its own chimera of misreading and overlapping new information as knowledge. A reading on the scope of the archive, especially from the perspective of colonial history and post-coloniality wherein the question of the 'object' and the 'reader' and the specific contexts in which these can be selectively produced and re-produced, will situate my argument for a post-structuralist reception of the concept of the archive. This I will do through Spivak's (1984) essay 'The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives' which reappeared in a reworked fashion in 'Critique of Postcolonial Reason (1999) where she complicates the notion of the reception and production of archival knowledge. The archive that Spivak reviews and rereads mainly are the Bengal Secret Correspondences of the colonial government. Before doing so Spivak argues for a revisionary perspective in the moment of the post-colonial which *per se* is allowing the emergence of the "Third World" as a 'convenient signifier' and further argues, as the main tenet of the essay, that the question of fixing in the figure of the "Third World Woman" as a signifier 'as an object of knowledge'. Asking for a re-politicization of British India which in the present has been constructed as 'cultural commodity with dubious fiction', she faces the difficulty in attempting to read a figure from

British India as an object of knowledge. Trying to re-open the case of the Rani of Sirmur via the same archive of colonial documents which has produced and erased the figure, she is positing a critique of the disciplines of history through White who is questioning the dominance of the archive in the process of historical knowledge:

> 'That language…is the instrument of mediation between the consciousness and the world that consciousness inhabits [White writes with some derision]…will not be used to literary theorists but it has not yet reached the historians hoping, by what they call a "sifting of the facts" or "manipulation of data", to find the form of the reality that will serve as the object of representation in the account that they will write "when all the facts are known" and they have finally "got the story straight'. [36]

Although Spivak (1999) expresses her anxieties over the 'wildly speculative way' in producing an ontological eminence of the "past" used by LaCapra (1983), she uses LaCapra's argument against an unthought-of passion of 'archivalism':

> 'indiscriminate mystique…which is bound up with hegemonic pretensions…The archive as fetish is a literal substitute for the "reality of the past" which is "always already" lost for the historian. When it is

---

[36] Cited in Spivak (1999), Hayden White, Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism, 1987, pp. 125-126.

fetishized, the archive is more than the repository of traces of the past which may be used in its inferential reconstruction. It is a stand in for the past that brings the mystified experience of the past itself—an experience that is always open to question when one deals with writing or other inscriptions.'[37]

The reconstruction of the past, ostensibly the main tasks of archive, more than often, severe the intricate associations with the sociopolitical anchorage, to becoming a choice of the archivist and the historian to put forward the project of reconstruction of the past. In doing that, we are risking, not only a naïve move of particularly extracted representations that are used as a tool of the project of history the structure of which might have been already conceived or given. As Spivak (1999) puts it the context of the correspondences between the governer-general of India and the court of Directors in London on the matter of "allowing half-pay subalterns to serve with regular troops in Native governments" in which case, the governer-general is admonished for proposing the inclusion:

> 'If the project of Imperialism is violently to put together the episteme that will "mean" (for others) and "know" (for the self) the colonial subject as history's nearly-selved other, the example of these deletions indicate

---

[37] Cited in Spivak (1999), Dominick LaCapra, Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1983, p. 344.

explicitly what is always implicit: that meaning/knowledge intersects power' (Spivak 1999, 215).

Before coming back to Spivak's (1999) thesis on reading the archive, let me for now, go to Dreyfus and Rabinow's (1983) explanation of power in Foucault's enunciation in case of disciplinary technologies and social institutions. In the Foucauldian understanding the working of power is multidirectional, beyond the grasp of political institutions in, producing a productive role. Foucault (1983) thinks of three kinds of possible genealogical moves which can affect subject formation.

'First, an historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, an historical ontology of ourselves in relation to a field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, an historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents' (Dreyfus 1983, 237).

The structure of the genealogies holds firm ground when one looks into the imagination of the subject formation in the colonial historical backdrop. The three processes, if happening at the register of he perceived real, mostly happens simultaneously. Let me for an example, briefly go through, Rabindranath

Thakur's 1916, novel *'Ghare Baire'*[38] and especially try to think of the figure of Bimala, wife of Nilhilesh, the zamindar, around whom the plot unfolds. Two aspects here are important. First, Bimala's construction as a modern woman who 'breaks the barrier' of the inner quarters of an otherwise orthodox Hindu undivided landowning family and 'come out' to the 'world'. Second, what happens when ideologies of Nikhilesh, the landed gentry and husband of Bimala and Sandip, Nikhilesh's friend and a nationalist leader, starts to describe and imagine Bimala. The novel is set in the backdrop of the emerging anti-colonial nationalist movement (*swadeshi*)—a project which has begun imaging the ideal woman much before to 1916 from the middle decades of the nineteenth century through social reforms of Bengali women.

The historical ontology of the construction of the Bengali *bhadralok* roughly began with the introduction of English after the 1835 Macaulay minutes and western forms of knowledge in the curricula thus constructing a form of subject whose construction was dependent on the technologies of the modern and a simultaneous utterance of difference with the modern when it came to women and gender. The formation of the nationalist imagination also demanded the reification of women in the reconceptualising of the self as the 'mother'—the protector of the sanctity of the home and the marker of the difference with the West. As Das & Chaudhuri (2007) have shown that the "polyvalent nature of the colonial interaction and the multiplicity of the ways in which the interaction has been formed into a narrative" (Das & Chaudhuri 2007, 1484-1485) leading to

---

[38] Trans. The Home and the World.

"conceiving the public space in terms of community grounded on affective values, the nationalist discourse projected family as a key institution in shaping the nature of public life. What was being legitimated in a new way was the claim of the nation to imbue the space of the intimate. The entire system of marriage, including non-consensual indissoluble infant marriage, woman's monogamy and ascetic widowhood, was redefined (in terms of love). The Hindu women, sacred and chaste, formed the true patriotic subjects, while the family constituted the nation in inception. The good woman, the chaste wife and mother empowered by spiritual strength became the iconic representation of the nation" (Das & Chaudhuri 2007, 1484-1486).

In this broad rubric of thought which has informed much of the nationalist literature on women, popular and otherwise, multiple contested readings of the enunciation and the subjectivation of the woman in the national imagination of the colonial and the postcolonial have taken place (Bagchi, 1990, Sangari & Vaid, 1989, Sarkar, 1987, Sen, 1993, Krishnamurty, 1989, Sinha, 1995, Chatterjee, 1993, Forbes, 1999, Chowdhury, 1998, Bannerji, 2001, Sarkar, 2001, Sarkar & Sarkar 2008).

'Traditional social ideology and practices were regarded by most shades of nationalists as the one domain that was unmediated by foreign rule, the

one independent space. Women and peasant, the only people as yet unpolluted by western education, could preserve the purity of that domain, 'if our womanhood is made to lose direction, then the nation's defeat would be complete. If, like the so-called enlightened, westernised Indian man, the Indian woman also takes its western education and changes her own nature and religion then our subjection would be extended from outside to our innermost core!' The woman's body was the ultimate site of virtue, of stability, the last refuge of freedom. Independence, like a hidden jewel, could be detached from external surroundings that spelt defeat and yet be concealed in the very core of the woman's body. This is perhaps the reason why we note an obsessive preoccupation in early patriotic literature with sati—through her own self-destruction she preserves this concealed in-dependence from being usurped. Very often, an implicit continuum is postulated between the hidden, innermost private space, chastity, almost the sanctity of the vagina, to political independence at state level: as if, through a steady process of regression, this independent self-hood has been folded back from the public domain to the interior space of the household, and then further pushed back into the hidden depths of an inviolate, chaste, pure female body' (Sarkar 1987, 2014).

The 'woman', in colonial historiography, was a contested site of 'honour' where the indigenous intelligentsia, the reformers, or communities divided across

lines of religion, caste and class and the colonial regime participated with differing agendas of constructing a modern identity for the woman. The invention of modernity and the much debated area of the colonial-modern in India were argued over the real and imagined constructions of the 'modern woman'. The constituency of this 'modern', as part of imagining the nation , was done on one hand over the essential difference with the West in matters of the honour of the women and her chastity leading to her deification as the goddess of the home, the proper site of cultural nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.   On the other hand, the woman, thus constructed and imagined via tropes of the everyday practices such as veiling and selective unveiling, education, feminine curriculum, advice manuals, acquiescent representations in the oleographic popular prints such as from the Raja Ravi Varma Press and the Calcutta Art Studios among others, left the real woman out of the processes, if any at all, of choosing her own agency. Deified, as the *debi* or the mother in the iconicity of art practices, both popular and institutional, or in the anchorages of the religio-cultural, the figure of the woman is lost. The woman as produced by the nationalist imagination which has continued reverberations well into the twenty-first century remains available as in representations. By saying this I am not arguing that there should be available for epistemological inquiry the 'presence' of the real woman which leads to another set of inquiries through the disciplines of knowledge that have rendered the woman docile. By using the word 'docile' and the phrase 'docile bodies', I am invoking the Foucauldian meaning in this context. The use of Foucault's concept

of docile bodies is removed from the context of imaging and constructing the body of the woman in the Indian colonial and postcolonial contexts and is specific to bodies such as the institutionalized figures of the trained European monarchial regiments in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries or of contexts where bodies were in need of correction. Even if the historical context is different, the use of the methods of turning individual bodies into objects where choice and agency are extremely restricted if not absent through the mechanisms of subtle coercion can be visualized in case of the figure of the widow or the girl adolescent. It provided, ways,

> 'of obtaining holds upon it at the level of the mechanism itself movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity: an infinitesimal power over the active body…it was not or was no longer the signifying elements of behaviour the language of the body, but the economy, the efficiency of movements, their internal organization; constraint bears on the forces rather than on the signs; the only truly important ceremony is that of exercise. Lastly, there is .the modality: it implies an uninterrupted, constant coercion, supervising the processes of the activity rather than its result, and it is exercised according to a codification that partitions as closely as possible time, space, movement. These methods, which made possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed on them a relation of docility-utility, might be called "disciplines"' (Foucault 1984, 181).

The regime of strict subjection, even if operational at the level of imagination, nonetheless, did not hold a water-tight ground for describing and re-producing the 'woman'. The 'woman' considered as proper subjects of the reformation, 'newness' and obedience were mainly high caste women in Bengal. It formed only a part of the whole spectrum of women in Bengali societies. Critique of the cultural nationalism in Bengal and in various parts of India, have already established, through literature, history and other disciplinary methods that women, in spite of such attempts, remained visible and invisible in multiple registers of the social. If, that is already part of the accepted post-colonial historical re-reading Bengali women, why are we not questioning the methods of archival reading when it comes to pictorial/photographic archives? Representations of women and its contextual uses in various phases of Indian history, in the popular canons of Indian art such as the calendar art, the sculptural traditions or the re-awakening of the ideal Indian woman in the Bengal school of art have been studies and critiqued as bearing essentialising, eroticizing or exoticizing trends and tropes. (Guha-Thakurta, 2007, Ramaswamy 2009, Guha-Thakurta, 2004, Chatterjee, 1990, Jain, 2007, Uberoi, 2009) If the analyses of the histories of Indian women and their particular representations have addressed such cultures, then I am attempting in the scope of this dissertation, a re-location of the nature of generalized acceptance of the realist tendencies in the photographic representations of Bengali middle-class women. If other spheres of representations of women, however much well-documented and accepted, have

been subject to feminist critique, can the photographic archive hold back its 'true' ground for long?

I will try to answer that but before that let me go back to the figure of Bimala once again. Read at one level, *Ghare Baire* is a novel dealing with the love triangle, if it at all can be called so. But what is important to us is Bimala's representation. She enters the rich zamindar family through marriage from an orthodox Hindu background. Bimala finds the opposite to what she has been trained to expect at the marital family. She finds her husband a facilitating gentleman who wants her to learn the ways of the time and she is put under the training of an English governess. Nikhilesh wants Bimala to venture out and 'see' the world and in the way, breaking the tradition, Nikhilesh introduces Bimala to Sandip, who is staying with them for the time being to carry forward the work of *swadeshi* nationalism in Nikhlesh's country. A tale of adulterous love follows between Sandip and Bimala, where the love for the motherland and his desire for Bimala was fused into one. This depiction was highly critiqued by the Bengali orthodoxy. (Sarkar, 2003[1]) In fact Rabindranath received multiple letters from readers despising his exposition of the domestic goddess to the lust of the villain Sandip. He even published his response to the spate of criticism in *Sabuj Patra*, (1322 BS [1915]) the Bengali language periodical where the novel was being serialized where he defended it generally as more of a work of art rather than a mirror of reality.

Sarkar (2003[1]) shows the accepted feminist reading of Bimala, who as a woman, has been written upon by the two men who renders her as a 'feminine' figure in different ways. The subjectivity, as produced of Bimala by the two men in the structure of the national imagination, differently but intimately connected to her, can be read as symptomatic of rendering the woman as well-made but without her own enunciations of subjectivity. What was new and perhaps the cause for the anxieties it caused in the milieu of the Bengali middle-class orthodoxy, was that Bimala represented her own voice in the novel. Bimala in ways counters the male gaze of different types as articulated through the protective and facilitating attitude of Nikhilesh, the husband, Sandip, the nationalist figure and the lover and in Amulya, in whom she finds her instincts of maternal love and caring. She might appear as a subject who has been thoroughly made by men in their own projects of nationalism and desire or facilitating the advent of modernity in the embodiment of women. At the same time as Sarkar (2003[1]) point out that Bimala articulates her desires but gets trapped in history and the social:

> 'Bimala possesses sexual and political will and autonomy, but she cannot imagine a form or identity that can adequately hold and express them…Why is there an absence of stable form that is not just a travesty of the old? The turn of the century modern woman, acquired split representations: either lampooned as mimic Victorian lady or a shrewish folk devil, or as the preternaturally solemn, puritanical, sexless creature

of reformist homes, while the transcendent icon at all times is always that of a luminous, gracious mother figure. Her autonomy therefore, had no adequate image, from which it could be reflected back to her as coherent fullness. Her autonomous self appeared to her as a series of dislocations. Perhaps Rabindranath did not develop an alternative embodiement for the modern woman because he saw her as always faced with impossible choices, with a difficult freedom' (Sarkar 2003[1], 38-39).

The tendencies and the ways of representations that Bimala, in course of the narrative, exhibits and suffers from, might do some work in summing up Foucault's three genealogical moves of subject formation. But seemingly, as in the representation of Bimala, which might be read as suggestive of women per se, there is a purported closure within the categories of historical ontology. But have we been able to account for who Bimala was? Das (2006) have argued that even at the end of the novel *Ghare Baire*, when Bimala possibly gets back to the home passing through the subject formation of the outer world as in Sandip's desire transforming herself from the figure of the *bhakta* to *devi* and her experience with Amulya's death gain giving her role of the 'mother-as-nation' to 'natural-mother', her seeming stability is transient. Sandip flees the zamindari of Nikhilesh in two ways. Firstly to save himself from the fires of the communal violence that he himself has prompted and secondly also as he has fallen in the eyes of Bimala, through his activities in *Sukhsayor* and expositions of ruthless self-interest. Also in the end of the narrative and the reader is unsure of

Nikhilesh's physical wellbeing and is acutely aware of the changed status of the relationship they had, even within the marked differences of gender, after Bimala's exploits with Sandip. Now is a time when Bimala faces a blank and her incommensurability of her representation—as a woman. To quote Das (2006):

'Where does Bimala turn to? To a re-turn that is rendered impossible through the labyrinthine shifts in relations? To a subjectship as the human as marked by the norms of the 'man'? To a woman-hood as subject-victim of patraiarchy-nation-family?...the simple progressing structure [of her subjectivity] is rendered ironical by undecidabilities at every turn. Is the *bhakta* subjugated or free through a prior surrender? Is being a *devi* a divine occurrence or a passionate entry into desire? Indecisions rock the structure as well as well as individual moments and figures. The text foretells a failure. Can a woman really go beyond the enmeshings of gender and the nation that implicates her? Can the woman 'speak'? Is it imperative that she watches on to the corpse of the Amulya, haunted by the yet unknown death/life of Nikhilesh, toying with the idea of reaching out to a pistol at hand?' (Das 2006, 308-9).

Anxieties are already pouring in—will it be a possible of representing well the woman, given the apprehensive nature of the works of representation, literary or the visual? The traditional historical methodologies of knowledge

179

production have left little space, for the literary or the articulations of a complex subjectivity of Bimala. Foucault (2002) argues for a historical *a priori* which he claims 'is not a condition of validity for judgments, but a condition of reality for statements' (Foucault 2002, 143). It also accounts for the fact that the discourse of the *a priori* has a history which cannot be reduced to meaning or truth but

'…that it involves a type of history –a form of dispersion in time, a mode of succession, of stability, and of reactivation, a speed of deployment or rotation – that belongs to it alone, even if it is not entirely unrelated to other types of history. Moreover, this *a priori* does not elude historicity: it does not constitute, above events, and in an unmoving heaven, an atemporal structure' (Foucault 2002, 143).

Given this layered articulation of the *a prioris*, which forms a kind of substratum on which a kind of the work of history might be possibly performed, Foucault moves on to try a definition of what he will like to describe as the archive. He is invoking the density of discursive practices instead of the linear history in the process of the archive. Simultaneously, the archive deploys and distinguishes heterogeneous spaces.

'Instead of seeing, on the great mythical book of history, lines of words that translate in visible characters thoughts that were formed in some other time and place, we have in the density of discursive practices,

systems that establish statements as events (with their own conditions and domain of appearance) and things (with their own possibility and field of use). They are all these systems of statements (whether events or things) that I propose to call *archive*' (Foucault 2002, 143).

Ostensibly, this can be a liberating move from the judgmental materiality of the *thingliness* of the object in archive. It might also be a helpful ideological critique of the historical reception and production of the archive and its transference from the places of royalty to the public in the nineteenth century—a moment of democracy when, historically, for the first time, the public, which has been the object of knowledge in the archive, looks into its own histories and dispositions in the archives of governmentality (Osborne, 1999). Further moved, through the experiences of the postcolonial,

'as the postmodern suspicion of the historical record. As Robert Darnton puts it, "hard facts have gone soft." Many scholars (whether or not they describe themselves as postmodernists) have come to understand the historical record, whether it consists of books in libraries or records in archives, not as an objective representation of the past, but rather as a selection of objects that have been preserved for a variety of reasons (which may include sheer luck). These objects cannot provide direct and unmediated access to the past. Historian Dominick LaCapra has described the dangers of the "archive as fetish," of believing that the

archive "is a literal substitute for the 'reality' of the past which is 'always already' lost for the historian' (Manoff 2004, 14).

Foucault furthers his definition of the archive as a place where the piling up things as an nebulous mass is halted but at the same time there is no effort to describe things and objects in the archive in a linearity emanating a definiteness. I will resort to the last longish quote from Foucault to put forward the point:

'The archive is not that which, despite its immediate escape, safeguards the event of the statement, and preserves, for future memories, its status as an escapee; it is that which, at the very root of the statement-event, and in that which embodies it, defines at the outset the system of its enunciability. Nor is the archive that which collects the dust of statements that have become inert once more, and which may make possible the miracle of their resurrection; it is that which defines the mode of occurrence of the statement-thing; it is the system of its functioning. Far from being that which unifies everything that has been said in the great confused murmur of a discourse, …it is that which differentiates discourses in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own duration. Between the language (langue) that defines the system of constructing possible sentences, and the corpus that passively collects the words that are spoken, the archive defines a particular level:…between tradition and oblivion, it reveals the rules of a practice that enables

statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification. It is the general system of the formation and transformation of statements' (Foucault 2002, 146).

It remains an argument with much clarity and speaks of the possible everyday moves of the archive and its associated practices. At the same time, where 'exactly' can we place the 'histories' of the woman of the proper name Bimala in such an archive? The sheer density of the 'experience' of the woman Bimala remains un-enunciated through most of the modern historiography. An archive of Bimala, pertaining to her representations, is a strategic and important step for feminist ways of history making— contributing to the 'mode of occurrence of the statement-thing; it is the system of its functioning'. It surely produces information and history, looking at the archive also can be a moment of solace for the things and time lost especially when we turn to women as a classifiable category of demography, census, history, ethnography or of the family album. But does it produce knowledge which is specific in nature to the specific nature of the object in the archive? It might look as if it is an essentializing move—a thing which most feminisms have avoided. Let me risk, for now, keeping it alive and read Derrida, partially through 'Of Grammatology' and more extensively through 'Archive Fever' in an attempt to arrive at the conceptualization of the nature of the archive affecting representations of women. Before that I will refer to a point Zizek (2008 [1989]) in order to recapitulate the nature of the question regarding representation, in a distant

ground of photographic representation of women and archive. According to Zizek (2008) the bone of contention between Descriptivism and Antidescriptivism lies at a very fundamental stage. The question is 'how do names refers to objects they denote?' (Zizek 2008, 89). The descrpitivists would argue that each word refers to a bunch of expressive topographies and the word will refer to an object featuring more or less the bunch of features. He gives the example of the word 'table' and the group of features that correspond in reality to the word table, thus 'intention' gaining 'logical priority over extension'.

> 'The antidescriptivists answer, in contrast, is that a word is connected to an object or a set of objects through an act of 'primal baptism', and this link maintains itself even if the cluster of descriptive features which initially determined the meaning of the word changes completely... descriptivists emphasize the immanent, internal 'intentional contents' of a word' while antidescripivists regard as decisive the external causal link, the way a word has been transmitted from subject to subject in a chain of tradition' (Zizek 2008, 90).

This again brings me back to the fundamental issue at stake here whether to read Bimala, the singular woman, woman of and by the narrative, in her analogical descriptive fate or do we attempt to follow a causal link through which the concept Bimala, in her assertions and silences, might produce

meanings which is different from the analogical Bimala, but leaves traces to go back and search for the image of Bimala in the archive—albeit incomplete?

To further my project of problematizing the concept of the archive before looking into the photographic representations, I will try to do an inexhaustive and fragmentary reading of Derrida (1994 [1976]). In 'Of Grammatology' Derrida, points to the fact that the grammatologist cannot avoid the process of questioning himself about the origin of the essence of his object—'What is writing?' leading to the question about when and where does writing begin? Philosophical and teleological responses to the beginning of writing will be structured and self-evident via evidence which infrequently has been critiqued. This brings us to the question of representation lying at the heart of the writing. The self-evident nature of evidentiality of writing faces a transposition when Saussure takes his theme of representation of language by writing to positing that writing is unconnected to the inner system of language. This can, possibly be a schema of looking into the nature of archives, as it comes to us and the object of its representation. The realm of science was outlined by the old network of external/internal, image/reality, representation/presence and is now faced by the problem of trying to negotiate an originality that transpires through the opening of the 'image' within its field which appears as the condition of 'reality'. This relationship, Derrida argues, cannot be thought of 'within the simple difference and the uncompromising exteriority of "image" and "reality", of "outside" and "inside", of "appearance" and "essence" with the entire system of opposition

which necessarily follows from it. He argues that if writing is taken to be the clothing of speech, it becomes a "garment of perversion and debauchery, address of corruption and disguise…it is not a guise for the language but disguise"' (Derrida 1994, 33-35). And if this is the case then:

> 'One already suspects that if writing is "image" and exterior "figuration", this "representation" is not innocent. The outside bears with the inside a relationship that is, as usual, anything but simple exteriority. The meaning of the outside was always present within the inside, imprisoned outside the outside, and vice versa' (Derrida 1994, 35).

The problem of exteriority as meaning received immediately leads to the probability of a wrongness in reading. Evident by now, is that the concepts of stability, permanence and duration which assists the relationship between the speech and writing are open to critique but Derrida argues that they need more critical and close attention. Presuming the archive, to come, not as given but as a necessity in trying to graph representations Derrida writes that:

> 'the operation that substitutes writing for speech also replaces presence by value: to the *I am* or to the *I am present* thus sacrificed, a *what* I am or a *what I am worth is preferred*. "If I am present, one would never know what I was worth." I renounce my present life, my present and concrete existence in order to make myself known in the ideality of truth and value' (Derrida 1994, 142).

Indeed, as a distant horizon of truth and value, in these words one can try to feel the closures of Bimala's representation slowly opening such as in the end of the novel which leaves the reader speculating about Bimala's ultimate destiny or might rather briskly say her archival placing after she turns away from the relationship with Sandip to get back to Nikhilesh. She possibly cannot now get back to Nikhilesh, as the news arrives that her husband, who had rode away in the darkness of the yester night, to stop the communal riots in his land, has suffered critical injuries in his head. Rabindranath, opens the closures regarding Bimala's marital fate when they were expected to close toward a resolution through the epistemic violence of patriarchal reprimand or the attainment of a different subjecthood of the widow. At this point, seemingly baffled by the choices of poetic justice/violence on the subject of the archive—Bimala, woman, we should reread the concept of the archive itself and see if the task of the archive is possible.

'Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression' originated as a lecture delivered in 1994 and was first published in French in 1995 as *Mal d'archive: une impression freudienne*. It was translated and published the same year in the American journal Diacritics and as a separate English language monograph in 1996 (Manoff 2004, 11). Moving beyond the initial discussions around the etymology of the word archive where Derrida finds two principles of

commencement and commandment—*Arkhe* in Greek. But at the very beginning Derrida doesn't want to begin and even with the archive. Even while saying that political power is not possible if the archive is absent, he argues for a science of the archive where its theory of institutionalization must be included in order to inscribe itself and the right which authorizes the work of the archive. If a right can be thought of, there should be the presence certain limits which are parts of the 'deconstructible history' of the archive. Herein, Derrida, unlike other theories in the realm of poststructuralist thought, invokes the work of psychoanalysis as part of the deconstructive move he plans through his survey of the concept archive.

> 'Derrida claims that Freudian psychoanalysis offers us a theory of the archive premised on two conflicting forces. One is a death drive and the other is a conservation or archive drive that is linked to the pleasure principle. In this formulation, the archive affirms the past, present, and future; it preserves the records of the past and it embodies the promise of the present to the future. Derrida claims that what Freud posited as a death drive (or sometimes as a primal urge toward aggression and destruction) may also be characterized as "archive destroying." This death drive "not only incites forgetfulness, amnesia, the annihilation of memory. . . but also. . . the eradication. . . of. . .the archive, consignation, the documentary or monumental apparatus." According to Derrida, what is at work in the construction of the historical record is a negotiation

between the death drive and the pleasure principle, between Thanatos and Eros' (Manoff 2004, 11).

This longish quote, in effect a try at summarizing the essay and the book can at best be a one-dimensional template to read archive Fever. Derrida says that a recognition of the violence of power that posits and institutes the law and thereby the archive becomes its first figure. He places two secret sites of inscription that binds themselves. They are printing and circumcision both of which comes from Freud's own experience as a beginning, if at all, of the archival move's search for the external substrate of archiving. In the 'diabolical' death drive, through Freud, Derrida (1996) arrives at the exterior, the substrate, on which the archive can possibly happen. To Freud and his psychoanalytic school, the Freudian archive, as a basis for the most nuanced place for representation, begins the work of representing the outside an internal archivization through the machine tool of *Mystic Pad (der Wunderblock)*. The archive has always been a pledge and a token for the future. 'To put it more trivially: what is no longer archived in the same way is no longer lived in the same way. Archivable meaning is also and in advance codetermined by the structure that archives' (Derrida 1996, 18).

There is the necessity of finding the domestic outside alongside an internal substrate without which the works of consignation, registration, impression, censorship, and repression are not possible. This pushes us to signify

the idea of a psychic archive as distinct from spontaneous memory. This can be the possible site of a politics and a way of thinking the woman as represented in the scope of the archive. Here, Derrida, makes the existence and the politics of the archive possible as he says that like Freud who mostly never 'managed to form anything that deserves to be called a concept', he also only have impressions and a notion. He argues for the relative indeterminacy of the word archive. It is linked to the Freudian death drive without which a desire and a possibility of the archive would have been ineffective. In the possibilities of opening up the archive both as a recording of the pat and carrying a promise of the future, it carries often such as other concepts the 'unknowable weight' of repression and suppression. The work of the archive and its possible presence cannot be reduced to these unknowable. In the Freudian move, the one who gives birth to the archive is also the one who leaves impressions and thus gets marked it. The marking might be done knowingly or unknowingly, with or without acceptance, in her own culture and discipline. It is not another possible move to just speak from the archive without having been marked 'in advance' by this Freudian move—the Freudian impression. This radicalism of the inflecting the space of the archive and the epistemology it creates with the Freudian impression now possibly creates a place where, even if with a lack in its presence, the woman can be found (Derrida 1996, 29-32).

Let me, at this stage, and before completing the review of Archive Fever, cite Irigaray (1985) in order to appreciate the subjectivity of the woman, in order

that we might be able to place her, inadequately enough, in the themes of the historical archive. According to Irigaray, the woman has the responsibility of maintaining the 'object' end of the subject-object polarity of sexual difference.

> 'Is it necessary to add, or repeat, that woman's "improper" access to representation, her entry into a specular and speculative economy that affords her instincts no signs, no symbols or emblems, or methods of writing that could figure her instincts, make it impossible for her to work out or transpose specific representatives of her instinctual object goals?' (Irigaray 1985, 124).

In absence of the inability to perceive and think a space of the archive that could have, possibly, represented the woman in her impossibilities of subjectivities,, Irigaray argues for a turn toward the translation of the dictatorial repressions in the silent and cryptic script of the body language. This masochistic move on part of the woman, in absence of the conscious archive and language, to get back to her desires can happen in dream. The work of psychoanalysis as Irigaray puts it through Freud's Totem and Taboo, develops the dreams of the woman, the hysterical dream work of the other woman, will lead to the caricature of a work of art. Further, but a little before this argument was placed, in "Woman Is a Woman as a Result of a Certain Lack of Characteristics', Irigaray develops the idea of the specificity of the woman in the grid of differences.

'Femininity is instigated by a wave of passivity, by the transformations of the little girl's early instincts into instincts "with a passive aim" and by her perpetuating the "object" pole. When it really comes down to it, then, woman will not choose, or desire, an "object" of love but will arrange matters so that a "subject" takes her as his "object." The desirable "object" is always the penis, the phallus. Of the man (or) of the mother. Woman will therefore borrow from him or from them as much as she can, if she intends to sustain the "subject's" desire. If she wants him to love himself in her, (by the detour) through her. She is narcissistic, in fact, but only by phallic mandate, for, as we have seen, any narcissization of her own sex/organ(s) is completely out of the question. She is mutilated, amputated, humiliated ... because of being a woman (Irigaray 1985, 113).

Irigaray (1985) also lists the range of overlapping physical peculiarities of mature femininity which is available for representation, but is not sure as to which are ascribed to the effect of the sexual function and social upbringing. I will take three examples from the list which will help me to understand the representations and meaning of the concept woman, before looking at her at the visual archive. First, is the larger investment of narcissism to femininity leading to the stronger urge to be loved than to love. Second, the physical vanity of women, resulting in valuing their charm, as late compensation for the original sexual inferiority. Third, the sense of shame in women which is supposedly a feminine characteristic, but is purpose might be the concealment of genital

192

deficiency. On a general tangible visual level, narcissism, shame, and physical vanity are visible in the visual representations of women. But Derrida and Irigaray both push us to take into account the psychoanalytic 'lack' that is in need of addressing in the work of the archive. The historical material-based archive, the site of my praxis in this dissertation, as we get it, will in ways perpetually fail to account for it. This failure to account for the subjectivization of the woman represented in the archive other than the facts that the historian and the archivist will constantly severe the representative embodiment of the woman in the archive. This is apparently an enabling move helping in positivist classifications of the body and the backdrop leading to 'certain' proven knowledge about the woman. I will come back to Irigaray's position of the theory of subjectivity in Chapter 3.4. But for now let me attempt a final reading of Derrida's archive Fever. In the Foreword to the 'Archive Fever', he argues for the impossible task of asking questions about the history of the concept and of the concept of the archive. In ways where the work of the grammar and the language has given the concept of the archive a legitimate and neutral way nonetheless Derrida poses the question whether we have a univocal, consistent and homogenous 'relationship of any concept to a term or to such a word as "archive"?'(Derrida 1996, 33). Even if there is the dominance of the concept that marks the archive (as the past), the deconstructive move here would entail that the assurances provided by the meaning of the concept will lead only to closures of the past where the archive 'recalls faithfulness to the tradition' (Derrida 1996, 33). If at all a general and interdisciplinary science of the archive is possible it

193

has to include psychoanalysis as a general science of the archive. The archive is here meant as representing a space that can show all the 'economy of the memory and to its substrates, traces, documents, in their supposedly physical or techno-prosthetic form (internal or external: the mystic pads of the past or of the future, what they represent and what they supplement)' (Derrida 1996, 34). Derrida argues that psychoanalysis transforms the concept of historical truth— the object of the historian—in times of deciphering the archive, 'and the implications of the subject in the space he claims to objectivize' where chances of the rigorous truth or pure objectivization shrinks radically. In doing so and cutting across customary norms of scientificity, we are pushed toward an inspiration of the history of the truth and the truth between the unknowable difference between a Freudian material truth and historical truth. While the process of archivization is also a process of repression of elements that will never appear in the archive as evident and displayable, Derrida, through the work of Yerushalmi and about the memory of Israel raise the question"

> 'How does one prove in general an absence of archive, if not relying on classical norms (presence/absence of literal and explicit reference to this or to that, to a this or to a that which one supposes to be identical to themselves, and simply absent, actually *absent*, if they are not simply present, *actually* present; how can one not and why not, take into account *unconscious*, and more generally *virtual* archives)?' (Derrida 1996, 64)

The truth, which is in much claim in the work of the archive, and through it of historical knowledge, which I have already shown to be gendered as not provide a proper place for the woman, might be of very different nature. Our archives of materiality will proceed toward archivization but will only step back due to lack of the substrate on which it can write properly the object. Beside the differentiated material truth and the historical truth, there is the presence of the *truth of delusion* emerging from the work of psychoanalysis as of hauntedness, hallucination and delusion. The presence is always repressed but according to Derrida, it returns as the spectral truth and which is part of truth irreducible by elucidation (Derrida 1996, 87). Derrida problematises the concept of the archive but does not essentially do away with the notion of it. The archive, with its irreplaceable singularity of the document which it aims to interpret each time in its original uniqueness, should be available idiomatically, 'at once offered and unavailable for translation' (Derrida 1996, 87). He interprets and exposes the work of the archive as permeated with a political and ethical function that can only possibly happen if the historian, the user and the archivist will think of the incompleteness of the materiality of the object of representation in an epistemological framework.

From this point, we arrive at the very questioning of the being there of the archive even if it is present always as such with us. Given this lack, established by the psychoanalytic move of Derrida (1996), let me come back to Spivak's (1999) arguments about the construction of the Rani of Sirmur as an

object of knowledge. Spivak acknowledges the slips in representations that come up with the political nature of archival representation itself. Accordingly, she arrives at the historical function and the production of the archival knowledge, through the embodied histories of Rani of Sirmur, the ideational figure of the sati and Bhubaneswari Bhaduri. In the process, Spivak says that the identity-in-differential (as constructed by the subalternist historian Ranajit Guha) strategy of reading into the histories of subaltern turns into kinds of essentialist and taxonomic tasks. This further endangers the effort to locate the gender-segregated woman in history. To my task, albeit in a piecemeal fashion, I will take the definition of the third world woman that Spivak provides in order to move forward for now.

> 'Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling that is the displaced figuration of the "third-world woman" caught between tradition and modernization, culturalism and development' (Spivak 1999, 304).

With these two moments of the Derridian reading of the archive, as it is, as the place of a possible aporetic knowledge of the subject and Spivak's argument about the selective and 'disappearing' production of the knowledge of the object of the archive—the woman, I move onto the next part of my part where I will lay out the early historical-political background of the condition of women in Bengal. As a note here, to which I will return in Chapters 4 and 5, I

want to flag that in conceiving the collection of photographs—a work of/from the field travelling into the classifications of the archive—I too have risked brushing the perspective limiting the field of data more toward thinking probable closures of the project of relocating photographic representations of Bengali Hindu and Brahma middle-class women. Nonetheless, with the postcolonial and poststructuralist critical awareness of the loss of that the work of the archive will suffer, I move on.

3.3. The Colonial Condition in Bengal: The *Bhadramahila* as the Icon

The Victorian hegemonic disciplining of the social and a certain colonial modernity emerges in the nineteenth century through social reform movements led by the indigenous intelligentsia and the colonial state. Partha Chatterjee (1999) has shown that the figure of woman appeared at the centre stage of debates around modernity. The new woman (*nabina*, the popular epithet) differing from the figure of the *prachina* (the 'traditional' woman) would be virtuous through proper education and discipline. Typically bourgeois virtues of orderliness, thrift, cleanliness, and a sense of responsibility, the practical skills of literacy, accounting, hygiene and the ability to run the household according to the new cultural and economic conditions set by the outside world were necessary qualifications.

'Once the essential femininity of women was fixed in terms of certain culturally visible spiritual qualities, they could go to schools, travel in public conveyances, watch public entertainment programmes, and in time even take up employment outside the home. But the "spiritual" signs of her femininity were now clearly marked – in her dress, her eating habits, her social demeanor, her religiosity' (Chatterjee 1999, 37).

Chatterjee (1999) goes on to observe that the specific ideological construction of the 'Indian woman' in modern literature and arts is undeniably a product of the development of a dominant middle class culture coeval with the era of nationalism. Social reform movements in the middle decades of the nineteenth century and later nationalism and Hindu revivalism at the end of nineteenth century located its subjectivity in the transcendent domain of culture, where it considered itself superior to the West and hence undominated and sovereign. It could not tolerate an encroachment by the colonial power in that domain. Chatterjee shows that the 'issue of female emancipation' seem to disappear from the public agenda of nationalist agitation in the late nineteenth century because of the refusal of nationalism to make women's question an issue of political negotiation with the colonial state.

To quote Chatterjee:

'The simple historical fact is that the lives of middle–class women, coming from that demographic section that effectively constituted the 'nation' in late colonial India, changed most

198

rapidly precisely during the period of nationalist movement –
indeed, so rapidly that women from each generation in the last
hundred year could say quite truthfully that their lives were
strikingly different from those led by the preceding generation.
These changes took place in the colonial period mostly outside the
arena of political agitation, in a domain where the nation thought
of itself as already free" (Chatterjee 1999, 132-33).

Let us go back, briefly to the second half of the nineteenth century, when the general mood was that the birth of the girl child in the Hindu orthodox family was received as an indication of misfortune and much woe (Chakraborty 1963). If we set aside this general apathy for the girl child in Indian society which continues till today, Bengal was witnessing the rise of class of gentleman or the bhadralok whose identity was formed in difference with the *chotolok*. The new class although divided by caste origins exhibited a few common parameters in situating their identity in the colonial modern atmosphere of Bengal. According to Borthwick (1984), there was preponderance in the number of males in the city of Kolkata over the number of females. As the educated Bhadralok migrated to ward the city and began to get established, they also brought their families to Kolkata. In a way the presence of women was an integral part of the urban life that also helped the man consolidate his social identity in the new found urbanity and amongst smaller families. The rigidity of the purdah or the veiling, not always in the sense of the veil strictly covering the face or the body with regards

to Hindu and Brahmo women, was of a varying nature in Bengal. Women were partially seen in the public places of the bathing *ghat* of the village tank or the river or in the courtyards of the household. (Borthwick 1984) But such selective and very limited public exposure was under the supervision of the male members and the senior women members of the family who would usually decide to the exact modes of public exposure for the younger married and unmarried women in the family. This form was more predominant in the Hindu undivided or joint family system that was the prevailing basic unit of social organization in Bengal which was further broken down into the figures of the *kartā* and *ginnī*, the oldest male and female members of the family respectively. The *kartā* would be responsible for the economic upkeep of the family and was generally into salaried professions and the *ginnī* 'looked after the household stores, made arrangements for meals, and supervised the behaviour of family members' (Borthwick 1984, 10). The sexual divisions of labour, coupled with the structure of the traditional orthodox family form in Bengal were against the comparatively free growth of women in the spheres of the social.

It was in the sphere of the domestic that women found themselves newly hegemonised. Public exposure of women from within families was firmly edited and deftly measured. The middle class ethics of being educated and civilized produced a sliced view of women, mostly indoors, only after negotiating terms and manners of a social exposure. Photographs of women from educated, well−off, middle−class and upper middle class families began to appear since the

200

latter–half of the nineteenth century, mostly in family albums from the 1880s onwards. The majority of them were posited against signifiers of their virtuous family life like husband and children. Being represented as the role-playing types, choosing autonomy of agency were mostly not the choice of women in orthodox Hindu families beyond the relatively autonomous space of the *andarmahal*. However, it will be altogether an injustice if it is inferred that every image of women that is preserved in family albums are all cast into stereotypes. Visual language, such as the literary language, does have greater possibility of multiple readings. Both are systems of signs, but the visual surpasses the primary fixitiveness of linguistic signifier *per se*; the visual reproduction of the real is in a much greater state of flux with regard to the creation of meaning.

Chatterjee (1999) remarks that battle for the new idea of womanhood in the era of nationalism was waged in home. It is known from evidence left behind in autobiographies, family histories, religious tracts, literature, theatre, songs, paintings, and such other cultural artifacts, that it was home that became the principal site of struggle through which the hegemonic construct of the new nationalist patriarchy had to be normalized. The nationalist discourse thus becomes a discourse about women. Women were not active agents of the discourse but passive carriers. It will not be much to assume and analyse the point that women's visual representations inside family albums were testimonies to this normative process. Apart from such testimonies, there are traces of fissures. As Chatterjee (1999) states that if modern woman differed from her

predecessors, she did so as the result of social practices of men and not of themselves. The cultural-nationalist agenda provided a base for the hegemonising of women in Bengali societies. As Bannerji (2001) observes:

'In this agenda, patriarchy organized through a colonial racist perception, projects a site of contestation, a specific and concrete object of rule—namely women, their bodies, and familial sexual conduct (K. Sangari and S. Vaid 1989:1-26). This war of moral and cultural attribution, identity and self-definition is centred on or carried through reform projects that seek to define and organize the lives of local women. This means the regulation of conduct of families where the control over the conduct of women was to take place' (Bannerji 2001, 77).

Education, as a reformers' project, became one of the principal sites of facilitation and contestation through which women in the nineteenth and early twentieth century Bengal were prescribed. In fact, most histories of women's reformation, outside the periphery of the colonial state's legal reform such the banning of the sati, Age of Consent Bill or widow remarriage, show that the indigenous communities cutting across religious lines had their own views about educating their women. Considered as marker of the social progress, education was also differently arranged for men and women. In case of men where it was accepted that education would lead to economic benefit of the household, education for women in general was seen as a non-economic activity even to the

extent of presuming that finding groom for the educated girl would be a really difficult task for the family. Mostly, education for women was devised in lines of a feminine curriculum that included the moral sciences, basic geography and needle work. The foundations of the feminine curriculum in Bengal was premised upon the thought that women, with a little education , will better mothers and will be doing the upkeep of the family in better and learned ways (Borthwick 1984, 63-65). The scene of modern English education began to change rapidly in Bengal after the 1835 Macaulay Minutes which proposed the exposure of disciplines for a select band of indigenous people who would in turn assist them efficiently in administering the colonial state. It created in the history of Bengal, the space for a *chakri* as clerks, writers or otherwise for educated men, and in the process changing patterns of migration from the village to the city of Kolkata and affecting the redefinition of the structure of the orthodox undivided families. Educating the women, in such altered scenario of the social was also a task of importance. The number of schools for girls in Bengal leaped from 15 in 1863 to 2238 in 1890. The number of girl students at these schools increased from 2486 to 78865 (Murshid 1982, 43). In spite of the enthusiasm, which had progressive results for women history in the region, the curricula of women's education was a fraught area. It would be wrong to assume that the putting forward of the feminine curriculum (*strijanita shiksha*) came from the orthodox quarters of the Bengali society. Even Brahmo reformation agenda was partly for such a curricula for the woman. *Bamabodhini Partika*, one of the early periodicals for women in nineteenth century and published by Brahmo women

went for a selective feminine curriculum where the stress was on aspects of motherhood, care and the domestic.

> 'In the early 1860s, the *Bamabodhini Patrika* (which was founded by the followers of Sen[39]) had started a scheme of education for girls and women through correspon-dence, known as *antahpur shiksha* (home education). As a feasible alternative to a few years of schooling in a formal institution, this course provided the opportunity for girls to continue with learning even after they were married- *Zenana* education through the columns of the *Bamabodhini Patrika* as well as from home tutors continued to be a popular method of educating girls for several years' (Karlekar 1986, WS- 26).

Although in a large number of cases the period of attainment of education was very brief and attendance was irregular, the process left its social mark in the advancement of middle-class women in Bengal (Borthwick 1984, 75). The ways in which the girl was to be educated for a future mostly of domestic confinement was also an area of difference among the elite reformers who championed women's education as a mark of progress. As Karlekar (1986) summarizes the tendencies of educating the women in Bengal by commenting that evidently, the contemporary obsession with institutional educations and degrees had early

---

[39] Keshub Chandra Sen (19 November 1838 – 8 January 1884) was a prominent Brahmo figure in nineteenth century Bengal. He is more remembered as for differences with the *Brahmo Samaj* in Bengal and for his own views about Brahmo religion. He was also a champion of early women's education in Bengal.

origins where the family set up was increasingly geared to allow their daughters to engage in the public world in education and examination. At the same time the gendered nature of the family and dominant sexual divisions of labour within the household was not congenial to a basic shift in notions on women's roles. The mainstream Bengali *moddhobityo bhadralok* (middle-class gentlemen) viewed 'women's education as the veritable Pandora's Box'. In order to be able to cope with what was to materialize in the changing courses of time and history, it was felt sensible to advertise 'opinions on the basic differences between the sexes, women's essential needs and so on'.

> 'Though each year, more girls were in school or participating in zenana education, and later, going to college, their education was, as we have seen, a part of definite familial strategy. While with general social change, expectations were modified somewhat, basic convictions re-mained unchanged. The rancour that was directed against Kadambini Ganguly was by the early Twentieth Century, camouflaged in more sophisticated and convincing arguments. What is of interest is that in present-day India, arguments on women's roles and their relationship to education have not changed much from the days of those who initiated the early debates' (Karlekar 1986, WS-30).

At the end of the nineteenth century the Hindu revivalist tendencies of a cultural nationalism appropriating a major share of the social spaces, many of the advances in the outlook of Bengali middle-class women began to take a back

seat. In this atmosphere, one of the most ridiculed figures was of the educated *bhadramahila* (gentlewoman) whose thirst for education and ways of the west was leading the Bengali society toward a destruction. The educated women, showing signs of choice, however ordinary, in going out of the bounds of the domestic were a figure of attack.

'In the same way a Bengali *babu* copies his master by writing in English, the Bengali wife is doing ditto. Whoever imitates the English woman's behaviour, we shall call them *bibi*. …The *babu* wears the boot, the *bibi* puts on a pair of slippers or shoes…The babu wears an open neck coat with the dhoti, the *bibi* wears a jacket over the saree…The *babu* plays the 'harmony flute', the *bibi* plays the piano. The *babu* drinks brandy while the *bibi* prefers port…refusing to cook as it will make the hands dirty with soot is not *bibiana*, refusing to pick up the child so as to avoid getting the clothes stained is not *bibiana*, whistling away time by reading plays or playing cards is not *bibiana*…nowadays our wives are getting increasingly attracted towards the *bibiana* way of life, it is high time we become alert otherwise some great danger will befall us.' [Sri… (Anon) 1881]

This quote from a late nineteenth century Bengali periodical reflects the popular mood of a time that loved and hated to describe and prescribe the figure of the 'new woman' in Bengal. She was subjected to a 'new patriarchy' which

was more facilitating than prohibiting in its newest embodiment of social reforms movement in Bengal. She was expected to be the opposite of the coarse, vulgar, loud and quarrelsome, devoid of superior moral sense, sexually promiscuous common woman (Chatterjee 1999, 9). The coming into being of the *nabina* (new woman), follows from the history of social reform movements since the middle decades of the nineteenth century mainly with respect to education and marriage. The heterogenous community of *bhadralok*, which consisted of the members of the Brahmo Samaj and men from the Kayastha, Brahmin and the Baidya castes and who were by no means unanimously decided on any single agenda, devised plans to educate the women of their community. The colonial state and the indigenous intelligentsia sought to create new social spaces and purge old ones in order to 're-claim' the civilization lost, obviously with differing goals. The coming together of these was centered primarily on the concept of woman. As we shall see, western and Indian class bound positions produced discourses in union that deepened already existing asymmetries including the extremely touchy question of sexuality (Srivastava 2007, 43).

The increased scope of *chakri*, or salaried profession in the imperial city of Calcutta, the incremental popularity of English, not only as a language to be known but also as a way of life which can increase the *bhadralok's* chances of success in life, also facilitated this piecemeal process. While others opted for a *zenana* style of education that sought to educate girls in the confines of the domestic boundaries under the tutelage of either men in the family or women tutors, a few of the families sent their girls to school (Karlekar 1986, WS-25).

The casting of the *bhadramahila* mould as a companionate wife for the *bhadralok* in the Victorian model of genteel middle class women had prescribed limits to this project of producing enlightened women. A curriculum that included basic reading and writing, needlework and embroidery was deemed appropriate to make women sufficiently learned. It was expected that women, via this education, would develop as an able companion of her husband rather than become a rights bearing individual. Even educated women were expected to stay indoors as the public realms of professional life, confrontational politics and decision making were left to the *bhadralok*. Women were seen as the guardians of honour of the family and contributors to its well-being through abnegating their selfhood. Even well-known women like Janadanandini Debi, wife of Satyendranath Tagore, first Indian Civil Service recruit and Priyambabda Bagchi, an 1892 Calcutta University graduate expressed their views in favour of a return to the indoors and primacy of domestic duties. While the number of educated women increased as the nineteenth century progressed, along with it ideals of companionate relationships and legal promises for women like the Age of Consent Act 1891 or the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856, there was also an increase in pamphlets and popular genres that reflected the mood of a stringent Hindu orthodoxy against women, especially those considered liberated and educated. Given such different histories of the time, studies have shown that the encounter and the negotiation with the colonial experience brought forth new ways to perceive and construct the self where the re-casting of the woman was given primary importance. The ushering in of a colonial modernity, particular to

the regional contexts, sought to review the spheres of interactions with the colonial state. It worked to create logic of differences that would form the base for the nationalist imagining of the self. The subjective charge of the nationalist thinking excluded the category of women which was both the ground and object of nationalist accomplishments. (Das and Sen Chaudhuri 2007) With the redefinition of the gender codes and the questions of class coming to the forefront in the making of the *bhadramahila*, the national normative formation was only ideally homogenous. The sphere of popular print (particularly farces and the novel) in Bengali in the nineteenth century repeatedly make use of working class women characters like the *jhee* (domestic help, the working class woman) who lectures the *bhadramahila* to stop reading fancy romantic novels and concentrate more on the well-being of her husband and fulfill the responsibilities of the extended family.[40] The compartmentalization of the vulgar and the *bhadra* (genteel) woman as in a system of differences where the genteel woman was supposed to be on the higher plane of national imagination did not hold the homogenous ground it promised. *Paricharika,* [1880] a Bengali periodical, listed a few points about what should not be treated as marks of women's emancipation.

1. Public speaking is not women's emancipation

2. Reading amoral and harmful plays and novels is not women's emancipation

---

[40] For example see *Novel Nayika Ba Shikkhita Bou* [Heroine of the Novel or Educated Wife] undated and anonymous popular farce published by Nabakumar Dutta, Shaitya Prachar Karjalaya, 3/1 No. Nilmomi Mitrer Street. Kolkata.

3. Meeting men of bad repute is not women's emancipation

4. Quarrelling with men servants or being careless in speaking or attire is not women's emancipation.

5. Any exceptional changes in the essential *lajja* is not women's emancipation.

6. Behaving, dressing up, talking, enjoying etc. like men is not women's emancipation.

One of the main anxieties unleashed in popular pamphlets, *naksha* or satirical prose pieces, *ketchha* or scandals, and *prahasan* or farce was regarding her sexuality. Ideas of romantic love (highly popular in contemporary tales, fictions and novels), education, increasing dominance of western styles of life and fashion, new imports in the ideas of spouse selection, and an attitude of indifference towards domestic duties were seen as co-habiting in the body of the new woman. The potent threat that she posed to orthodoxy and Hindu revivalism in late nineteenth century Calcutta soon became the subject of pamphlet-dramas and farces. Sexual scandals and promiscuity pivoting on the body of the woman were staple to these cheap prints. Education, and any sense of liberty or equality emerging out of it, was seen as destructive forces that contributed towards ripping apart domestic harmony and the ideology of the *sanatan* Hindu household and its concomitant moral values. A world of scandal was what the farces, poetry and pamphlets represented. The Hindu wife and the Hindu woman by then has been resolved as the essence of Hindu cultural nationalism and

anything that posed a potent threat to the supremacy of nationalist thinking and cultural orthodoxy was subject to attack from various representational fields, cheap prints being one of the primary among others.

Discourse must be thought of as situated within fields of power, not only constituting that field but also constituted by it. According to Chatterjee, dominance here cannot exhaust the claims to subjectivity for even the dominated must always retain an aspect of autonomy. Otherwise, power would cease to be a relation; it would no longer be constituted by struggle.

'If the nationalist ideology in the late nineteenth century Bengal legitimized the subjection of women under a new patriarchy, its history must be a history of struggle. The difficulty which faces historians here is that by working from the conventional archives of political history, women appear in the history of nationalism only in the 'contributive' role. All one can assert here is that women also took active part in nationalist struggle, but one cannot identify any autonomous subjectivity of women and from that standpoint question the manner in which the hegemonic claims of nationalist culture were themselves fashioned. My argument is that because of the specific conditions of colonial society, this history is to be found less in the external domain of political conflict and more in the 'inner' space of middle–class home' (Chatterjee 1999, 137).

Even if the space for contestations, a possibility in all political cultures, remains open and the problem of the conventional archives that confronts the historian, the eluding question in contemporary Indian historiography has been to locate the woman. The site for such locations can be a wide territory of the social, heterogeneous, porous and often overlapping into each other. Arguing trends of Indian histories/feminist histories in India have tried to search and situate the woman in provinces such as the literary narratives including autobiographies, family, marriage, heteronormativity, reproduction, violence or in the histories of the arts. The woman thus produced went through the experience of the colonial modern in their dressing up accordingly to the wish of the family, religion or the nation among other things. The model of the Victorian womanhood sans the aspect of sacredness of the family overdetermined the construction of the Bengali *bhadramahila.* Although political reforms of the postcolonial state with much larger participation of women in various spheres of the labour happened in the twentieth century, the Bengali middle-class structure of the *bhadralok-bhadramahila* dyad continues in the contemporary informing various representations one of which is the family photographs. As Bannerji (2001) observes:

> 'In this interpelleted ideological form neither patriarchy nor the gender
> division of labour is discarded but is rather redefined and displaced in
> such ways as to mediate the emerging new social relations and to form a
> new ideological cluster… Their [women's] domain, however, is social

reproduction rather than social production, and they help to crystallize an ideology of 'home', womanhood and a type of motherhood, all of which serve as complex social and emotional signifiers working with desire and practical needs. Even to this day, and especially now, it is this cultural— symbolic cluster to which domestic capital and consumer advertising cater in a promise to make a dream come true' (2001, 174-175).

It might appear that Bannerji is making a case for an overwhelming ideological critique of the representation of woman in the Indian society but she on a closer examination she points toward the birth of a modern society where woman and men can possibly transgress the older Victorian sexual division of labour in a mediation where women can be part of the public and men can be indoors, but to her the psyches and social relations have become increasingly more individualized toward becoming privatized (1999, 175).

Given the continuity of the serotypes of the *bhadramahila* in the Bengali society, the emergence of the new image of the woman, as visible in the photograph, is in itself a historical outcome of the turn of the century from the nineteenth to the twentieth. Even if the nationalist discourse tried to devise a monolithic identity for women, identities remained ruptured. The criteria of photographic representation of women overlap demands of patriarchal society and possibilities of representation in the realm of the pseudo-realism of the camera and the photographic technique. Performances of the self before the

camera can make representation go beyond the grasp of normative structures of framing. Edward Said has argued of an incipient and unresolved tension in the contest between stable identity as it is rendered by such affirmative agencies as nationality, education, tradition, language and religion, on the one hand, and all sorts of marginal, alienated or anti–systemic forces on the other.

The conditions and crosscurrents that led to the creation of such visual depiction of women in family albums, are aspects that I am trying to read. Dipesh Chakraborty's (2001) use of the definition of historicism is suitable in understanding the developments in the genre of visual representation. He quotes Maurice Mandelbaum's minimalist definition of historicism :

> 'Historicism is the belief that an adequate understanding of the nature of any phenomenon and an adequate assessment of its value are to be gained through considering it in terms of the place it occupied and the role which it played within a process of development' (Chakraborty 2001, 22).

Dominant modes of representation of women's photographs in family albums and collections are historicist in nature, living up to their supposed work in the parameters of historical judging. He further argues of historicism as a mode of thinking in which to understand the nature of anything in this world, it must be seen as a historically developing entity, that is first, as an individual and

unique whole – as some kind of unity at least in potential—and, second, as something that develops over time. To quote Chakraborty:

> 'Historicism can typically allow for complexities and zigzags in this development; it seeks to find the general in the particular, and it does not entail any necessary assumptions of teleology. But the idea of development and the assumption that a certain amount of time elapses in the very process of development are critical to this understanding' (Chakraborty 2001, 22-3).

But in this general re−viewing, I am trying to put up a point that normative social procedure of indigenous patriarchy in all spheres of women's lives and their representations, were not cast into rock solid moulds. At this juncture, I am trying to sketch the trends of photographic depiction of women in the family albums and propose further possibilities wherein we can locate the woman, conceptually in the realm of representation but also not bereft of histories.

Chapter VI

Image, History, and Memory: A Space of Her Own?

**4.1. Locating Women's Photographs from 1880s to the 1970s in Family
   Albums and Family Photographs: Representing Women, Negotiating
   Narratives**

Here I will present the general trends of the construction of the family album

and modes of representation of women in it. Here, at this point, it will be an

attempt at viewing the family as evident in the kinds of photographs archived in

the spaces of the family album. By saying the kinds of photographs, I refer to

kinds of photographic representation that recur very often in the albums and

collections. The recurrence of such kinds of photographs is the basis of my citing

them here. This is not say that there are gaps and exceptions, and I will try to

read, partially do a content-analysis and look into the possibility of the trends of

photographic representations of women.

I want to repeat at this stage that while collecting the photographs, all

photographs including those of men were collected and digitized. This was

primarily done not to break the narrative to be found, if any at all, in the family

albums. This might also help, in certain ways, to trace the growth of the family

form, in its smaller avatar, especially from the early decades of the twentieth

century. The photographs used in this Chapter have been chosen from years and decades spanning from the 1880s to the 1970s. I have already mentioned the rationale behind choosing the time span. May I repeat a few points of the rationale again here before I go about with the task? The primary motivation behind choosing a long time span is to look into the possibilities of a diachronic study of changing photographic cultures and representations of women in it. I will not be attempting any diachronic study in the dissertation apart from showing a few trends of representations. I am, at this point, trying to look at as a diachronic study of the representation of the woman in the family albums might give me back results which are a point of critique in this dissertation. Simultaneously, it is an act against itself in so far being able to problematise diachronic historical reading. The choice of a time-span of ninety years was also because, apart from changes in the evolution of the camera and it becoming increasingly portable, of reasons such as—1) The camera had limited and specific use with respect to domestic photography, 2) even if the number of amateur shutterbugs increased with the advancing twentieth century who contributed to the 'new' views of women, the photographic technique had strong ties with the neighbourhood studios hegemonising conventions of framing, composition, lighting and backdrops, 3) apart from the minor seepage of colour photographs mostly printed overseas, the family album is a majorly a display of monochrome images, 4) throughout the time period, photography, its preservation and upkeep in the albums presupposed an economic stability of a certain kind, education, and continuity of the family objects among generations.

217

This brings me to a thought and experience, which cannot be discussed in the scope of this dissertation. When I say continuity of the family and the passage of the album from one generation and the other, I am accepting a middle-class who had the economic means and cultural ways of affording photography. But here is a point and it can be left just at that. The partition of India in 1947 resulted in the partition of undivided Bengal into East Pakistan and West Bengal leading to violence, countless loss of lives and mass migration in both directions. Both East Pakistan and West Bengal shared a common history of cultures and language. (Kudaisya and Yong 2004, Didur 2007, Zamindar 2010, Chatterji 2002, Pandey 2001, Bandyoapadhyay 2004, Khan 2013) The uprooting of millions of people including the middle-class who settled in Kolkata or in various parts of West Bengal and India was a traumatic event in the contemporary South Asian history. The migration meant a loss of history, identity and selfhood. Many families, in a hurry to cross over to West Bengal and India, did leave behind letters, diaries, photographs and family albums among many other things, considered redundant at that point of time. When I have spoken to middle-class families who were once refugees, they have mentioned about the loss of such objects. Also, coeval to this loss, families and individuals have rebuilt photographic memories in albums after they have settled in India and moved on with their lives. Thus when I say, continuity of families is a general precondition of the presence of the family album, I am only able to speak partially and ineffectually. There might also possibly be other kinds of

discontinuity in the family history ushered in by death, kinship strains, internal displacement, diaspora, marriage and elopement. This can be also a moment of emancipation for the form of the family album insofar as the object/photographic congregation of disparate/continued voluntary visual representations can begin abruptly, almost arbitrarily. The family album is not like the family tree which is based on tracing paths of generations and kinships in a scientific manner. I will, as we go through the photographs, come back to discuss some of the points flagged here.

The temporal space these albums occupy is large and disparate. Such a lengthy time scale can diffuse a reading. But I couldn't help choosing from a wide range of albums, mostly from middle and upper–middle class Bengali Hindu/Brahmo families, since these families were to some extent engaged in 'preserving' a history of their lives. These were decidedly relevant to developments and the rise of the family album form in Bengal. Nevertheless, taking into account the fissures that would inevitably appear in selecting a time span so wide, my effort would be to see configurations and whether any distinct changes happen in the representation of women in family albums, through these decades. The subsequent reading/looking might appear as tentative and without formal closures. I do not take into purview of this chapter decades after 1970's primarily due to fast changes in photographic commerce in that period. The introduction of cheap cameras, cut in prices of developing and printing and coming of colour film rolls, of aim-and-shoot cameras roughly from 1980s have

changed the economy and politics of domestic and family photography. This democratization helps more people to avail the technology, thus leading to changes in social practice of photography. The later decades, that have also seen the introduction of digital photography, do need separate treatment and theorizations, which, however, is well beyond the scope of this chapter.
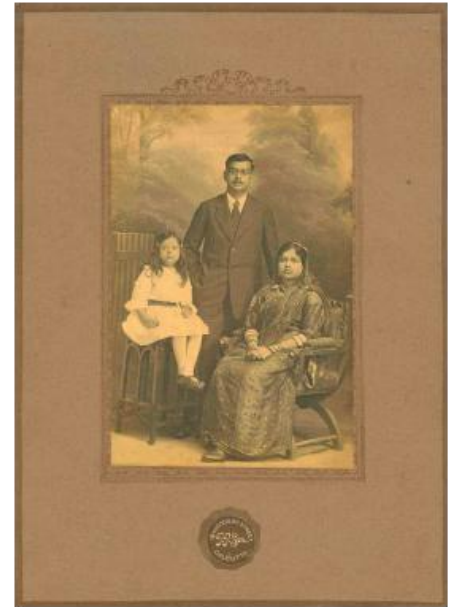
Figure 17. Family photograph of
Manindra Kumar Bose.1920.

Figure 18. Sudhira De, Dr. Subhil
Kumar De and Subhasini De, 1938.
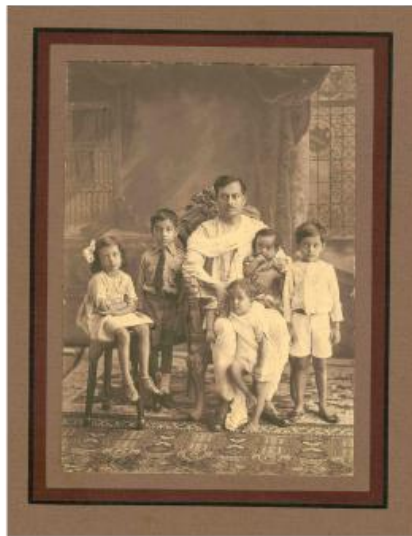
Figure 19. Narayan Chandra Mitra
and his children. 1925/26.

Figure 20. P.C De, Mrs. P.C De and
Lady Bose. 1904.

Figure 21. Asin Dasgupta, Uma Dasgupta and Anil Ratan Dasgupta. Darjeeling. 1976/77. [UDC]

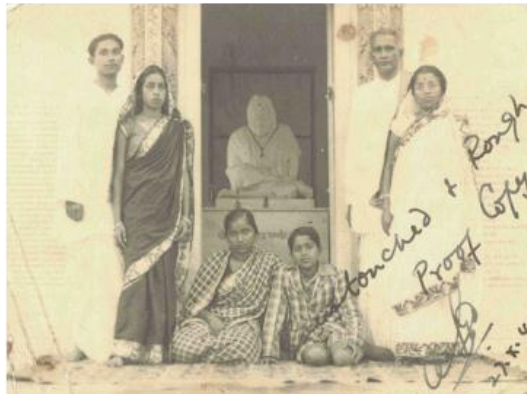Figure 22. Gopa Chakraborty, Pratima Chakraborty, Bulu Chakraborty, Gayatri Chakraborty, Purnendu Chakraborty with one unidentified female member. Early 1980s. [KCC]

Figure 23. Family photo standing from left father, mother, grandfather and grandmother, seated uncle and aunty. Gorakhpur. 1940. [BCC]

Figure 24. Somdev Chatterjee, Kiranbala Devi and Aparna Chatterjee. Mid 1970. [ACC]

Figure 25. Unidentified family group. [RGC]

Figure 26. Labangalata Debi, granddaughter of Hemchandra.1896 [AGC]

Figure 27. Mayalata Palit. 1928 [AGC]

Figure 28. Unidentified. [AGC]

Figure 29. Rama Sanyal. 1956. [ABC]

Figure 30. Lopamudra Mukherjee. 1975/76. [ACC]
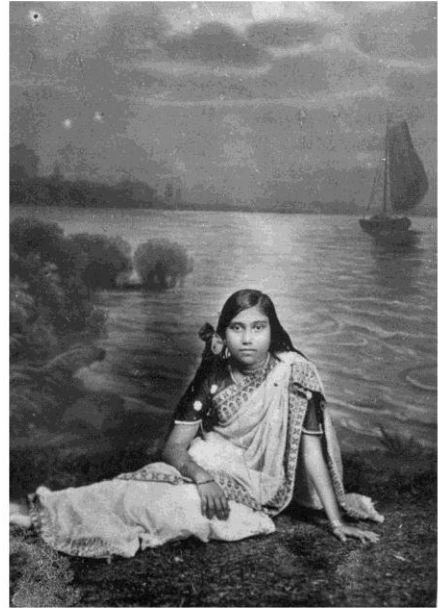
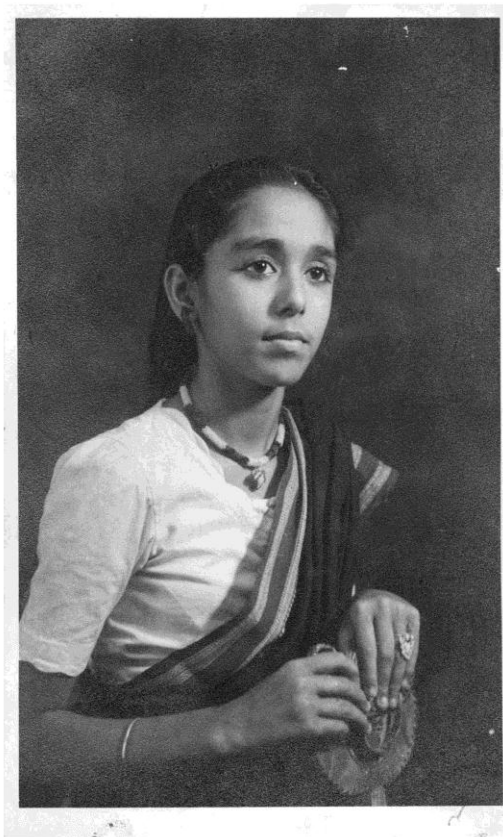

Figure 31. Madhurilata Ghosh. 1933. [ARC]

Figure 32. Shukla Mukhopadhyay. 1949. [AROC]

Figure 33. Aparna Chatterjee. Early 1970. [ACC]

Figure 34. Madhuri Banerjee. 1970s (?). [IBC]

Figure 35. Ruby Chaudhurani. 1925 (?). [ARC]

Figure 36. Arati Lahiri. Early 1970s (?). [BGC]

Figure 37. Supriya Chakraborty nee Mukhopadhyay. 1976.
[GCC]

Figure 38. Keya Ghosh. 1971/72. [SGC]

Figure 39. Rita Bose's mother (?). 1970. [RBC]

Figure 40. Anita Seal. 1956-58. [KSC]

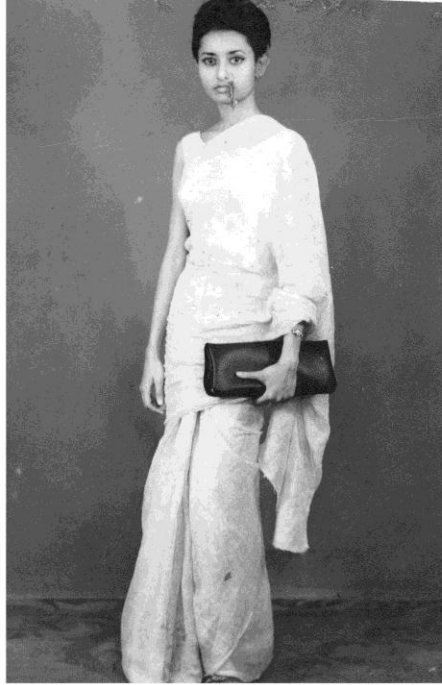Figure 41. Supriti Mitra. 1946-47. [JDC]

Figure 42. Unidentified. 1960s(?). [RCC]

Figure 43. Unidentified. Late 1960s(?). [SCC]

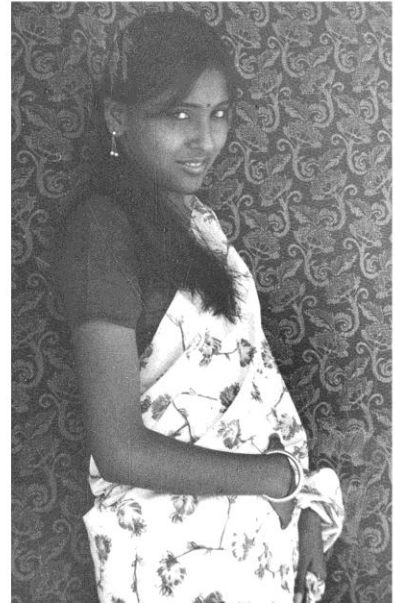Figure 44. Nandita Bagchi. January 1968 [SBC]

Figure 45. Reba Dasgupta's sister. 1973/74. [RDC]

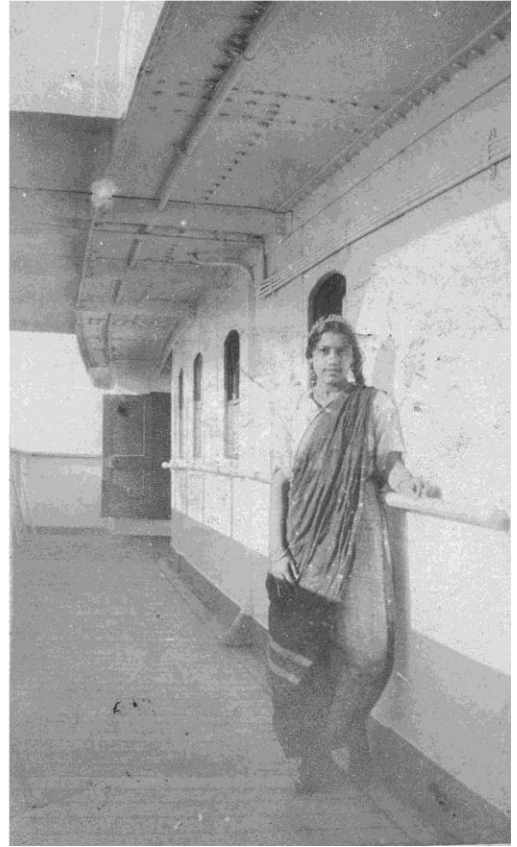Figure 46. Baradasundari, wife of Lalmohan Ghosh. 1919. [KDC]

Figure 47. Nita (?). [MCC]

Figure 48. Ranu Biswas. Kolkata. 1980. [RBC]

Figure 49. Unidentified. [PDC]

228

Figure 50. Aparna Chatterjee, Purnima Mukherjee, Pratima Mukherjee, Seema ganguly and Anasua mukherjee. 1960. [ACC]

Figure 51. Shukla Mukhopadhyay with her paternal cousins. Date unidentified. [ARC]

Figure 52. Unidentified family photograph. [ADaC]

Figure 53. Shukla Mukhopadhyay with her mother. 21.1.1956. [ARC]

Figure 55. Supriti Ghosh, Radha Ghosh, Rina Ghosh and Shelly Ghosh and Nita Sanyal. 1981. [HGC]

Figure 54. Bithika Ghosh and Swapna Ghosh. 1965. [ARoC]

Figure 57. S. R. Kundu's students. 1969. [KKC]

Figure 56. Unidentified. [ADaC]

Figure 58. Dr. Nilratan Sarkar's daughters. (From left seated) Arundhati(1st), Shanta (4th), (From left standing) Kamala (3rd), Mira (6th). Others unidentified. 1910. [IDC]

Figure 59. Mira Chowdhury, Bulbul and unidentified female figure. [MCC]

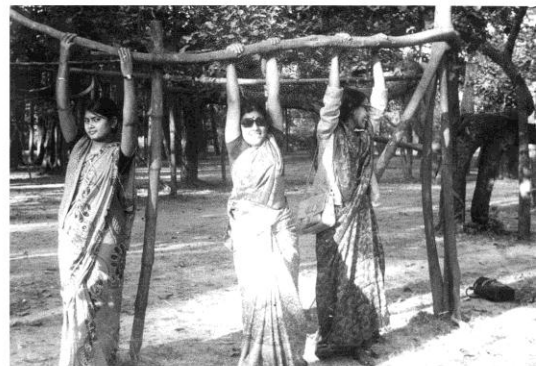Figure 60. Supriti Gosh and her friend. 1975. [HGC]

Figure 61. Unidentified. 1975 (?). [HGC]

Figure 62. Unidentified. [SCC]

Figure 63. Bhabani Sen (aunt)and Gopa Dutta (Aunt's daughter). 1948. [GDC]

Figure 64. R. G. Kar Medical College students' outing. 1966 (?). [RRC]

Figure 65. Unidentied trick photo. [USC]

Figure 66. Unidentified group photo. 1977. [RDC]
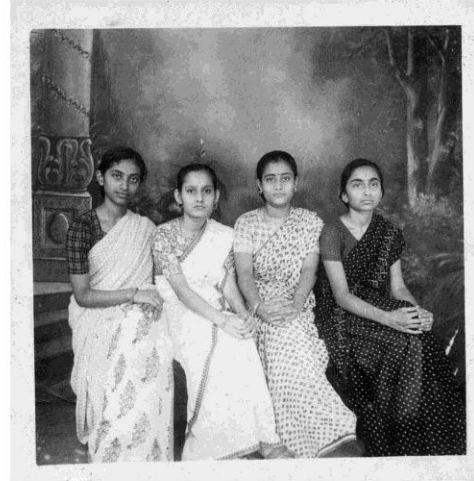
Figure 67. Unidentified group photo. Early 1970s (?). [SChC]

Figure 68. Shikha Duttagupta and Tapati Dasgupta. 1970. [KDaC]

Figure 69. Ruchira Moitra and Bani Thakur in front of Lady Brabourne College, Kolkata. 1959-60. [RMC]

Figure 70. Female members of the family of N.C Chatterjee and Somnath Chatterjee. 24 June 1957. [BChC]

Figure 71. Group photo of Gita Chakraborty's marital family members at Jessore, Bangladesh. 1952-53 [GCC]
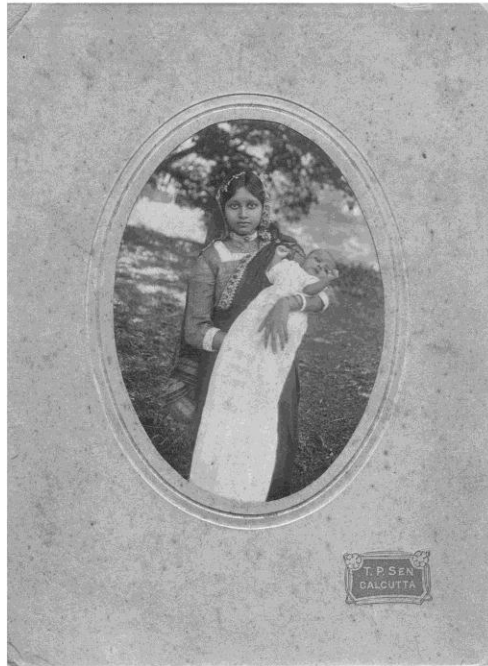
Figure 72. Shobhana Mitra with her child. 1930. [AGC]

Figure 73. Preeti Mitra, Bijoylakshmi Mitra and Jayasree Mitra. 1945. [ARC]

Figure 74. Unidentified. 1981. [PBC]

Figure 75. Chinmayee Bandyopadhyay with her first born child Sibaji Bandyopadhyay and nurse. 16 November 1954. [SBC]

Figure 76. Surabala Ghosh and Manmathanath Ghosh. 1888. [AGC]

Figure 77. Unidentified. 1950s/60s (?) [RBaC]

Figure 78. Child Anuradha Roy with her mother at maternal uncle's home. 1959. [ARC]

Figure 79. Supriya Mukherjee and unidentified group. Kalyani. West Bengal. 1958. [KBC]

Figure 80. Atashi Mukhopadhyay (extreme Right) and other students. 1937. [BCC]

Figure 81. Uma Majumdar's students at her farewell. 1965. [UMC]

Figure 82. Loreto House, Keka and Others, Kolkata. 1969. [KDC]]
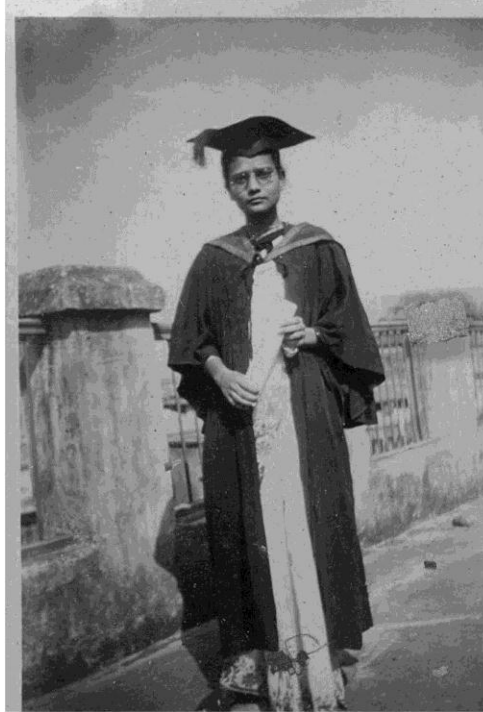
Figure 83. Mamata Banerjee, Kolkata. 1938-41. [NSC]

Figure 84. Sipra Guha Roy and Gargi Bose, Assam. 1965. [RGC]

Figure 85. Shantibala Ray, Principal, Victoria Institution College, Kolkata. 1940. [SuCC]

Figure 86. Dipti Ghosh, Kolkata. 1958.[SuGC]
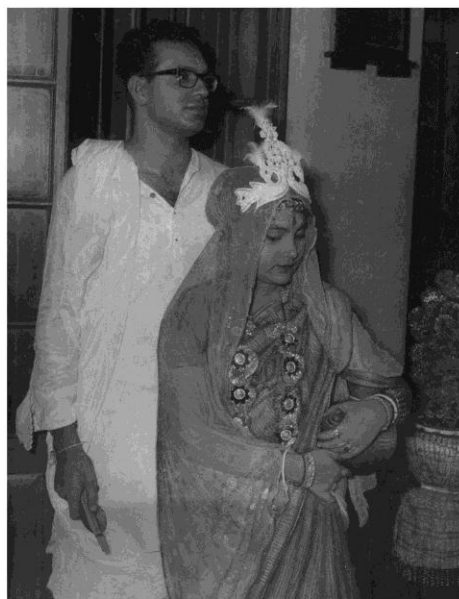
Figure 87. Bibhas Mukherjee and Manju Mukherjee. Hand colored on monochrome print. 1968. [MMC]

Figure 88. Ratna Mukherjee on her day of marriage. 2.5.1974. [RaMC]

Figure 89. Ratri Ray's marriage. 1965. [ARC]

Figure 90. Marriage Photograph of Aparna Chatterjee and Somdev Chatterjee. 1976. [ACC]
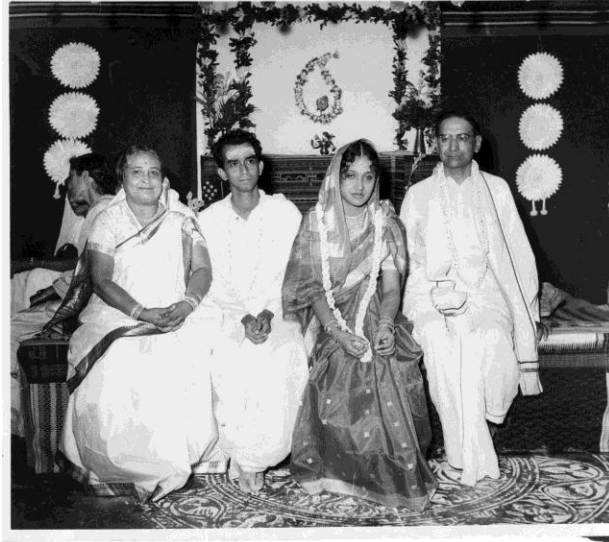
Figure 91. Bula Mahalanabis (left),Prasanta Chandra Mahalanbis (right), Supriya Sinha and other. Brahmo marriage ceremony.7 August 1955. [LSC]

Figure 92. Ruchira Moitra and Indrajit Moitra getting married. 1971. [RMC]
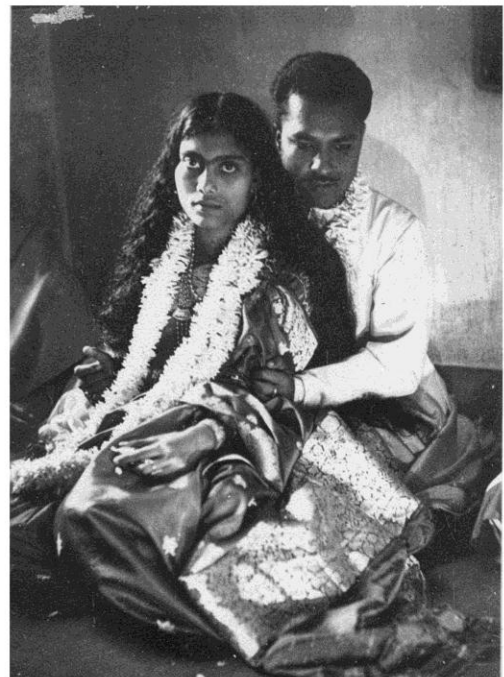
Figure 93. Ratri Ray's marriage. 1965. [ARC]
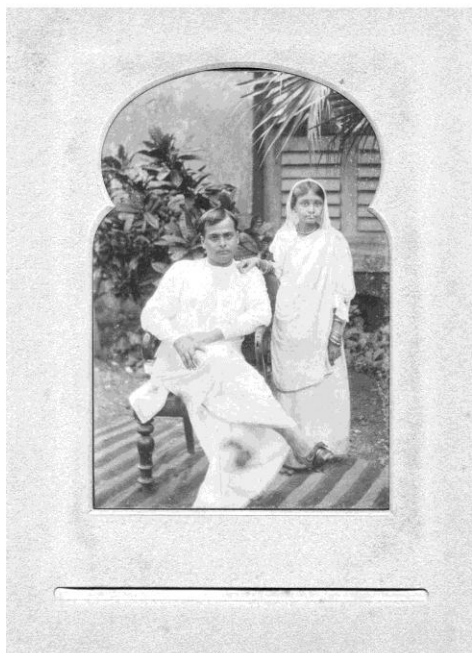
Figure 94. Bhamini Mitra (?) and Sushama. 1926. [AGC]

Figure 95. Unidentified couple. Early 20th century (?) [ECC]

Figure 96. Unidentified couple. 13.2.1952. [ABC]

Figure 97. Mira Chowdhury's aunt and Tubal (?). Early 20th century (?) [MCuC]
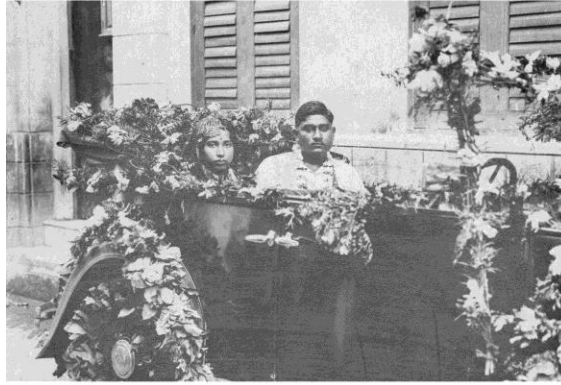
Figure 98. Pratima Chatterjee and Nirmal Krishna Chatterjee. 1935. [JCC]

Figure 99. Supriti Ghosha nd Hirak Ghosh. 1978. The *bindi* on the forehead and the vermillion marks are hand coloured in red on monochrome print. [HGC]

Figure 100.Manojit and Subhra Chakraborty. 1978. [MChC]
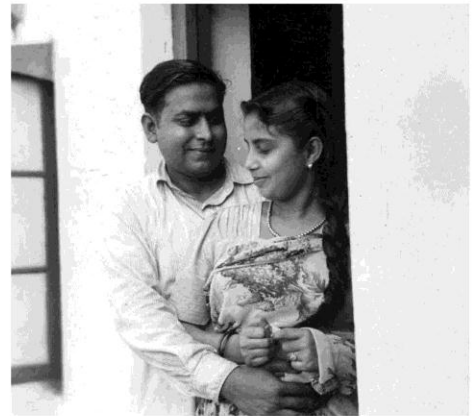
Figure 101.Unidentified.[ADC]

Figure 102. Niranjan Banerjee and Chinmoyee Banerjee. September 1953. [SBC]

Figure 103. Rajkumari Ray and unidentified male.1938. [ARC]
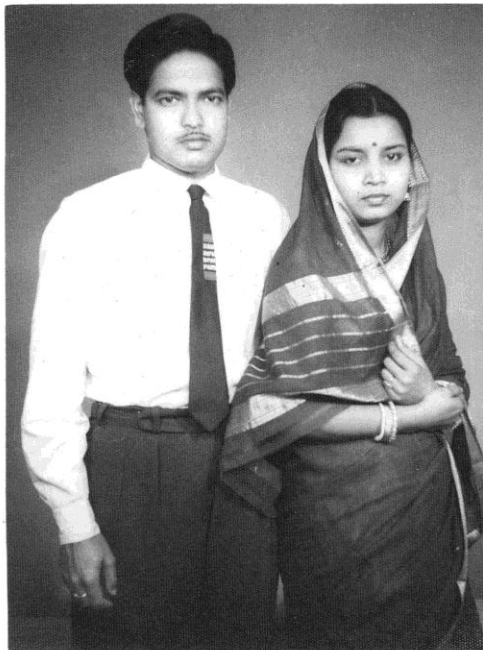
Figure 104. Reba Dasgupta's cousin and her husband. 1952-3. [ReDC]

Figure 105. Reba Dasgupta's uncle and aunt. 1957-8. [ReDC]

243

Figure 106. Shukla and Amaresh Chakraborty. 1978. [MChC]

Figure 107. Abhijit Mitra and Monideeta Mitra. 1970s (?) [MuMC]

Figure 108. Ratri Roy and Husband. 1965. [ARC]

Figure 109. Manmathanath Guhathakurta and Mirinalini Guhathakurta. 1941. [JGC]

244

Figure 110. Bijoylakshmi Mitra. 1964. [ARC]
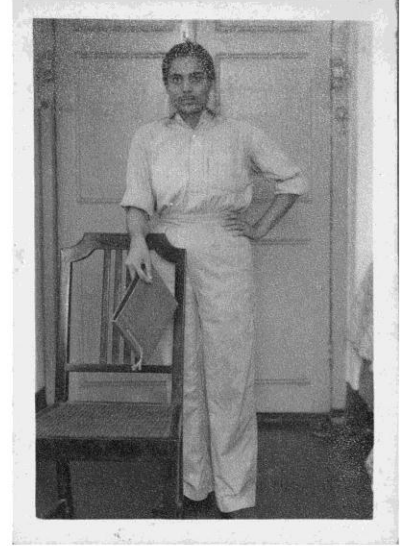
Figure 111. Minati Sengupta. 1948. [GDC]
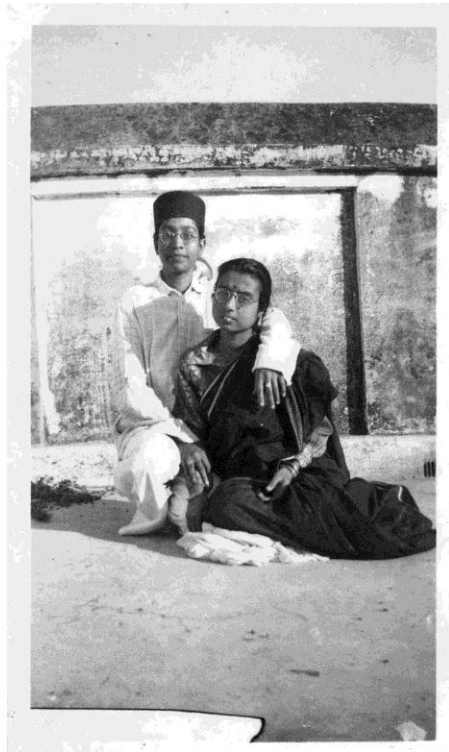
Figure 112. Unidentified. [ECC]

Figure 113. Tutu Lahiri.1944. [BGC]

Figure 114. Rama Mukherjee, Chinmayee Bandyopadhyay and her youngest sister Arati. . 1951.[SBC]
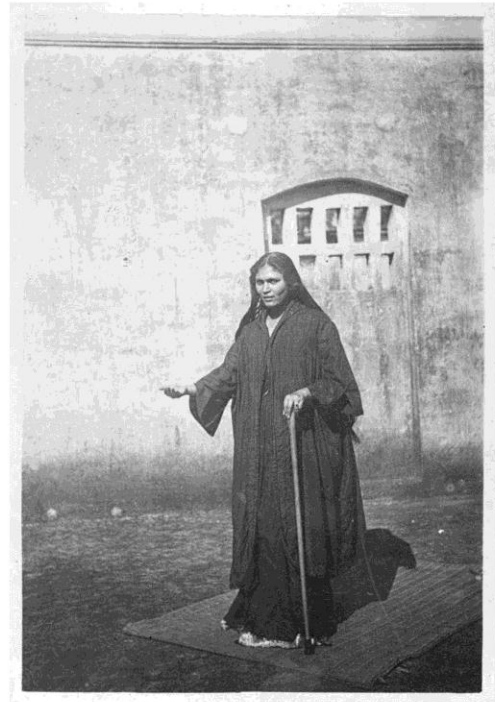
Figure 115. Chinmayee Bandyopadhyay . 1951.[SBC]

Figure 116. Chinmayee Bandyopadhyay and her cousin. 1951.[SBC]

Figure 117. Manju and Anju. Mid to late 1970s.[MMC]

Figure 118. Mira Ghosh. 1950.[ARC]

Figure 119. Unidentified..[ADC]

Figure 120. Bibhabati Ghosh. 1942. [ARC]

Figure 121. Pratima Majumder. 1979. [AvMC]

Figure 122. Ina and Bandana Bannerjee.
1955. [BChC]
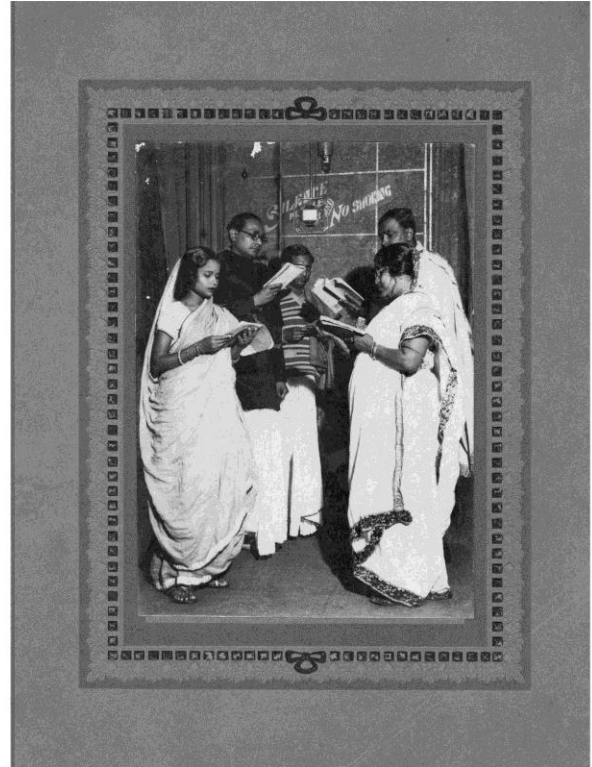
Figure 123. Mani Majumder (2nd from left) and Kananbala
(extreme left). 1932. [AvMC]

Figure 124. Uma Dutta (aunt) Maya Dutta (aunt's sister in law).
1948. [GDC]

Figure 125.Kalpana Kundu.
1978.[KKC]

248

Figure 126. Unidentified. *Bindi* on forehead and vermillion mark hand coloured on monochrome print. [MuMC]

Figure 127. Unidentified. [MuMC]

Figure 128. Bandana Gupta. 1960. [KDgc]

Figure 129. Renuka Devi Chowdhury (extreme right). 1962-63. [SLCC]

Figure 130. Mother of P. R. Das, Pratibhamoyee Devi. 1937. [PDC]

Figure 131. Chinmoyee Sanyal. undated. [SLCC]

Figure 132. Unidentified. [SuMC]

Figure 133. Chinmayee Banerjea. 1958-59. [SBC]

Outdoor Sporting Activities

Figure 134. Sudha Devi, Latika, Kanika and Gopa. 1943. [KBC]

Figure 135. Unidentified. [SoVC]

Figure 136. Family Picnic. 1952. [SPC]

Figure 137. Unidentified. [ADC]

Figure 138. Family Tour. 1978. [AvMC]
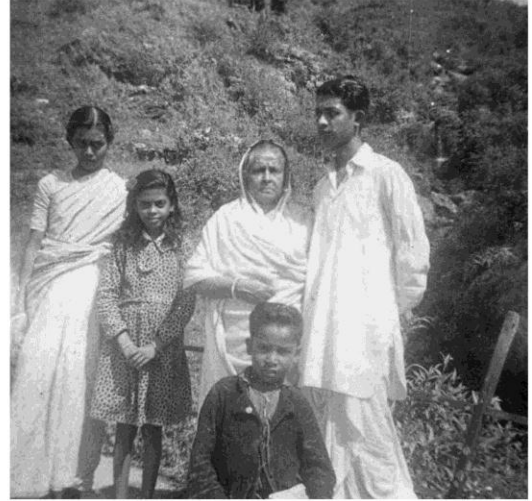
Figure 139. Snehalata Bhaduri (third from left) and others. 1956-57. [ABC]

Figure 140. Aparna Chatterjee.1970. [ACC]

Figure 141. Gita Chatterjee, N.C Chatterjee's mother. 1952.[BCC]

Figure 142. Swati Lahiri. 1970.[PCC]

Figure 143. Chinmayee Banerjee. 1953.[SBC]

Figure 144. Sunanda Mukherjee. Mumbai. 1956. [SuMuC]

Figure 145. Keya Ghosh. 1966. [SGhC]

Children

Figure 146. Ashima Goswami. 1930. [SLCC]
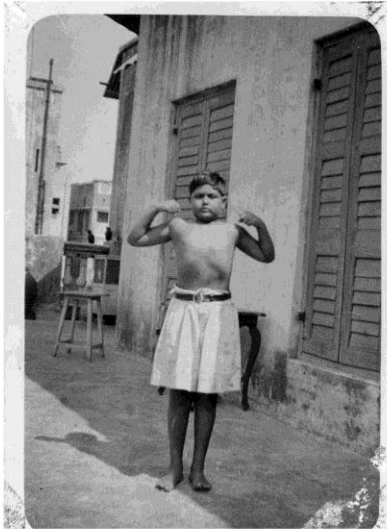
Figure 147. Ajay Mitra. 1945-46. [JDuC]

Figure 148. Keka Basu. 1965. [KDC]

Figure 149. Bibhabati Ganguly.
Late 1880s (?).[GGC]
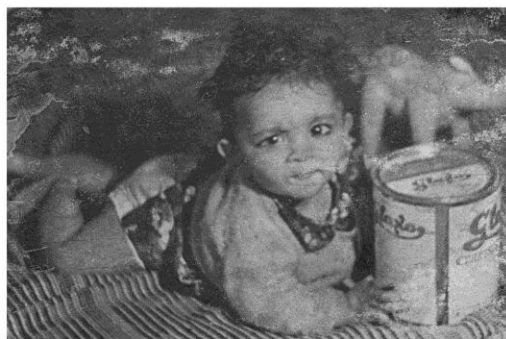
Figure 150. Dhrubajyoti Mukherjee. 1960 [ACC]

Figure 151. Binodini Dasgupta, Sarojini
Chaudhuri. 1958. [GDaC]

Figure 152. Vadarani Das. undated. [MBC]

Figure 153. Ishita Chakravarty on her
grandmother's lap. 1966. [BCC]

Figure 154. Haridasi Kundu. 1978. [KKC]

Figure 155. Snehlata Sen.1966. [LSC]

Figure 156. Anita Sil's grandmother. 1978. [KrSC]

Figure 157. Unidentified. 1960. [KBaC]

Figure 158. Radha and unidentified. undated. [SGC]

Figure 159. Unidentified. [ADC]

Figure 160. Unidentified. [PDC]

Figure 161. Unidentified. [BCC]

Figure 162. Reba Dasgupta's brother with his friends at Rajgir. 1965. [(RDgC)]

I have consulted nearly 10,000 photographs from middle-class family albums. With respect to this I have 'categorized' the major trends visible in Bengali Hindu and Brahmo family photographs. The largest section of the samples is from Hindu families. Only a few, less than ten are from Brahmo families—even those are part of the breakaway portions of such families who have entered into marital alliances with Hindu families. In that process of the migration, some photographs have also travelled from the parental home to the marital home family albums. In a way, many family albums are a mix of cultures and traditions.

On the basis of a content analysis of the photographs, I have noticed some tendencies in the types of photographs that are usually part of the family albums across time and place. The content analyses of the photographs were done through—

1) looking at the medium (in most cases monochrome),

2) size of the paper prints (in most cases not exceeding the average dimension of the pages of the traditional photographic album),

3) who are represented in the photographs i.e. women, men, children, inanimate objects, pets, architecture, landscapes and events,

258

4) the kinds of photographic conventions and actions represented in the photographs i.e. portraiture, formal studio photographs, candid photographs, outdoor photographs, travel. Occasions and events such birth, marriage, religious festivals, death, initiation, parties and gathering, picnic, or photographs taken at important moments in course of education such as the graduation photograph with robes.

On the overall visible scale, I have noticed the subsequent trends in a large number of family albums contain photographs relating to broadly to the following—

1) The Family   (figures 17 to 25)

2) Single Women[41]   (figures 26 to 49)

3) With Other Women/ Women in Groups (figures 50 to 71)

4) Women with Children   (figures 72 to 78)

5) Education   (figures 79 to 86)

6) Marriage   (figures 87 to 93)

7) Couples   (figures 94 to 109)

8) Dressing up   (figures 110 to 117)

9) In the Act   (figures 118 to 133)

---

[41] as in the photographic frame.

My purpose in this dissertation will not be to engage in a census of all the photographs via copious description toward producing a social-cultural history perforated with points of gender and politics. That is a possible way of doing history leading to specific, pointed and detailed knowledge. The few works of detailed review of photography in India in recent times (Pinney 1997, 2008) and which included women and the early Bengal scenario along with a pan-Indian review (Karlekar 2005, 2006, 2013) are premised on the historical substratum which in ways raise important questions about photography and its uses. Pinney (1997 and 2008) discusses in detail the formations of a part of colonial epistemology via the photographic/anthropological knowledge of the colonial subjects/objects of knowledge. He then shifts to a critical ethnographical discussion on the popular uses of photography in small towns (such as Nagda) in postcolonial India. He uses Arjun Appadurai's word while making the intent of his work clear for the readers.

'In the words of Arjun Appadurai, I want to follow the 'concrete historical circulation' of images and trace the 'meanings…inscribed in their forms, their uses and their trajectories'. If photographs are indeed usually made into something more than the mere 'chemically discoloured paper', what are the forces that construct them into this, rather than that, and how does this change through time, through political position, through 'culture', through class? How do photographs get entangled in different systems?' (Pinney 1997, 10)

Pinney's 2008 work on early photography in India concentrates more on the imperial drives of the photographic imagination and its formations. Both works are detailed in their surveys. They move accordingly with history especially in 2008 work tracing the 'growth' and 'coming' of the medium and its various uses in India. On the other hand Karlekar's (2006) edited work on Indian women is a pioneering book on the subject of photography dealing with women as represented by the camera. At the outset, in the acknowledgement, one of the thoughts behind conceiving such a work has been laid out. The CWDS (The Centre for Women's Development Studies), a New Delhi based social sciences and humanities research organization, an autonomous research organization supported by the Indian Council of Social Science Research, took on the project of documenting women's photographic representations for an exhibition. The purpose for such documentation was from the belief that 'the visual image provides a more holistic understanding of what is learned through the written

word, memory and recall' (Karlekar 2006, ix). It was also driven from a necessary historical anxiety that photographs till that point of time have never been a close part of the main body of research on women and by the 'end of 1990s, it was evident to a group of researchers that the photographic image could tell a tale' (Karlekar 2006, ix). Karlekar (2006) further argues for the importance of the photograph as 'aid to history'. Her move here is quite evident but troubled with anxieties that crop up here. One the one hand it seems that the book is an endeavor to 'see' Indian women across a century, on the other Karlekar mentions photographs as 'aid to history'. This leads to problems which are suggestive of the critiques that can be flagged to a kind of archival impulse which doesn't limit it to the process of collection and documentation but produces specific knowledge. As Enwezor (2007) argues that the spectators' often play a crucial role in interpelleting the effort of the archive into momentous forms of perceiving. Even if the status of the archive in contemporary historical understanding is an unambiguous place, the aide-mémoire inconsistency disquiets the historical determination of the public memory (Enzewor 2007, 30).

At this point, I can think of two ways which might form the mainstay of Karlekar's argument. Both of these come up from her perception as photographs being aid to history. First, on a documentary evidential level of particular genres of image making, it is conventional knowledge that photographs do present one with a kind of truth. For example we can take journalistic photography which had been stretched to its extreme limits affecting corroboration of 'truth' and

262

'event' in spite of the knowledge of the political and visual choice that photographers make quite often show things from a perspective suited to the purpose. Second, on a more conceptual ground, the *made-to-workings* of the image are summed up by Mitchell (1996):

> 'What pictures want, then, is not to be interpreted, decoded, worshiped, smashed, exposed, demystified, or to enthrall their beholders. They may not even want to be granted subjectivity or personhood by well-meaning commentators who think that humanness is the greatest compliment they could pay to pictures. The desires of pictures may be inhuman or nonhuman, better modeled by figures of animals, machines, or cyborgs, or by even more basic images-what Erasmus Darwin called "the loves of plants." What pictures want in the last instance, then, is simply to be asked what they want, with the understanding that the answer may well be, nothing at all' (Mitchell 1996, 82).

This might be the other end of the spectrum of analysis of the image in recent art history and visual cultures where the historicity of the interpretation of images is argued as a challenged territory. The recent interests, in the region, about family photographs as a way to the narrative of the family and history, lies somewhere between the two positions that I mentioned. Affective histories, onlookers looking into family albums and photographs and getting on with the work of nostalgic remembrance, the spread of family knowledge generationally,

and the process of knowing persons through the images are all possible moves in constructing a history in so far as that will remain as a construction such as any other constructions of knowledge. This is not say all such constructions will work on the 'true' and 'false' binary. I will, with specific examples of family photographs, discuss the problematizing of the true/false polarizations and the possible or impossible spaces of representation within them. My point here, before progressing further, is that visual histories of women, such as by Karlekar, from a particular time of the modern forms an analogy of the written and documented histories within contemporary trends of feminist historiography and emerging research. Does it stop only at being 'aid to history'? Albeit naming such histories as visual histories, what is the specific visual knowledge about women that the spectator/viewer gets from it that is different from written forms? Will it be a possible move to attempt such a reading in the specificities of the photographic image? Or will it be another essentializing move to find an essence of the woman represented as in the family album, reducing her to terms that have already been described and produced as an object of knowledge?

Scott's (2011) reading of Foucault's theorization, in the context of thinking a feminist archive of theory, is one way in which the specificity of the woman in the represented image of the photograph can be thought of. Dwelling upon Foucault's theory of the archive as a heterogeneous dense space of discursive practices that pronounce statements as events and things, Scott argues that an archive of feminist theory can be built on this conceptual substratum.

Such a construction will only expose as evidence 'that there are contests about what counts as knowledge, that knowledge is no surely or commonly agreed upon thing, even within what might be called as cultural or discursive "systems"' (Scott 2011, 142-143). Scott doesn't stop her argument at this permeated presence of the archive. Further she iterates the necessity of a feminist archive of theory which will build on the critical work for dissemination for generations of feminist to come. She is trying to think of the archive as a 'living heritage' in the contemporary situation of the 'fashionable' thinking of a post-feminist situation and names it as post-post institution, in the sense of the continuing vitality of feminist theory (Scott 2011, 143). Her stress is on the activities of reading and reception and not exactly on the classificatory process of the archive. It may be a feminist move, but at the same time is leaving out the specific nature of the object represented in the archive. To her, the continuity of the fundamental histories of feminism is important task to be achieved by the reader/receiver/user but she puts a closure by wishing that she 'wants to protect the archive' from 'wrong kinds of people. Such 'people' can carry the task of misreading and making ideological points from her works which would have been the least of expectations of reception (Scott 2011, 146). She leaves this unproblematically open by closing the argument, but we can think that Scott must have been aware of the fact that neither such 'people' cannot be banned from the archive nor can it be ideally the political task of the contemporary archival thinking. This rather brings me again to the problematic point of positing a historical knowledge as coming from the archive. It is not my task here to do away with history. I am

aware of the importance of historical reverberations in the spread of feminist movements, methods and thinking. Scott's (2011) work is an attestation of this importance. Even if there are chances of producing historical knowledge from the uses of the archive, it can be possibly done through thinking the space of the archive, in its Derridian (1996) reading as a space that has suffered an irreplaceable loss in its conceptual inception. This is not about just the act of remembering that physical objects in the archive will be fragmentary or the work of the memory produced by it will depend largely upon the conditions of the receiver/spectator/reader.

Rather it is a move toward understanding the processes of representation as marked by/with an absence in rendering the present that is difficult to be put aside as Derrida (1988) shows while thinking of communicability of communication as a concept through Condillac's *Essay on the Origin of Human Understanding* (1746) while interpreting J. L. Austin's theory of performative utterances. Let me here, very briefly, Austin's (1984) theory about Locutionary, Illocutionary and Perlocutionary Acts. Facing difficulty in distinguishing performative utterances from constative utterances, Austin decides to look back into the types of senses in which 'to say something *is* to do something, or *in* saying something we do something and even *by* saying something we do something' (Austin 1984, 94). The performative/constative dichotomy begins with Austin's assumption that in spite what they might appear to be, certain sentences are not true or false. For example 'I think tomorrow's rain might add

to Kolkata's waterlogging woes'. Such sentences can signpost certain action on part of the speaker, which to Austin cannot be reduced to simple true or false but can be *happy* or *unhappy*. Beyond the function of the truth value of a sentence in the ordinary act of saying, Austin argues that in the performative sentences, the utterance, is part of the performances of an action that constitutes the action at the same moment.

The syntactic examples of these acts which he cites are:

1. 'Locution: He said to me 'Shoot her!' meaning by 'shoot' shoot and referring by 'her' to *her.*

2. Illocution: He urged (or advised, ordered, &c.) me to shoot her.

3. Perlocution: He got me to (or made me, &c.) shoot her' (Austin 1998, 101-102).

Geoffrey Leech (1983) defines Austin's formulation of these three kinds of speech through which the speech act is performed in the following manner— A) In case of the locutionary act one performs the act of saying something, B) The illocutionary act is the act of performing an act in saying something and C) the perlocutionary act is performing an act by saying something (Leech 1983, 199). As explained the locutionary act is the utterance of some words in a particular language where the meaning is direct and on the surface. The

267

illiocutionary and the perlocutionary acts are much more complex phenomena where through the former the speaker communicates his objective and through the latter the speaker enacts her wish intended for the receiver/hearer of the sentence/message. The three intentions of the messages in the syntactical utterance might not be separable as the ideal case. In fact the three layers of meaning might be operational at the same time and in the same utterance. In the sentence 'Can you fetch me a glass of water, please?' the three speech acts may be operating simultaneously. 'Fetch the glass of water' has a clear communicative message which is the locutionary act. At the same time, the sentence communicates to the receiver the idea of a request to fetch the glass of water. Coeval to the locutionary and illuocutionary process the perlocutionary act of the desire of the speaker that the hearer should act accordingly and fetch the glass of water is also acted/ performed.

The image, the photograph, as an idea of communication, can operate such as the speech act. Here we are taking the image as a sentence and utterance which flows beyond the restriction of the description by a 'single' word. The density and congealing of objects, even if there is only one central object, in the photographic frame, when communicated is more like an abundant description from the perspective of the onlooker. The photographer, whose absence, informs the production of the positive print of the photograph, can be supposed to design the communication acts intentionally. There can be a second move, the absence of the photographer coupled with the 'naturalness' of the medium can be

cognized by the onlooker as a message originating from the object of the photograph itself.

This is more evident in case of the archive of family photographs I am looking at where 'unidentified' images pervade the place of the album where the narrative history falls apart. Images act more like the utterances where the creator/issuer/ utterer of the message is absent. In case of the family album and the time through which I looked into, the issue of 'unidentified' images was a critical one. The unidentified nature of the photograph can be multiple. I am indicating a few possibilities from the point of view of the identifier of the particular family album—1) One remembers the subject of the photograph but cannot identify the photograph further with respect to date, location or photographer/studio, 2) One remembers exactly the date (may be its written on the backside of the photograph) and the location but is oblivious of the identities of the individual(s) present in the image, 3) One partially remember the decade, or a couple of years to which the photograph might belong but is oblivious of the rest, 4) In a photograph where there is more than one individual (such as composed group, or candid photographs in which photographed people might not be coreographed *per se*), one remembers one/two among the multiple figures but cannot identify the rest. It is a complex and simultaneous process in which the intended propositions of the image works which is generally understood as forgetting. As in the case of the family album from common families, this process of forgetting is also tied to the nature of the image and its narratorial-historical communicability. But to the researcher who might carry no special

knowledge of the photographs which has not been identified or have been partially identified, questions of communication and representation becomes more important than the history. This is not say that photograph do not have primary importance as historical evidence as I have discussed earlier.

In my experience of dealing with family albums this is a kind of problem. Qualitatively speaking few family albums and photographs has all the photographs neatly identified as in time, place, and subjects leading to a history of the subject woman. This is a recurrent theme in almost all the family albums that I have consulted for this dissertation. If this is so and history is dependent largely on the presence of facts that illustrate and illuminate the visual (contrary to popular claims of visual 'history') we are possibly facing an aporia of an unsituable situation in terms of reading the family album as emanating definite historical knowledge.

The general question that comes up is about what is this history made of? In the case of the family albums, it will be an unformulated and chance mix of dates, names, locations, studios, photographers, subjects and objects (inanimate, as the studio backdrop or the drawing room, props etc.). I am thinking of two moves at this point—1) the history that might emerge from such reading will necessarily be fragmentary, incomplete and incohesive in spite of all copious descriptive activity   2) then the possible way is to search for types of repetition

in the album which will corroborate the other existing narratives (written or spoken) of women and her representations in a given historical time thus producing a history of visualizing women. This might be illustrative of the other histories and narratives of representation. In doing so, and at times of strategic political importance in feminist history making, we are beating the specific nature of the communication that the visual prompts us to cognize. As an object etched by history from the late nineteenth century, the question of the family album seems to be resolved in its materiality. Given this, women in them, resists being put into a 'woman's place' as spoken by Derrida and McDonald (1997):

> '…you wonder how I would describe what is called "woman's place"; the expression recalls if I am not mistaken, "in the home" or "in the kitchen." Frankly, I do not know. I believe that I would not describe that place. In fact, I would be wary of such a description. Do you not fear that once committed to this path of topography, we would inevitably find ourselves back "at home" or "in kitchen"? Or under house arrest, *assignation à residence* as they say in French penitentiary language, which would amount to the same thing? Why must there be a place for woman? And why only one, a single, completely essential place?' (Derrida and McDonald 1997, 27)

Derrida further argues that there is no place for woman through the metaphor of dance and the impossibility of representing the woman that dance

would generate against the backdrop of Western metaphysics. The "place" of the family album seems too inadequate to tell the tale, if at all possible, of woman. At the end of Chapter Four, after attempting a classificatory review of women's photographs in family albums, I will, in Chapter Five, try to read into the possible relocations of women in family albums and photographs from the three points of ruptures of memory, romantic love and death separately. These will be a reading to see whether the space of the family album as representing women, is possible to be imagined and seen? But before that let me come back again where I digressed i.e. communication of the intended messages through the photographs.

Wollheim (1998) argues that there are two different ways to see things. Things can be seen "face to face" or things can be seen "in a marked surface". Walton (2008) cites Wollheim (1998) in reading into the depiction, perception and imagination of pictures and photographs, 'Representation does not have to limit itself to what can be seen face to face: what it has to limit itself to is what can be seen in a marked surface' (Wollheim 1998, 223). This can one move of seeing a work of pictorial representation. In case of the painting, especially, the comparative importance from the perspective of the viewer is larger on the "marked surface" of the painting as made than in case of the photograph which ensures a realism almost already given in the space of the emulsion based paper print. Austin (1984) faces a similar problem of overlap and masquerade between the constatives and the performatives therefore:

'the real conclusion must surely be that we need (a) to distinguish between locutionary and illocutionary acts, and (b) to distinguish specially and critically to establish with respect to each kind of illocutionary act—warnings, estimates, statements, and descriptions— what if any is the specific way in which they are intended, first to be in order or not in order, second, to be "right" or "wrong "; what terms of appraisal are used for each and what they mean' (Austin 1984, 146-47).

Let me take the example of the Figure 43. The photograph shows an unidentified young woman, dressed in Jodhpur breeches, wearing a scout's tie partially lighted from natural sources, holding a rifle in a downward position. The photograph, although not certainly dated, is from the 1960s. If we try to think the image through a sentence or an utterance it might be such as this—'A young woman posing with a rifle'. The ordinary viewer, with no other knowledge about the woman other than her regional-cultural background, might just read the photograph within the grid of a clearly communicated message gathered from the photograph, an instance of locutionary act. It also, we are assuming at this point, through cooperation between the photographer and the subject woman in framing the event (the moment of the photograph) communicates to the absent receiver the idea that of a certain amount of play and power (as associated with the rifle) informs the representation of the woman. Illocutionary it is in the sense that speaker (assumed to be the collaboration between the photographer and subject woman) communicates her objective of

portraying the image of a comparatively powerful woman. The perlocutionary desire of the utterance, in this case the photograph, also tries to establish the speaker's intention of delivering the message of a woman who is powerful. The possibility of the three acts operating at the same instant remains. Probably, the potency of the acts will not be much altered even if the absent viewer of the photograph receives a complete set of metadata. The photograph, as a complex grid of information, shocks the viewer/spectator beyond the specific historical analogical points describing it. We might also keep in mind here that such a response might be a feature of other kinds of representational communication. In fact, I am using the core of Austin's argument where the:

> 'The truth value of an utterance could… be methodologically waived or transferred to external circumstances and considered together with the appropriateness of the utterance to various situations and normative procedures' (Kujundzic and Buschert 23, 107).

I take into account that the unbound character of the speech act where intentionality of the utterance is central to Austin's thinking. Thinking the complex nature of representation as in writing Derrida says that it is indissociable from those of communication and of expression. In reading via Condillac, Derrida shows that in the case of the linguistic sign, the image of the thing, there is the absence of the addressee who is writing something in order to communicate something to someone who is absent. The absence of an object

274

from present perception necessitates that the sign is produced or comes into being coeval to imagination and memory. Such a structure provides a general assurance of all the continuities and the linking of presence to absence. On another general level in 'Signature Event Context', Derrida critiques the idea that communication 'circulates a representation as an ideal content (meaning); and writing is a species of this general communication. A species: a communication admitting relative specificity within a genre' (Derrida 1988, 6). A written sign is communicated in the absence of the receiver. It is absent only to the extent that it is a distant presence (the absent receiver) that might have been in multiple ways idealized in its representation. He argues that this divergence, distance, delay or the deferral should be capable of being 'carried to a certain absoluteness of absence if the structure of writing, assuming that writing exists is to constitute itself.' According to him at the heart of this argument 'writing could no longer (be) an (ontological) modification of presence' (Derrida 1988, 7). If the readability of the written communication is to have the grounds of communicability it should remain readable even when the receiver has absolutely disappeared:

> 'My communication must be repeatable—iterable—in the absolute absence of the receiver or of any empirically determinable collectivity of receivers. Such iterability—(*iter*, again probably comes from *Itara, other* in Sanskrit, and everything that follows can be read as the working out of the logic that ties repetition to alterity) structures the mark of writing

275

itself, …A writing that is not structurally readable—iterable—beyond the death of the addressee would not be writing' (Derrida 1988, 7).

Derrida objects the obvious nature of this proposition through the example of an idiomatic cipher writing only to be communicated between two subjects. Provocatively he raises the question that if both the subjects are dead in ways shall the mark left by one of them still be accepted as writing? To the extent that the process of writing is organized by a code that might be of an unknown nature and non-linguistic, the iterability of its identity even in the absence of a particular person makes it a writing. It potentially throws open its secrecy to all empirically determined subject.

'The possibility of repeating and thus of identifying the marks is implicit in every quote, making it into a network [*une grille*] that is communicable, transmittable, decipherable, iterable for a third, and hence for every possible user in general. To be what it is, all writing must, therefore, be capable of functioning in a radical absence of every empirically determined receiver in general…For writing to be a writing it must continue to "act" and to be readable even when what is called the author of the writing no longer answers for what he has written, for what he seems to have signed, be it because of a temporary absence, because he is dead or, more generally, because he has not employed his absolutely actual and present intention or attention, the plenitude of his desire to say

what he means, in order to sustain what seems to be written in his name'
(Derrida 1998, 8).

This sustenance means that for a thing to be what 'it' is, it should always carry the chance of repetition. Every phase of moon is a distinct phase in itself but at the same time belongs to the general example of moon phases. Keeping the distinct singularity of one particular phase of moon it will through its repetition be cognizable in the next phase of the moon. These two moon phases which apparently are the repetition of the same will carry a mark of difference along with it. Every singularity is conditioned by the structure of sameness and difference which is repeatable with a difference and alteration (Lucy 2004, 59). I take this reading to see that each classificatory tendency of representational stereotypes of women in family albums cannot be boxed within the apparent closure and seamlessness of categories such as "The Family" or "Couples" or "Women with Children". The readable message of Figure 43 can be altered with other similar looking photographs of single women that will communicate a sense of play and power. If differentiated by proper historical information and read alongside with it, the photograph becomes different enough in the sense that it corroborates and verifies exact information about the history of the woman but not exactly of the *representedness* of the photographic print. When I try to form a narrative of the "general trends" in the construction of the family form via photographs of women in albums, the difference that I am by and large reading into is the difference of information. This is also an enabling move contributing

to cognition of the definiteness of the subject woman in the photograph. Beyond that, as in the case of Figure 43, it might also open up the interjections of general social knowledge of the decade of 1960s in West Bengal, as allowing visual representations of women to be less formally constructed than the photographs from the early decades of twentieth century. At this point I am indicating at the descriptive/identificational content beyond the specific singularity of the image such as marked by name, place, description of the action etc. The iterability constituting the identity of the language, or in this case the photograph, prevents them from being a unity that is identical to itself (Derrida 1988, 10). Derrida further argues that a certain self-identity of the element (the woman in the photograph here) is a necessary condition for its recognition and repetition (as a woman). To quote Derrida:

> 'Through empirical variations of tone, voice etc., possibly of a certain accent for example, we must be able to recognize the identity, roughly speaking, of a signifying form. Why is this identity paradoxically the division or dissociation of itself, which will make of this phonic sign a grapheme? Because this unity of the signifying form only constitutes itself by virtue of its iterability by the possibility of its being repeated in the absence not only of its "referent", which is self-evident, but in the absence of a determinate signified or of the intention of actual signification, as well as of all intention of present communication. This structural possibility of being weaned from the referent or from the signified (hence from communication and from its context) seems to me

to make every mark, including those which are oral, a grapheme in general; which is to say, as we have seen the non-present *remainder* [*restance*] of a differential mark cut off from its putative "production" or origin. And I shall even extend this law to all "experience" in general if it is conceded that there is no experience consisting of *pure* presence but only of chains of differential marks' (Derrida 1988, 10).

With this review of the irreplaceable loss informing the archive in its inception, the acts of speech constituting meaning between the receiver and sender even when they are absent and Derrida's conception of iterability leading to a deconstructive move about the considering the structure of *repetition-as-difference*, I will read the trends of photographic representations, if any, in family albums and photographs.

4.2. The Family Album: Reading the Repository of Photographs

Generally speaking, it is the democratization of photographic image making that set forth a process that would ring the death-knell for the hegemony of traditions of representations out of the hands of elite. To quote Bourdieu (1990):

'One might say of photography what Hegel said of philosophy: 'No other art or science is subjected to this last degree of scorn, to the supposition that we are the masters of it without ado.' Unlike more demanding cultural activities such as drawing, painting or playing a musical instrument, unlike even going to museums or concerts, photography presupposes neither academically communicated culture, nor the apprenticeships and the 'profession' which confer their value on the cultural consumptions and practices ordinarily held to be the most noble, by withholding them from the man in the street' (Bourdieu 1990, 5).

Bourdieu brings in also, in detail, the class question in the practice of photography. He nominates that relationship between individuals and photographic practice is essentially a mediate relationship. Although surveys of photography as a critical category are available, there is lesser number of critical insights into family photography. The early contours of the legal juridical, official frames of photography in the colonial, that I have traced, more often than not, tried to posit the figure of the woman as well as the man in definite generic moulds. With the interiorisation of photography from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, simultaneous to the emergence of women in the nationalist pictorial imagination, a different, less looked into trend of family albums began to develop in the middle-class families in Bengal. Here, the economy of photographic discourse was different from what was in the public domain such as official photography, journalistic photography or medico-legal

photography. The process of consumption, appreciation and retrieval of memories through photographs are often incompatible with dominant modes of representation in the public domain. Unexpected ruptures and overlooked possibilities appear in the play of memories and desires in the photographic representations. The aesthetic of displaying, arrangement of photographs cannot always be subdued by the preponderance of popular aesthetic choice in a specific time within colonial/post-colonial social spaces. In a way, the subjective nature of photographic albums, each with its distinctive 'narrative' do not usher a closure of the possibilities of the visual but also open up scope of reading patterns of gendering. The non-public or the limited public access of family albums gives it a chance to preserve moments in it, which otherwise can be prejudiced in spaces beyond the limits of kinship ties within which such images of women are subject to discursive exchanges.

Malvika Karlekar's (2006) study about women's photographs features Indian women from more or less enlightened families. She also travels a wide section of Indian communities to locate the photographically represented woman. My reading, while, acknowledging her critical contribution, will look into more common middle-class lives being played out inside family albums, conditions of their representation, and possibilities of slips from historically specific trends and modes of engagement of women with photographs. As a last point and as a defense of the structure I will be using here, I quote from Saussure on what he said about comparative importance of synchronic and diachronic analyses with

regard to language. Broadly, the scope of Saussure's observations can be translated into realms of reproduced visual language of photography. According to him, diachronic and synchronic studies diverge in all approaches. It is clear that the synchronic perspective takes priority over the diachronic, as for the public of language users that is the only available reality. The case may be similar to a linguist. If the linguist looks through the diachronic perspective, he might no longer be probing the language, but a succession of events which transform it. It is frequently claimed that there can be nothing more significant than trying to know how an assumed state originated. Saussure move is not to leave behind entirely the diachronic developments of photography, without which I could not have possibly arrived to the point of family albums and which I have already done. My purpose is to read implications of the family album form's or the family photographs' consumptions in the specific context of the late nineteenth century and the most part of the twentieth century in Bengal/West Bengal.

Family albums, generally, and the specific ones that I am looking into, are circulated among limited spectatorship of the kins. Viewership of family albums is usually restricted in the limited and porous domain of familial kinship. Otherwise, those remain as memory vaults within which narratives wait to be germinated.   History of families, uprooting, and reconstitution are relived through the photographic experience. Stuart Hall (1990)

'suggests that cultural identity is not something that ever really exists in a performed state, transcending time, peace and history. Rather it is always in a process of constant transformation. Identity is not something fixed in the past, awaiting discovery; nor is it a crystallized essence waiting to be uncovered. On the contrary, it is subject to the movements of history, culture and power. However, Hall also points out that cultural identity is not merely a question of whim and imagination, since all identities have their histories, and histories have real effects, both material and symbolic. In addition, they are always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth. Cultural identity is an unstable point of identification constructed through speech, acts and artifacts. To Hall, an identity is not an essence, but a positioning' (James and Lobato 2004, 8).

Women's photographs in family albums that I looked into are generally inscribed with the notions of cultural identity and social positioning. I seek to read the patterns and ruptures in such patterns in representation of women in these albums. My purpose is to propose the general and read individual ruptures and moments when hegemonic modes of representation do not hold much ground. In viewing women's photographic in family albums, I have used Roland Barthes' formulations of *studium* and *punctum*. Starting from the notion of the *studium*, a photo can speak of a sense of respectibility, of social assent, of conformism and of ways of dressing. However, one could also go further and respond to Barthes' attempt to find the *punctum*—the point that wounds

(punctures) the normative structure and that thereby provokes in the spectator a different gaze.

> 'The *punctum* contains the metonymically exceptional. It is probably unintentional and tells the viewer that the photographer was there. Nevertheless, the punctum is, above all, situated at a very individual level. It is concerned with what the photo signifies for one viewer and not necessarily for others (for whom it may simply be one more photo among thousands of similar images)' (James and Lobato 2004, 11-12).

Family albums, in general, contain abundant examples of such elements of resistances. In order to separate the 'universal' hegemonic from the fragments of daily experience, it is necessary to derive knowledge of the context and access to other 'intimate' information, thus turning the observer into a privileged reader. In the albums, a combination of professional photos and spontaneous, immediate snapshots (these are rare to find in early albums because of the expensive and cumbersome nature of the photographic apparatus in late nineteenth and early twentieth century) that lack overt symbolic intent but reflect the desire to arrest movement and time in a precise instant are common. These photographs can be associated with the defense against the ravages of fleeting time, fragments, whose endless succession threatens to erase memory. Probing into lives through photos can be problematic. Despite their documentary power, their status as historical evidence has been the subject of intense debate. The notion that a

photo can summon up the past in any unmediated, transparent way is now generally regarded as a form of naïve realism. According to Hall, 'The evidence that the photographic text may be assumed to represent is already overendowed, overdetermined by other, often contradictory meanings, which arise within the intertextuality of all photographic representation' (Hall 1991, 155).

From a similar position of ideological critique, John Berger (2008) looks at photographs as decontextualised and as signifying discontinuous moments. He has offered various tools for reading the photo's narrative capacity. Berger proposes to tie photography to social and political memory rather than using it as a substitute for them. This alternative function of photography is what connects it with memory and is what allows Berger to argue for the need to construct a context for each photo, either through other photos or through words.

In most cases, the photos are without verbal cues. Albums rarely have an explicit textual thread to provide a narrative plot. In case of photos, the discursive community is not immediately available and the photographs remain enigmatic for the viewer/researcher who does not have some personal knowledge of the image's context. While individual photos of women may perhaps remain mired in decontextualised ambiguity, something changes by putting them in an album. The relationship established between photos renders it imaginable to deliver a story. Assortment and organization, a dynamic process of historical

construction, have been used to offer the on-looker an account. It signifies in most of the albums I have encountered, the progress and changeability of individual lives, caught within the boundaries of family. Photographs do point to a disjuncture in the viewing experience, but at the same time, they allow for the possibility of gathering the fragments of dispersed lives. Photos, therefore, imply discontinuities associated with a sense of irretrievable loss. Will it be possible to say that they acquire meaning when we can locate it within a system of socially determined signifying webs? To comment hesitantly, photograph is a site where the present and the past are newly connected. The story told, the past constructed, will still be partial and fragmentary; the narrative will be plagued by breaks. The logic, if at all, underlying the selection and ordering is however open to multiple interpretations. Albums can serve as both instigators and preservers of memory. They embody a desire to preserve the external image, which helps remembrance. It is like the opening of the memory box. For Walter Benjamin, memory functions in such a way that images simply accumulate with no apparent order. There is no chronology that orders this succession of memory flashes. Benjamin argues that an image acquires its meaning to the extent that it finds a corresponding moment in the present (James and Lobato 2004, 13).

If the photographs of women in family albums raise the issue of memory, they also engage the threat of forgetting. Not only does an album preserve precisely what is most likely to be forgotten; the process of selection also entails corresponding processes of discarding or destruction of unwanted faces and

figures within the family. Through photographs of women in family albums, one could reach what Benjamin calls the hymnic moment. This hymnic moment does not imply a nostalgic gaze but rather an active and deliberate selection of images that will allow her to situate her personal experience within a broader context of identity formation. Putting together a photograph album involves joining present with past, overcoming discontinuities produced by the photographic act. Christian Metz (1985) argues that we can compare photo albums with other rituals and social practices, particularly those associated with death. Photos allow us to accept death and the loss of what we love (people, places, customs) but also imply that life goes on. Maximum researchers who have considered family albums uphold that the content of the album represent the 'genre of family comedy, while excluding the tragic' (James and Lobato 2004). There are however, exceptions to this in photographic cultures of India and elsewhere, where there are formalities to be photographed with the deceased person, which I will discuss in Chapter Five.

Arrangement of photographs in albums does have a possibility of rupture, as these can transcend the masculine linear classic temporal scheme of the family as 'growing' through events, occasions and representations. It can be more synchronic in arrangements of apparent disjointed moments. In the realm of family albums vis-à-vis images of women, the viewer is at the intersection of the personal, the social and the political. The photographs, in a way, connect the

intimate and the public, thereby reinforcing the ties with formation of identity through complex processes of gendering within a family.

Following Hall (1991), it can be argued, that photos are marked by multiaccentuated traces that history has left behind. The privileged reader can supply an inventory, using the elements at her disposal from outside of the visual frame. According to Laikwan Pang (2005, 56-85) photography is perhaps the form of cultural representation most frequently associated with modernity. Yet the 'putative' truth-value of photograph is constantly threatening to slip out of control, largely because these representations can be mechanically reproduced. While it is known that there is a direct relationship between the object and the photographic representation, the representation could be infinitely produced to the extent that the original is lost among reproductions. Crary (1992) notes that with invention of photography, the world of images changed from the metaphoric to the metonymic, when publics could not tell the differences between an original and a copy. This may be symptomatic of images, which have comparatively more public currency.

Following well-debated formulations by Judith Butler, to whom the category of gender is problematic and endowed with performance, it can be argued that the concept of performance can link gender and photography. If gender is performance, photography as a form of representation can work to both

dramatize and naturalize this performance. It can be stated that such dynamics is particularly evident in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century India, when the newly imported photography had to negotiate existing representation systems, such as painting and lithography. I will come back to the performativity of the photograph in Chapter 5. While briefly commenting about the ruptured possibilities of photography, it can be loosely argued that Bengali women, who had minimum or no publicly visible social political agency otherwise, forged a cult of the self through photographs. Photographs, unlike other forms of performance, can be seen not only by others but also by oneself, and photography suggests a will to power in terms of presenting ones' body and identity according to one's wishes. Is it so that women have more attachment to family albums as they are comparatively larger repositories conventional carriers of domestic memories than men?

Photography that calls attention to performance of the body echoes both traditional aesthetics and commodification of female figure. Roland Barthes has argued that photography's ability to capture reality gives its representation two contradictory features: its closeness to reality makes representations extremely polysemous, which Barthes has described as 'madness'. Photography also tends to hide its mediation process, mythologizing representation as natural instead of constructed; connotations become denotations. Therefore, while photography seems to destabilize gender meanings, photographs can also be easily manipulated by dominating gender ideologies – a process that explains why

289

women's photographs captured in family albums are organized by the gaze of hetero-normativity. In other words, photography is polysemous but its polysemous nature can be easily subdued in a definite web of politics and usage.

New meanings arise through the placing of photos in various contexts and in dialogue with different images and narratives. Photography has a dual ability of setting free and disciplining femininity in the context of the family albums. It is the ostensibly direct and honest representation of reality inscribed within a mechanical reproductive system that always implies a network of reception beyond the producer's control (Pang 2005). I want to argue that images of women, always do not confirm to stereotypes in which they are continually tried to be cast into. The point is elucidated in the following section dealing with photographs of Bengali middle-class women. Malavika Karlekar (2006) has partly done this with her close introspection of studio backdrops and costumes worn by the women.

Here it would not be entirely out of place to mention here that in some of the most incisive writings about emulsion based photography, the image is seen as a shock to the flow of time.

'Photographic camera, in view of Walter Benjamin for instance, interrupts the ordinary continuum of history. Photographs bring death to the photographed, but precisely in transforming history into a cemetery,

290

in converting the past into a spectre haunting the future, the photographic image can also stimulate a serious solidarity between the dead and the living. Photographic images, according to Benjamin, turn time into space. They disclose that which has been forgotten or overlooked in historical time, and in this way, they no longer allow us to conceive of history as continuous and linear and to see our present as a mere reproduction of the past…Arresting temporality, photographic images establish and verify material connections across time: they display history as a discontinuous site of magic, epiphany, correspondence and shudder' (Koepnick 2004, 99-100).

Emulsion—based photography is not as closed, homogeneous, and clear-cut as many of its commentators, including at times Benjamin often projected it to be. Meaning and reference according to Sontag (1977), do not reside in the photograph itself. The meaning develop from what one does with definite images, from how one endow them with knowledge and desire, and from how one allows them to effect the viewer under particular circumstances and position them against the background of contending dialogues.

'According to Sontag (1977), the meaning of photographic images, including what they have to say about life, death and memory, always comes in the plural; they speak differently to different audiences and different times…In Siegfried Kracaeur, Walter Benjamin and Roland

Barthes a look at the photographic image as a prosthetic memory device is precisely because it seems to beat the patriarchal violence of linear time by its own game. As they break historical time into a discontinuous set of seemingly self–enclosed moments, photographs define and transfix past, present and future' (Keopnick 2004, 101-5).

When I began to look into family albums and generally started talking to women about their reflections on albums and photographs, the structured mode of a closed and moulded representation began to break down fast. Women's interpretations of photographs of themselves and others were numerous as predictable. It varied with kinds of socialization. While I was expecting more answers from the point of view of stereotyping of women in family albums, the respondents were more eager to reply and talk about their attachments to particular photographs rather than the flow of any particular family album. They as a general pattern talked about particular photographs as sources of memory, lost possibilities in childhood photographs that they are not ready to submit to any determined structures. Points of dress, make–up, postures, even photographs taken during illness resurface in the minds of the interviewees. One of the respondents mentioned about a set of photographs taken during a near-fatal illness after childbirth. She told more than once the she does not like the photographs but cannot exclude them from the album. It remains as part of her essence. She goes back frequently to that particular set of photographs. Locating such experiences inside dominant genres of visualizing the Bengali family is

problematic. These are points where certain presumptions about domestic photography doesn't hold tight. Women viewers constantly reformulate meanings and positioning of photographs. Patterns of selection of *favourite* photographs change with passage of time. Same photographs are liable to be liked and disliked with time as happens with social relations. Broad visual changes in family photography that I tried to demonstrate would be incomplete without women speaking about their experiences/attachments regarding family albums. This chapter would not attempt any theorization of narratives of women but present them as open ended. A few points of commonality will be highlighted. The six interviewees were chosen generally from middle-class/upper middle-class Bengali Hindu households. The selection was done on the basis of the researchers' knowledge and presumption of their ability to answer the set of questions. The key objective of this small and random survey was to see how women articulate their feelings, particularly desires and memories, about family photography.

The range of age of the six women respondents, all residents of Kolkata, varied from late twenties to late sixties. All, except one, were graduates, two of them had post-graduate degrees and two of them had relocated to Kolkata post-marriage. In each of the cases, interviews were done in absence of any other family members/friends. They were not subject to any external influence while expressing their views. These audio-recorded interviews ran up to an average of thirty minutes for each interviewee. A basic set of questions were used in each

case but according to the need there were deviations from the set questionnaire. Discussions were generally free flowing. The amount of information sliced from the interviews was done to partially streamline the expanse of such sessions. The questionnaire was not handed over to the interviewees. The major points covered in the interviews were:

a) First encounter of the interviewee with photograph/photography

b) Importance of the 'family album' to the interviewee

c) Perceptions about marriage photographs

d) The ways the interviewee relates to and relives past through photographs

e) Attachment with particular photographs

f) The mode of display of photographs in the interviewees' household

g) Different occasions to get photographed (including official photographs for demographic purposes)

h) Any attempt by the interviewee to practice photography

i) Types of women represented in family albums

j) Cultures and contexts of the viewing of family albums

k) Anecdotes regarding photographs/photography in the family

Here, I will make a précis of the main points of the interviews. Interviewee 1 is a graduate, in the age group of 25–30 years, working for a computer hardware firm in Southern Kolkata. Soon to be married, she now lives in South Kolkata. The interview was done in her office. According to interviewee 1, photographs of her family, friends and extended family are not

294

coherently arranged with any continuity/narrative. Her mother informally took her to the neighbourhood studios on each birthday and would keep notes on back of the prints. The practice stopped after a certain age of which she was not sure. She is emotionally attached to these photographs and feels these are 'live' registers of changes while growing up. She spoke of her special likeness of 'those' black and white photographs that she plans to preserve carefully all her life. She bemoans the lack of any organized group photograph of her family and the presence of only one photograph of her mother before marriage. She said that she would have liked to have a glimpse of her mother's childhood. Travel photos are very important to her experience, as those give her a chance to be situated forever in naturally exotic backdrops. In the new family, to which she would be moving after her marriage, she wants to maintain a family album primarily for two reasons. The first was of her own fondness of albums stuffed with photographs that can be opened at any page for reminiscing the past. The second point she mentioned was that she had lost many moments from her childhood and family life due to the absence of a classic family album which would narrates the story of a family with a certain continuity; she would not like this oblivion to happen in case of her child. Broadly speaking, to her, an album can be successful in making memory work towards a definite remembrance of things past. The desire to locate the career of 'self' within familial framework, to see the body mutating and to have a continuous history of the family seems to be particularly working here. It would be interesting to investigate whether this longing for continuity and a documented family narrative is exclusive to or at

least more intense in women. This can be such not possibly because majority of women nurture the patriarchy-driven self-image of primarily a familial being and hence would try to locate themselves in a certain history of the family. The life of the Bengali woman is fragmented and migratory in their shift from the parental to the husband's family after marriage. The yearning for a modern ocular-centric narrative of the self through the family album of the parental family and an aspiration to maintain such continuity in the post-marital life, for a woman who is just going to be married, is suggestive of how desire for modernity can be gendered and can act upon a logic of compensation.

Interviewee 2 (age group 30–35 years) is a newly married working woman, who relocated to Kolkata from the district of Birbhum post-marriage. A graduate, she lives with her husband. She first encountered photography when she was a child of approximately six years and remembers being photographed during winter. To her, photography is a definite register of changes in her life. Her shift from a small town to a metropolis can be palpably felt through snapshots. Her style, body language as a school girl and college going girl in early nineties, to a woman who works for a Kolkata based NGO has gone through definite changes, which can be read from photographs preserved in the family album. She described her journey as a journey from innocence to experience, moments of which are captured in photos. She is particularly fond of old, fading, monochrome photographs of her parents and herself. After relocation into the new family post-marriage, she had brought with her very few pictures

from her parental family album, one of which is a portrait of her deceased father. She sees photographs as a very able way to get back to childhood days. She is not enthusiastic about her marriage photographs or displaying them. According to her, family album consists of happy moments and reality is somehow excluded from it. She remembers her first photograph just after she was born and brought back home, in the arms of her mother in the *verandah*. She likes travel photographs, especially photos of her first tight-budget tour with her husband. She mentioned that scribbles behind particular photographs help her to situate photographs and appear as a stream of memories, which as an experience is unparalleled. She doesn't like to use photographs of individuals to be hung as part of the home décor. According to her, most of the women seen in family albums reflect the middle-class family stereotypes. Role-playing forms the major part of photographs in family albums. She doesn't like studio photography and says that a photograph taken for official purposes doesn't really concern her beyond their official functions. She remarked that in photographs from 1950s and 1960s in her family album, young women and men from her family used to dress up as Suchitra Sen, Supriya Choudhuri and Uttam Kumar, all popular icons of Bengali popular cinema. She wished she had a monochrome photograph of herself in her early twenties, which she might have displayed in her house. To her, family albums don't necessarily mean photographs of persons; photographs of objects and pets are cherished equally.

The third interviewee (age group 40–45), a resident of North Kolkata, is a single woman staying with her mother. A research degree holder, she is a working woman from a once-upon-a-time-large family. She is exceptionally attached to family albums from her family. According to her, there were multiple albums, parts of which are now scattered and lost. Her father, a government doctor, had a transferable job and the family had to relocate several times. She spoke about old fading photographs of her parents shot at Tagda near Darjeeling in the Himalayan West Begal, where the family stayed for quite some time (Figure 139 is from the same trip). Her photographs with her cousins show her emotional attachment with her maternal family in Rourkela. Extended family seems to form a greater part of her identity. The walls of her home are decorated with framed prints of her father's university convocation and enlargement of great grandparents. Once a joint-family, her family is now reduced to two members. The sense of loss of near ones and the persistent efforts to keep memories alive through the albums comes out from her interview. She speaks at length of a distinct photograph of herself as a child. The photograph shows her as a child holding a doll. She repeats the point that she never liked playing with dolls as children of her age did. Possibly, she was forced to play with the doll in order to take the photograph. Nevertheless, she also mentioned that she indeed looked good in the photograph. She said she would have been happy if she had more photos of her grown up years. The type of family albums that she has gone through has especially portrayed older women in middle-class stereotypes. Her mother, whose movements are restricted within the home, cherishes displaying

photos of her brothers and her sons, who have relocated to other cities. The interviewee is not at all comfortable with so-called official photography. She likes to take photographs herself but finds the cost and the technicalities associated with it difficult to manage. She cares to take photography seriously sometime in future.

The fourth interviewee (age group 45–50 years) lives with her family in South Kolkata. A post-graduate, she relocated to Kolkata after marriage from Shantiniketan. According to her, the first conscious engagement with photography began with the child-book in the family, which acted as a visual register of a growing child in the family. Her mother deftly maintained the child-book. Subsequently, after her relocation she had brought the photograph of her mother whom she lost at a young age. The parental family album is now with the interviewee. Brought up in a boarding school, she cherishes photographs with her hostel-mates, rather than the usual brigade of cousins. She recalls an anecdote in which the father of one of her roommates, a press photographer, used to take their photographs during his visits to the hostel. She now immensely enjoys looking at those photographs kept in the family album. According to her, the photographs in a family album entail a process of selection. This is mainly done to make the representations of the family as primarily a happy place. She mostly likes old albums with black and white prints covering translucent pages and readjustable photo corners. Marriage photographs are not much important to her. She does not particularly like to display them. She feels that memories work

greatly through family albums, but not only through it alone. Her mother's photograph is therefore part of her remembrance and not the only thing. She has a dislike for displaying photographs of persons who have passed away, though she acknowledges that she at times is keenly drawn towards moments of grief framed in family albums. She recounts an episode in her life just after the birth of her daughter when she was critically ill. Photographs from that period are very important to her to the extent that she often returns to these photos. She takes official photographs to be entirely utilitarian, entirely beyond realms of emotional attachment. She shared her dislike for getting photographed now, a major point of difference with her husband. She likes travel photos. The only photograph that she displays in the bedroom is one in which she and her daughter figure together. Asked about a particular attachment with any other photograph, she mentioned one taken long back with her fiancé beside the well-known *canal* towards Prantik in Birbhuhm.

The fifth interviewee (age group 65–70 years) is a homemaker whose both present and ancestral homes are situated in Kolkata. Probably she had access to college education. She has no definite remembrance of her first encounter with photography. She brought a few photographs of her brothers and sisters from the parental family album to the new family after her marriage. She considers the family album an extremely important space of reliving the history of a family. Old photographs of near ones are a kind of antidote to her moments of depression. To her, the family album is also a tool for educating children and

initiating them into lineage and culture of a particular family. She likes photographs of her marriage primarily due to aspects of romance and hopes of a new life attached to it. The family album, according to her, should be preserved very carefully as this is history irreplaceable. She remembers two photographs of her distinctly; one from her school days wearing a dancing frock and another, a personal favourite, from her college days. In her own family album and other albums that she has seen, she found women attuned to role-playing, compartmentalized according to age and marital situations. She dislikes displaying dead people's photographs; their remembrances are more subtle to her experience. Her personal liking is for more casual and *romantic* poses in the household. When asked whether she had tried her hands at photography, she replied that there was no opportunity in her family for women to try their hands at photography.

4.3. The Family Album: Producing the Familiar

David Halle (1987) argued that there is no serious study of family photos in relation to the context of their exhibition. Albums concentrate on family history in a selective and concentrated way. There are comparatively lesser instances of strangers appearing in family albums. Women feature as a prime object/subject in family albums in Bengal. The growing popularity of family albums led to its almost ubiquitous presence in the Bengali middle-class families. The family albums were generally leather or hard paperboard bound, usually

with black pastel paper pages with preset or separately supplied photo corners and translucent paper cover to each page of the albums. Sizes and thickness as in the number of pages differed as we move from the late nineteenth and twentieth century. The space of album apart from other indoor display of photographs in Bengali middle-class households was central to the exhibition of photographs to other people or to the self. The photographs, exchanged through discussions, comments and reminiscences among a limited viewership consisting of family members, friends, kinship circles and neighbours were not exposed to the public as such. Most albums, which I have consulted for this dissertation, have a comparatively larger presence of women in it than men. As noted earlier, the colonial-modern Bengali trend made it easier for the exposition of woman before the camera. We can note here, that the intrusion of the camera in households or when the woman travelled to a studio, was not, except for a very early phase, taken to be a meddling in the private sphere of the family life. Rather, it was seen as an enabling apparatus of the modern which made the exchange of exact image of the woman, often indoors otherwise, a thing of felicity. The space of the studio, fantastic in its appeal, at the same time provided the sense of the private. The feeling of the studio chamber with not many unnecessary people inside, the closed door, the general silent mood, the presence of the mirror to perfect the hair style or for the last minute checking of one's own face and transference of the scene via changing of the backdrop, all contributed to its moments of private feeling in spite of the presence of the photographer. The studio backdrop was also an important point in this transference. As Appadurai (1997) argues that:

'In fact the role of the backdrop in "locating" the photograph is much more complex. Although it often locates the photographic subject in some sort of context, it also locates the photograph in a certain sort of public disclosure. In the case of the photographic backdrops, this public discourse can and does take many forms but a frequent referent is the discourse of modernity as a visual fact' (Appadurai 1997, 6)

A visual history of development of the female self can be traced through the photos in family albums. According to Julia Hirsch (1981), the photographs in family albums are fictionalized biography. In the old photography studio, this biography was often idealized by placing the subject in front of the kind of backdrop her imagination hungered for. Family photographs strive for unity, stability, dignity and character. Following Hirsch's (1997) argument, it can be stated that the family album is a more or less superficial psychoanalysis. We project onto the photographs and subtract from them too. Photographs in which women looks 'optimistic' are liked best in albums by other members of the family and kins. This poignancy is vested upon the figure of women as a site of exchange of cultural value. It might be referred here that Hirsch argues that the family photo has been prostituted into the politics. 'He is a family man' is always a note of praise. No one as yet used 'a family woman' as a character reference. The identities of the family and the woman are exchangeable in case of the family album. Therefore the reference is not an extraneous one, but implicit within the body of the woman displayed in the album. Hirsch (1997) has shown

how photography has become the primary means of self–representation and uncovers both deception and power behind this visual record. She reconnoiters photographic convention for constructing family relationships and the difference between idealized images and reality. Idealized images and reality are in constant negotiations and argument in photographs, especially in family albums. The family is constituted through the iconography of significant occasions, through styles of dressing, appropriate demeanour, pose and positioning. Wedding photographs, or those taken shortly after a special event, became particularly popular and an ordeal for the bride, perhaps just out of *parda* or for the child bride. In the twentieth century, there was much relaxation and informality in poses of conjugal couple as I shall discuss in Chapter 5. In group photographs, the positioning of the patriarch, as well as who sat next to whom, who was to stand, and so on were often very reflections of actual hierarchies within families. (Karlekar 2006, XV) To quote Karlekar :

‘The earliest photographs of women and girls placed them in the family context. Families and individuals stood or sat elaborately dressed, framed against the backdrop of phantasmic studio sets – distant lakes, castles, tropical forests – that looked beyond everyday reality… The camera recorded the emergence of the urban, nuclear family, adjustments in the traditional joint family and changing roles … Elaborately formal attire, pose, and the positioning of the persons was of vital importance; in the case of married couple, how each spouse was seated or standing, both individually and in relation to each other, often indicated relative status within the marital bond.

Photographs of upper–middle–class women with books, a well-tended plant or an expensive object d'art were often symbolic of aspirations – that of an educated, enlightened woman or of a skilled, a well-placed housewife, her husband's helpmeet' (Karlekar 2006, 1).

While representation of women began to change through the twentieth century in diverse spheres of social life, representation in home, inside family photography also changed with it, not to say it terms of political emancipation from sexual division of labour. The thematic divisions that Karlekar brings in with regard to her depiction of women in photography till Independence are (a) The framing of the Conjugal Bond, in which she traces the evolution of couple photos past 1859, which found large currency among urban upper middle–class families. (b) Changes in Body Language, where changes in conjugal photographs are noted in and around 1920s. These were times seating positions were becoming more casual and at the same level. The photographs gradually came to convey the intimacy of the conjugal bond. (c) The Girl Child (d) Celebrating Womanhood (e) The Family Group and (f) Ritual and Performance. The scope of this chapter narrows the focus of reading only to bring into light the positioning of woman inside family albums.

Annette Kuhn (1995, 1) link up family with broader social categories in a lucid theorization that helps in understanding positioning of women in family

albums. The family is taken to be a place of safety, closeness and intimacy. According to Kuhn, if the family ties are given and not chosen, then they have that much in common with other attachments of nation, race, class and gender. The specific photographs of Hindu/Brahmo family albums that I chose to go through, more or less reflect such categories of representations. Exceptions occur only to re-incorporate traditional *status quo*. Karlekar (2006) could produce images of emancipated women from enlightened families at turn of the century, but as it went, the largest section of women across the caste, class and gender divide were not able to reach the state of representational emancipation. The photographs of Bengali Hindu married/unmarried women/widow that I had the chance of looking into were mostly all confined to the hegemonic disciplining structures of society. Mostly they were shown / exhibited as repository of honour and shame (*lajja*). As I slip down the time-frame towards the thirties and forties of the twentieth century, it appears, as also stated by Karlekar, that a certain democratization of the positing of the woman has taken place. However, it is still the vestiges of Victorian framing and traditional posturing that are found imposed on the body of the woman in front of the camera. The presence of the man in the frame is to give agency, whatsoever little, to the figure of the woman beside him. Early (till 1940s–50s), marriage photographs, almost always, have the man staring at the lens, while the woman's looking is somewhat fractured and as if she was trying to avoid the lens but was made to prepare a look for the camera.

I have earlier in this Chapter listed trends of photographic representation of women. With the critical historical review in mind and the few unconnected interviews let me try to read the trends. In the section "The Family" (Figures 17 to 25), I have illustrated the family(ies) represented in the family albums. The concept of the family in case of the Bengali middle-class is patrilineal based on the assumption of the Hindu society that the woman leaves her parental home and goes to live in her husband's parental home. Unmarried children also live with their parents (Shah 1998, 18). The family here is a nebulous mixture between the joint family and the nuclear family. As Shah (1998) shows that the form of the nuclear family, what he calls the incomplete elementary family, or the family form in itself is difficult to straightjacket in the Indian scenario. Multiple combinations of individual, married and unmarried can form the shorter version of the Indian joint family system. Again there are difficulties in simply recognizing the joint family system in India in the limits between the joint family and the extended family. There has been ways to differentiate the Indian joint family system through the inclusion of the term 'generation' by mentioning it as a three-generation or four-generation family (Shah 1998, 18-19). The sociological anthropological problems of defining the Indian family systems in its representations can be found in the sphere of the family album also. If we take Figure 18, a formal studio photograph from the Kolkata based T. P. Sen Studio, it shows us three carefully composed figures of the wife (extreme right), Mrs. Subhasini De, the daughter (extreme left), Ms. Sudhira De and the husband standing at the back, Mr. Subhil Kumar De. Man, wife and children which forms

the essence of the nuclear family in the late-colonial modern. The backdrop has an atmosphere of Victorian country background with wickets. For a Bengali Hindu/Brahmo middle-class family at the turn of the century, with access to 'modern' education and ways of life (such as the watch on Mrs. De's wrist, the visible shoe or the child dressed in Western outfit) the *biliti* outlook and presentation of oneself without the destabilizing the traditional (such as the saree for the woman or the partial covering of the head with her saree) was an important attestation of class, taste and social mobility. The photograph dates to 1938, a time of surge of the nationalist politics in Bengal. On 8 March 1938, the workers of the Bangeswari Cotton Mill and Srirampuria Cotton Mill workers went on a strike. On 17 April, the All India Muslim League organized a special conference in Kolkata. The main speaker was Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948). It was also in the same year that Subhas Chandra Bose (1897-1945) was elected the president of the Haripura Congress[42]. One can even take into account

---

[42] The Indian National Congress held its 51st session during last month at Haripura in the District of Bardoli…This Congress Session was being held under the shadow of a con¬stitutional crisis, a crisis which had been precipitated by the Governor-General in his unwarranted interference with the functions of the Ministers of Bihar and the United Provinces. This challenge of the Viceroy was accepted and the Ministers of these two Provinces resigned. The tense atmosphere created by this crisis did not, however, have the effect upon the Haripura Session which might have been expected. While all the features were there which may have given rise to an extremely serious situation, actually the character of the Haripura Session was milder than any Session held since the Civil Disobedience Movement was called off… Subhas Chandra Bose in his Presidential address reminded the delegates of the latest authoritative pronouncement made by the All-India Congress Committee at its meeting in Calcutta last October declaring its policy regarding minorities, and of the Congress Resolution on Fundamental Rights, and said "the objective of the Congress is an independent and United India where no class or group or majority or minority may exploit another to its own advantage, and where all the elements in the nation may co-operate together for the common good and the advancement of the people of India." Whilst one of the main features of British Imperialist policy in India is that of "divide and rule," setting one community against another, the Congress is increasing its strength and influence among all sections. "Regarding reconstruction" Subhas Bose said, "Our principal problem will be how to

unconnected events such as the passing away of popular literary figure, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhayay (1876-1938) or the opening of the popular 'Light House' cinema-theatre at Chowringhee, central Kolkata in the same year. The possibilities of incorporating any particular historical time with personal, social, national and international events are a way of doing history. At the same time, with regard to photography, the representation of the family, which might have been otherwise affected by such events and occasions, remains unperturbed. The stability of the form of the Bengali middle-class family illumines the photographic representations, turning it basically into document of the private. The albums that I have consulted, in coordination with the sociologist's findings (Shah 1998) also refuse to present a single definition of the family. Possibly, the photographic form cannot do so. The moment of the photograph can be a moment in the history of the particular family and might be treated with great care in future recollections of the "past" family, but it will stop at just being that.

---

eradicate poverty from our country. That will require a radical reform of our land system, including the abolition of landlordism." In order to deal with the industrial problem he said "To solve the economic problem agricultural improvement will not be enough. A comprehensive scheme of industrial development under State ownership and State control will be indispensable. A new industrial system will have to be built up in place of the old one which has collapsed as a result of mass production abroad and alien rule at home." Bradley, Ben. "The Haripura Congress". The Labour Monthly. Vol. 4. London: The Labour Publishing Company Limited, 1938. URL: https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sections/britain/periodicals/labour_monthly/1938/04/x01.htm

The imagination of the word family gives us a complex and interconnected array of people, events, testimonials and histories which is impossible to be reduced to a photograph. Or, is it the other way round that all such possible histories can be located in one such photograph which acts mnemonically. The family has a choice of different moments in presenting itself through photography. One can take the different moments in the showcasing of the family in the family album.

The 1925/26 photograph of Narayan Chandra Mitra and his five children (Fig. 19) also attest to the presentation of the family form in photography. Manifestly, the father is posing with his children. The question that immediately follows is about the absence of the woman, here the wife. Was she unwell? Did she have the agency to choose the option of not getting herself photographed? Was she thwarted from her attempt to visit the studio by other members of the family or the husband? Was she dead at the time the photograph was taken? Not being the privileged viewer of the photograph with any definitive knowledge about the woman here; her absence from the frame also makes it an absent-presence. One searches for the woman on the general cognitive visual level in the photograph and finds none only to arrive at the conception of the presence of the absent woman, her trace here in the photograph that will offer authority, if at all, to the photograph to be classified in the genre of the Bengali middle-class family. All representations of the family are marked by fissures and absence, not in the sense of the *absent-presence* but an absence as linked with representation as in re- presenting the presence. Even one takes the example of Fig. 25, an

unidentified family group photograph from the early twentieth century consisting of thirty-six members; the completeness of the family form cannot be ensured as the photograph cannot corroborate to who else is left out of the frame of the family only to the point that it ensures a space, momentary yet timeless, produced by a Benjaminian *shock* from the ordinary continuum of history or the search for the *punctum*, in Barthe's formulation. The family, in its own context specific definition and formation, in the Indian and the Bengali experience, is a heterogeneous place to be represented photographically. Different formations, iterable expressions, such as Fig. 20, of the family are possible. The comparatively greater power of the mother, her deification, in the cultural-moral schema of imagining the constitution of the family is observable here with the mother/senior woman (Lady Bose) seated in the chair, the child bride standing behind her (Mrs. P. C. De) and Mr. P. C. De sitting on the floor of the studio. Although I do not have the exact knowledge of the kinship ties, if any, between the De family and Lady Bose, it gives the onlooker a feeling of the *mother-son-daughter-in-law* formation in the Bengali middle-class families. In literary texts, popular pamphlets and farces, poems in Bengali, this relationship has been put on trial to a great extent due to the portrayal of the married son as controlled by his mother and therefore proving disadvantageous to a modern romantic conjugality between the wife and the husband.

In the Bengali middle-class family albums, as I have stated before, there is the comparatively greater visibility of single women than men. This greater

311

visibility is not quantified on the basis of photographs containing images of women only but also on the basis of women visible in other photographs kept in the family albums. Images of single women (in the sense that a single/singular woman is present in the photographic image) are abundantly displayed in the family album. Is the family album a proper place of 'seeing' women within a restricted network of visibility that the album necessitates? The visual trends of 'single women' or 'women in groups' or 'in the act' that I have categorized proposes a visual space where women, in there *being-present* in the photograph. According to Bourdieu (1990):

> 'Because the picture is always judged with reference to the function it fulfills for the person who looks at it or the function which the viewer thinks it could fulfill for another person, aesthetic judgment most often takes the form of a hypothetical judgement relying explicitly on the recognition of 'genres', whose 'perfection' and range of application are conceptually defined. Remembering that the paradox of aesthetic judgement lies, for Kant, in the fact that it includes claims to universality without, however, returning to the concept for its formulation, we see that the most common attitude towards the photographs shown is precisely opposite of this…The effort of recognition is accomplished by classification within a genre or—which amounts to the same thing—the attribution of social use, as the different genres are defined primarily with reference to their use and their users…' (Bourdieu 1990, 89)

This is the common generic understanding of the 'use value' of photographs in the albums. In the family albums there are distinct changes in the sartorial and postural presentation of women as one advance from the late nineteenth to the decades of the twentieth century. Fig. 26, an 1896 photograph of a young girl, Labangalata Debi, traditionally draped in silks and jewelry, is a formal studio portrait carrying a relaxed look. The hand resting the face might have been a studio trick to face slow shutter speed without any motion blur happening at the time of the exposure. In case of Mayarani Palit (Fig. 27) whose photo was taken in 1928, from the same family album exhibits the changed and modern way of draping the sari and dress reform intiated by Jnanadanandini Debi, wife of Satyendranath Tagore of the Indian Civil Service and Rabindranath Tagore's sister-in-law. As Karlekar (2006) notes that 'the introduction of the sari-blouse and the petticoat (*shaya*) was essential before upper and middle-class Bengali women could come out in public, and of course, visit photo studios' (Karlekar 2006, 2). The use of books as props (here the stack of books is on her right) is also noticeable signifying an educated woman. Shukla Mukhopadhyay's 1949 studio photograph (Fig. 32) is an example of the changing tastes in the use of backdrop. Here the classic photographic black backdrop that highlights the figure in front has been used. The high angled lights, the frontality of the subject woman and the cautious highlighting of props such as the vanity bag, the ornate ring in her left finger are to be found in many photographs around these decades in Bengali family albums. Fig. 31 shows Madhurilata Ghosh photographed in 1933. Having some similarity with the photograph of Mayarani Palit (Fig. 27),

the painted backdrop here is much less sophisticated and overbearing on the photo. The riverside sitting posture on a moonlit night and the distant boat, have romantic connotations and such pictures of unmarried girls were used for matchmaking purpose. It is only later that typical matchmaking photographs from studios shed the performative enunciations of such backdrops toward the projection of the thorough figure of woman who was to be "seen" by the members of the family of the prospective groom. An example of the classic match making photograph from 1976, Fig. 37 shows Supriya Chakraborty nee Mukhopadhyay standing. The complete and erect figure of the woman, photographed here by Bombay Photo Stores, one of the costlier studios in downtown Kolkata, was looked at during choosing the proper girl often by families and intermediaries (*ghataks*). The visibility of the full length of the body was necessary in ascertaining the height, shape of the body, complexion (although difficult in case of monochrome photographs), looks and demeanour. The body of the woman, in such usage of the visual, was expected to embody in it, a range of moral and physical expectations necessary for the arrange marriage in Bengal. The match making photograph forms an important part of the album as after the marriage negotiations were over it usually found a place back in the album. Families generally tried to get hold of the best studio and a lot of care went into the presentation of the young woman. Often photographs were not liked by the commissioning family leading to changing of the choice of studio, the sari, the make up or the posture of the woman. It would not be out of place here to mention that many studios in Calcutta and other districts of West Bengal

advertised their specialty in this genre of family photograph. Sisir Studio, a neighbourhood studio at Mudiali in south Kolkata, till a few years ago, ran the brisk business of match making photographs through the following message— "*sisir studio manei ek chobite biye*"[43].

The presence of the lone woman in the family photographs was generally dependent on the types of occasions that necessitated the use of the camera. The events and occasions could range from marriage, travel, parties, outdoor picnics, the shutterbug in the family trying to capture candid moments or just a visit to the neighbourhood studio to get oneself photographed. An instance of the last example could be Fig. 39 from 1970 which shows Rita Bose's mother (?) getting herself photographed in a sari draped in the fashion of contemporary Bollywood actors. Photographs attesting to these sub-genres of family photography are frequently found later to 1950s. By then, the spread of the popular through the Hindi films, in the postcolonial context along with reinvention of the national imagination with the inauguration of the Five Year Plans, has been a part of the Bengali visual cultures also in terms of dressing, use of dark glasses, dramatic postures and expressions finding its reflection in the genre of the family photograph (Srivastava 2006).

---

[43] Sisir Studio guarantees that she will be married off in just one photo.

On the other hand the candid visibility of Bengali women in the spheres of domestic household increased from the early decades of the twentieth century. Fig. 44 of Nandita Bagchi in her south Kolkata parental household from the late 1960s show her combing her hair, Fig. 118 of Mira Ghosh from 1950 shows her doing lacework, Fig. 131 an undated (probably from the middle decades of the twentieth century) photograph showing Chinmoyee Sanyal at the sewing machine and Fig. 124 of Uma Dutta and Maya Dutta from 1948 shows them preparing vegetables before cooking. All such activities are proper sites of locating the women in the family. Even if the candid moments and the domestic chores are performed for photographing one can think about why such moments are selected. As Hirsch (1997) observes that photography in producing an illusion of being real, often naturalizes cultural practices and helps masquerading their stereotyped and coded characteristics that perpetuate family myths. The viewer and the photographer join hands in reproducing the structures of ideology and the viewer projects a screen made up with dominant mythologies and preconceptions that shape the representations (Hirsch 1997, 7).

Family photographs attest to this power of normalization. It is extremely rare, if not impossible, to find in family albums, women, of any age, dressed in nonconformist ways or "exposing" beyond accepted norms of civility of the middle-class milieu. The photographs of women in family albums can be read as testimonies, not only to the development of family at various stages, but also towards development of women to a point of normalizing where the 'self' of the

woman is lost. Hirsch (1997) argues for the recognition of the familial look in the realm of family photography.

> 'The familial look,…is not the look of a subject looking at an object, but a mutual look of a subject looking at an object who is a subject looking (back) at an object. Within the family, as I look I am always looked at, seen, scrutinized, surveyed, monitored. Familial subjectivity is constructed relationally, and in these relations I am always self and other(ed), both speaking and looking subject and spoken and looked at object: I am subjected and objectified' (Hirsch 1997, 9).

Marriage photographs are found to be highly formal. Exceptions within them were also found but they remained outside the parameters of the strict codes of familial looking. I have noticed that marriage photographs as in showing the formal marriage rituals; dress and marks, actions such as the putting on the vermillion on the parting of her hair in the forehead (see Fig. 92 which shows a 1971 photograph of Ruchira Moitra and Indrajit Moitra getting married) are comparatively newer phenomenon only after the 1950s. This is a hypothesis based on observations of the family album. Other possibilities might be in place—a) since marriage is of primary importance in Bengali middle-class lives, the photographs often have formed a separate album for necessary display and b) marriage photographs also migrate, even if partially, with the displacement of the individuals in the wedlock. The marriage in Indian families is not exactly a union

between two individuals where the woman is somewhat lower in the formations of gender divisions around marriage; it also depends on the self-abnegation of the man who marries the woman into his family (Uberoi 2006). The presence of the elders and their *asirbaad* are necessary part of a successful marriage. Fig. 89, a 1965 photograph depicts a moment shortly afterword the marriage ceremony of Ratri Roy is over. It shows the couple with an elder whose substantiation of the marriage with blessings for the newlyweds can make the marriage a successful one. Fig. 88, a photograph of Ratna Mukherjee taken in 1974 shows her on the day of her Hindu marriage where she waiting for the groom to arrive at her parental place to marry her. Fig. 91 is a 1955 photograph of a Brahmo marriage ceremony of Supriya Sinha which was presided over by Prasanta Chandra Mahalonabis, a well-known scientist and a leading member of the Brahmo community in Bengal.

An assured amount of freedom and agency in figures of women are noticed in photographs of women taken against informal backdrops, 'Travel' being one of them. Formal / stern expression of studio photographs exhibiting the couple often changes into expressions of smile, laughter and unorganized pose before the camera. It is a point to keep in mind in an outdoor location, the camera also changes. During travel an amateur, usually member of the family is usually in charge of taking photographs. Seldom can it be found that women (in a family) pose informally and comfortably before the stranger-photographer.

With the introduction of the railways in India, Bengalis could now travel with their families. Travel for leisure and travel with a secular purpose was gradually gaining currency during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Travel with family and especially accompanied by wives and children slowly became popular during this time. Women travelling either as pilgrims or for secular or educational purposes were quite unknown and uncommon before and even during this period. Travel was a word which was therefore absent in the context of women from India and Bengal until this period. Though there have been mention and historical records from as early as 1807, of women travelling as labour[44], however, these women did not belong to the salaried middle class for whom travel became popular during this period. By the end of the century, people from many regions of India were getting used to the idea of travel for secular reasons. Newer career opportunities and educational and career advancement for men was a major factor which led to the mobility of men from Bengal. As Bhattacharya puts it, 'Education and culture formed the two most significant elements that made up the world of the Hindu *bhadralok* gentry in the nineteenth century' (Bhattacharya 2005, 2). It was very rarely during this period that women travelled for purposes of education, though there are a few exceptions. Otherwise throughout time period of this dissertation, when women travelled, they were mostly accompanied by their family or kinfolks. Travel photography is an important part of the family album in the region. Many

---

[44] For details see Usha Chakraborty (1963), Michael H. Fisher (2004), Samita Sen (1999), Rozina Visram (2002), and Grewal (1996).

319

families have fondly remembered their holiday travels as an escape from the everyday into something beyond the ordinary. While there are many photographs of women posing before the picturesque landscapes, mountain, sea and other topographies, the journey is also an important aspect which has been captured in the family albums. Figs. 141 (1952), 142 (1970), 143 (1953) and 144 (1956) shows Bengali middle-class women travelling in long-distance trains. Fig. 143 shows Chinmayee Banerjee, on her way to spend the honeymoon in various places in North India. I will come back to her honeymoon photographs in Chapter 5 while discussing the construction of the fantastic romantic couple in the Bengali middle-class family albums.

Another general trend of photographs in the family albums is women in groups. Various kinds of groups are seen in the range of family photographs. Fig. 68, photograph of Shikha Duttagupta and Tapati Dasgupta from 1970 is a classic example of friends visiting neighbourhood studios to get themselves photographed. This is a chance of visually arresting friendship forever, in the midst of the general anxieties of loss and detachment. The visual, in this context, is more of a lexical proof of homosocial intimacies. In the middle-class social milieu often a good friend is inducted into the broader concept of the family. Apart from these, points of sameness such as the plaited hair in case of Fig. 68 are recoded for future references and remembrances. Fig. 67, an unidentified photograph from the early 1970s or Fig. 60, a 1975 photo of Supriti Ghosh (in dark glasses) and her friend sporting a trendy wristwatch belong to this genre.

Various other diffused women's groups can be located such as Fig. 70 which shows mostly veiled Hindu women of different generations from the family of N. C. Chatterjee and Somnath Chatterjee posing for an informal group photo occasion in the courtyard of the household in Kolkata. Fig. 71 shows Gita Chakraborty's marital extended family members in Jessore, Bangladesh engaging in an informal afternoon *adda* in the courtyard verandah. Ms. Chakraborty, a resident of Kolkata who grew up in northern India, visited Jessore in 1952. Fig. 64 shows a 1966 group photo of the students of the R. G. Kar Medical College, Kolkata, in an outing dressed in trendy outfits mimicking western dance moves made popular through the Hindi movies. Fig. 57, a 1969 photo shows girl school students of higher classes in Kolkata. Hey were students of S. R. Kundu, the mathematics teacher at the school. Other group photographs taken outdoors such as Fig. 50 (1960), Fig. 51 (undated) and Fig. 53 (1956) are reminders of the different places where socialites of various kinds between women were played out in front of the camera. Evidently enough this was possible only with the camera and its subject here, woman, both becoming comparatively more mobile in course of the twentieth century. Complete veiling was never a major issue in Bengali Hindu and Brahmo societies since the turn of the century in spite of the Hindu revivalist tendencies at that point in history.

Women's usual depiction as caregivers with respect to children are displayed in the Bengali family albums. Even if the number of photographs is not many (Figs. 72 to 78), the trend marked here points to the essential relationship

321

of the child with the mother. This sub-genre is a distinct one beyond the display of the family in the presence of the husband. It generally shows the woman taking acre of the child. Another distinct type of photographs in middle-class family albums pertains to obtaining of the formal graduation degree or the school group photo with the teachers. Fig. 81 shows Uma Majumder at her farewell from a missionary nursing college. Figs. 83 (1938-41), 84 (1965) and 86 (1958) shows women in graduating robes and holding the degree scrolls. At this point, I should point out that among all the albums and collections that I have surveyed for this dissertation, I have not found any photographs of young men as a graduate. On the contrary, women carrying marks of education such as the graduating robe or women writing and reading (Figs. 130 [1937] and 127 [unidentified and undated] respectively) are displayed with pride. Given the long history of social reform of women through education in Bengal that began in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, has it been part of the archival unconscious of the Bengali middle class to display women as educated? Even if one can think otherwise, this becomes an enabling factor of the modern inflecting lives of women in middle class Bengali societies at least in the visual registers of the family albums. At some points in the albums I have come across images of widows (Figs. 151 to 158). This is not extraordinary experience as widows in the popular avatars of grandmothers and domestic helps are still part of the Bengali middle-class families. Widows have been visible in the genre of the family album only from the early-middle decades of the twentieth century with relaxations in their social sanctions. The widows, in being never marked by

a 'well-made' sartorial presentation are marked by the absence of it. Such location of the woman in the frame, is the location of an individual, but bereft of agency. Das (2002) observes:

'To think of the located woman is to think of the woman in her body. This has been the theoretical move undertaken by many feminist thinkers. This seems to be the natural extension of the logic where location is defined as the intersection of the infinitude of contents and / constituting a certain element of pre-existence – ontological be-ing' (Das 2002, 113).

The infinitude of contents is generally erased out in the representation and the reception of the women's photographs that I came across. To bring in Barthes, the task of the gaze is to obliterate the '*punctum*', the source of life in the photograph and reduce image to the '*studium*' of horizontal linearity of culturally dominant processes of meaning construction. The constitution of the subject 'woman' in the family album entails an expressed or unexpressed narrative inside the private that is destined to become public; otherwise, the very private nature of the representation of the woman will diffuse the intended meaning. The photographs therefore problematise the linearity of the space in which it is destined to be displayed. Feminism specifies the patriarchal, gendered nature of civil society. It disturbs the symmetry of the private and public, which is now shadowed or uncannily doubled, by the difference of gender which does

not neatly map on to the private or the public, but becomes disturbingly supplementary to them. This necessitates redrawing of the domestic space and photography also.[45]

Women in the home, viewer of the album, subject of the photograph, can invest the object (the photograph) with narrative and memory, interwoven with private fantasy, fragmented readings and public history. The family album becomes a major determinant of whom and what will constitute history (read honour) of the family. As Karlekar notes, that if one analyses the history of the individual family album, one comes across certain principles of exclusion, of who constituted the 'family' and who did not (Karlekar 2005, 16). Further, Karlekar observes that as in Britain, the discourse stressed the emergence of family as a private domain, isolated from the world of work as well as wider kin networks. Complicated negotiations took place on competing roles and their attendant responsibilities within the new family. The companionate wife was expected to act as a buffer between the pressures of a fast−changing outside world with often contradictory expectations, and the home. Karlekar (2006) further argues that:

> 'The family photograph was gradually ritualized, a symbol of what Pierre
> Bourdieu has called 'domestic culture'. This culture, as was increasingly
> evident among the bhadra samaj, was reflected through the photograph

---

[45] Homi Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (Routledge, London, 1994), pp.10−11 cited in Das 2012,112.

that showcased the 'moral' protagonist and his where … the social rules of behaviour and the moral code are more apparent than the feelings, desires or thoughts of the individual subjects; in which social exchanges, strictly regulated by consecrated conventions are carried out under the watchful eye of opinion, ready to condemn in the name of norms which are unquestionable and unquestioned…'(Bourdieu 1990, 83 cited in Karlekar 2005).

Apart from recording individual demeanour, pose and sartorial style, the photograph that accomplished objectification of self-image was vital proof of the newly achieved statuses of the modern life styles and techniques of representation. The studio through manipulative use of props, attire and backdrops" could transport the imaginative – if not adventurous – client briefly into a simulated world of make–believe, of fantasy and desire that had little to do with 'reality'"(Karlekar 2005, 96). According to Arjun Appadurai in a sex–segregated colonial environment early studio photography became one of the central practices through which family, domesticity and reproductive intimacies… moved into the public sphere (Appadurai 1997, 4–7). Karlekar's reference to the discomfiture in the act of being photographed in early photography provides clues to how some individuals responded to public displays of marital affection. In some of the images, there is a palpable resistance among women to the entire photographic session, which is evident in ways they present themselves.

'Though the intra–diegetic look – or one where the clients look at each other within the frame – is absent, the body language and the gaze of the women reveal that they feel they are looked at critically by their husbands. They appear, even in photographs where there is no the husband, to be never free from this gaze, either literally or as an invisible check on their behaviour, posture and demeanour… It was compounded for women, overall unused to public scrutiny and to an outsider orchestrating – if not arranging – their attire, hands, gestures and posture' (Karlekar 2005, 100–101).

Kuhn (1995) proposes that memories evoked by a photo do not simply spring out of image itself, but are generated in a network, an intertext, of discourses that shift between past and present, spectator and image and between cultural contexts and historical meanings. In this network, the image itself figures largely as a trace, a clue: necessary, but not sufficient, to the activity of meaning making. Women's photograph can be the site of conflicting memories. According to Kuhn, the predominant question is whose memory is to prevail in the family archive. Memories are not only contingent but also exhibit power relations within a family (Kuhn 1995, 12–13). Judgments and meanings are very much part of the male bastion; women who generally participate in utterance of meaning (and comments) regarding representation of themselves in the family album, generally do so with a 'male' vocabulary. The partial stripping of the agency of women both as subject and object of the photographs became as a

whole a problematic as part of it relies on the difficult idea of desire. From Lacan's reading of desire, it can be postulated that, even if family photograph of women are apparently bereft of the erotic, it is man's desire that finds its meaning in the desire for the other (in the photograph / woman). This is not so much because the other holds the key to the object desired, as because the first object (man) of desire is to be recognized by the other. Lacan, in his very own mode, makes a summary; it is as desire for the other that man's desire finds forum.

The economy of photographs of women in family albums constantly evokes these tensions of interpretation. On a theoretical level, the possibility of multiple interpretation is never exhausted. The point is that, when reduced to the specific contents of family photographs, all possibilities of multifarious interpretations of women's live and '*punctums'* are erased by the dominant narrative of the family and role playing, when evidently, the male controls the language (signifier) which builds the woman (subject), mainly through an intricate mesh of hegemonic apparatuses. Lives of women are reduced to few narrow possibilities in family photographs. Family photographs are quite often deployed, shown, talked about – in series, where the figure of the man/boy takes the centre–stage and the figure of the woman is relegated to a place of companionate or appendage reading. Pictures get displayed one after another, their selection and ordering as meaningful as the pictures themselves. The whole, the series, constructs a family story in some respects like a classical narrative;

linear, chronological, through its cyclical repetitions of climatic moments − births, initiation rites (in case of males only), holidays − is more characteristic of the open ended narrative form of soap opera / tv flow. In the process of using, producing, selecting, ordering, displaying − photographs, the family is actually in the process of making itself.

The family album is one moment in the cultural construction of the family. It is not a coincidence that the conventions of the family album − what goes in and how it is arranged − are, culturally speaking, rather circumscribed. However, if the family album produces particular forms of family in particular ways, there is always room for manoeuvre within this, as within any other genre (Kuhn 1995, 17). As a feminist reading of photographs and memory, the use of photography as expounded by Annette Kuhn is worth quoting :

> 'Family photographs may affect to show us our past, but what we do with them − how we use them − is really about today, not yesterday. These traces of our former lives are pressed into service in a never ending process of making, remaking, making sense of, our selves−now. There can be no last word about my photograph, about any photograph' (Kuhn 1995, 16).

Following Kuhn, there can be an agency with women to re-interpret and play on the performative role before lens, rather than surrendering to patriarchal modes of visualizations. Obviously, such agency does not come automatically; the agency to re-read in her own terms is also a part of a larger process of learning to resist hegemony. Photographs of women in family albums can be re–interpreted and used in multiple ways by women towards creating a different world view entailing an openness of deciphering the signified, rather than closing it with fixed analogies. Re-working memory can be a way to counter–act the stereotyping of women in the photographs. Memory, although collective in nature, can be reworked in a pattern of choices, which are curiously autonomous to the point of relation between the woman and the photograph. Formally speaking, popular memory typically involves the remembered, the subject, placing herself—what she did or where she was at the time of the big event—at the centre (not always in case of family photos I worked with) of the scene; as it were grounding the remembered event in her everyday world, domesticating it (Kuhn 1995, 68). To Kuhn, memory work has a fragmentary and anecdotal quality. Memory unfolds less as a fully rounded narrative or drama than as disjoined flashbacks, vignettes or sketches.

A comprehensive point agreed upon by the interviewees was about the autonomous nature of memory work when they are looking into photographs. It is a sort of a full recuperation of the past by present. Here it should be mentioned that working of individual memory remains entangled with a larger and denser

network of collective memory working both at conscious and subconscious levels of mind. Nostalgia, love, loss, hatred, nonchalance can be linked with memory therefore by no means memory can be simply reduced to imagination. It can be said that the process of looking at photographs cannot be simply be reduced to structuration of visual hegemony. The numerosity of experiences and ruptures within specific subject locations are points that have to be addressed from this standpoint. The experiential location therefore remains a comprehensive way to read and propose a *camera femina* in family albums. Annette Kuhn's words make a conclusion plausible without presuming any closure in reading the photographs in family albums:

> 'Family photographs may show us our past, but what we do with them–how we use them – is really about today, not yesterday. These traces of our former lives are pressed into service in a never-ending process of making, remaking, making sense of, our selves – now' (Kuhn 1995, 16).

This survey of the general and accepted notions of the photographic notions of woman, the woman in the family, provides an extensive backdrop of the realm of family albums. Coeval to it and bringing back the possibilities and problems of representation as in the case of the photograph, there are photographic representations of Bengali middle-class women in family albums which might be difficult to account for if lost in anonymity. In Chapter Five, I will attempt, as I have done in Chapter Four, a reading to look into the

possibilities or the impossibilities that infest the representative figure of the woman in the domain of family photography.

Chapter V

Re-Locating Photographs of Bengali Women

5.1. Remembering Women's Represented Spaces in Family Albums

In Chapter Four I have discussed the tendencies of the familial looking through the visibility of certain trends of photographic representations of the Bengali middle-class women. On one hand, the tendencies of representation of women in the family albums, as I have argued, show woman as an object of history reproducing herself in the cultures and ideologies of the gendered familial looking. On the other hand, distancing oneself from the linear production of visual histories from family photographs of women; it can be argued that the family album is an enabling place/space of women's representation as emanating the impossibilities of representation task. I will look into this with regard to the work of memory, romantic couples and death in the place and space of the family albums.

Here I will try to read a few arguments of the intersectionalities of history, memory and representation and women's photographs in the context of Bengali middle-class family albums. In the provocative first line of her essay, 'On the emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse', Kerwin Lee Klein (2000) writes: 'Welcome to the memory industry' (Klein 2000, 127). Decades

have gone when historians and specialists have dealt with such key words like oral history and autobiography without ever pasting them together into something called memory. There has been a recent resurgence to the point that memory has become the leading term in our new cultural histories (Confino 1997). As Kerwin (2000) argues history, as with other key words, finds its connotations in large part through its counter notions and synonyms, and so, in a way, the emergence of memory promises to rework history's boundaries. To quote Kerwin:

'We need to reconsider the relationship between historical imagination and new memorial consciousness and we may begin by mapping the contours of the new structures of memory' (Kerwin 2000, 129).

To Kuhn (1995), memory work has a fragmentary and anecdotal quality. Memory unfolds less as a fully rounded narrative or drama than as disjoined flashbacks, vignettes or sketches. Like memory and when intersected with it, the defining of the sphere of history with regard to a field like the visual takes the shape of what Ricoeur describes as the 'realm of the inexact' and states that 'history is history only insofar as it has not attained either absolute discourse or absolute singularity, insofar as its meaning remains confused, mixed…' (Ricoeur 1992, 105). At this point, to identify with the question of memory in case of the photograph let me read Barthes' and Kracaeur's perspectives on memory through Wigoder (2001).

To Kracaeur memory images are for more useful in bringing back history. He sees Proust's *memorie involontaire* as the perfect model. A person is able to condense or embellish memory, unlike the photograph that in the passage of time only appears to darken, decay and shrink in proportions. The camera is capable only of capturing a brief moment that accentuates space rather than temporality. The medium of subjective memory, however, can shatter the space-time configuration in order to piece the salvaged fragments together into a new meaningful order (Wigoder 2001, 26).

Here Barthes differs from Kracaeur's take on memory. Barthes paradoxically searches in photographs for the monogrammatic image of his mother, which Kracaeur argued that only subjective memory could give. Barthes reverses Kracaeur's axiom of 'the last image of a person is that person's actual history' when he finally finds the essential photograph of his mother, not in the last images from her life but in the earliest photograph of her as the child. It served for Barthes more as a premonition of what she will become than as an indication for him of what she had been. According to Wigoder (2001), Barthes is in fact caught in a division between pre-self-history (the photograph of his mother before he was born) and anamnesis (his recollections of his mother). While Kracaeur relied on a metaphysical reading of images in his early writings, Barthes made use of phenomenology to combine a concrete reading of photographic objects with the need to emphasize the role that mental intentions (reception, retention and projection) perform on them (Wigoder 2001, 31).

Photography according to Barthes began historically as an art of the person: of identity, of civil status and the body's formality (Barthes 1981, 3). The largest part of critical analysis of photographs that Barthes undertakes involves providing photography with a grammatical tense. "The photograph does not necessarily say what is no longer", writes Barthes, "but only and for certain what has been." Barthes does not seek to recover lost time in a Proustian sense but rather acknowledges that photographs shock us precisely because they are incapable of retrieving the past.

It is worth mentioning as a point that both Kracaeur and Barthes start their analyses with photographs of women in family albums. In case of Barthes, it was his deceased mother and to Kracaeur, the figure of her grandmother became an entry point to his analyses. They were not engaging with women's photographs as a distinct category, but their argument pivot around specificities of the photographs mentioned. Kracaeur opines that the nineteenth century definition of subjectless camera that merely records the world is replaced with the belief that the camera is able to convey the subjective will of the photographer through his choice of filters, camera angles and printing styles.

Wigoder (2001) compares Kracaeur's early and later attitudes to photography. The essay "photography" relied on a Proustian model of subjective memory to recover the past. At this stage, photography is presented as a subjectless technical instrument capable only of capturing spatial configuration

of a temporal instant, which is incommensurable with history that can only be brought back by memory image. In Kracaeur's later writings, the analogy between "camera reality" and "historical reality" aims to explain a relationship between photography and history that revolves around the concept of estrangement as a precondition for the ability of the historian to retrieve past and interpret it. In both his early and later writings, the figure of the grandmother plays a crucial role. In the essay "photography", the image of the grandmother was related to how we perceive past, whereas in the book "History", the image of the grandmother that Kracaeur borrows from Proust serves to illustrate the present : one deals with the photographic object, the other with the photographic vision. Both the methods can be used to point the representation of the female figure in family albums. Barthes' later writings on photography also deal with two major ways of interpreting the photographic object. Unlike other forms of representation in art, photography's referential character and absolute indexicality create a concrete relationship between reality and its copy on the surface of the photograph.

Thiery De Duve's discussion on the distinction between photographs that act as "pictures" and those that act as events can be considered (Wigoder 2001). The photograph as picture is an autonomous representation of reality that curiously ceases to refer to anything outside itself, especially when it is framed or hung on a wall; here it represents the real as frozen gestalt. The photograph as "event" in contrast, makes us aware that it is only a fragment from reality, which

calls attention to the fact that something has been frozen precisely because life is continuing outside the frame. According to De Duve, the photo−portrait is an example of whether of a live or dead person, the portrait is funerary in nature, a moment. 'Acting as a reminder of times that died away, it sets up landmark of the past.' While this kind of picture gives the impression that something is witnessed that no longer exists, the 'event' produces a paradoxical effect of capturing life but not conveying it. Hence, whereas the snapshot refers to fluency of time without conveying it, time exposure petrifies time of the referent and denotes it as departed (De Duve 116 cited in Wigoder 2001). De Duve claims that portrait 'picture' is conducive to family album because time exposure is congenial with the ebb and flow of memory, as it does not limit its reference to the particular time when the photograph was taken, but allows imaginary reconstruction of any moment of life of the portrayed person to be imagined. Hence, the charm of a photo album relies on the fact that while each photograph is a landmark in a person's lifetime, memory is able to shuffle in between landmarks, and can erect on any of them the totality of this life (De Duve, 123 cited in Wigoder 2001).

Most of the images I have read of women and groups inside family albums are conditioned by durations of time exposure whose aesthetic structure was initially practiced in the nineteenth century portrait tradition and which relied on having the sitters face the camera and remain immobile for long durations of time. Benjamin concluded that direct look of sitters encapsulated

337

them in their cocoon while the stillness that was required of them by long exposure was felt in the general impression of silence they exuded. "The procedure itself", wrote Benjamin, "caused the models to lie, not out of the instant, but into it; during the long exposure they grew, as it were, into the image" (Benjamin 2008, 205).

As a detour I will for the present turn back again for a few comments about Kracaeur's unbound reality and Barthes' punctum. It is perplexing, to think vis−a−vis images of Bengali women in family albums, that both Kracaeur and Barthes take pleasure in seeking details that give the impression of 'existing for themselves'. Ironically, the discovery of these realistic details relies more on the subjective process of detection premised upon the receptive process of a unique and individualized subject, than on the object under scrutiny. Barthes adopts a subjective / objective model to the methodology of reading images. In "The Photographic Message", he makes a distinction between "denotation" and "connotation". The former represents the brute facts we see in photographs and the later the coded message that the photograph implies. Unlike Kracaeur's emphasis on the optical experience, which leaves the spectator always alienated from the object of his vision, Barthes emphasizes a concrete relationship between the photographic object and its referent (Wigoder 2001, 52).

Kracaeur did not compare history and photography to prove a mimetic relationship between them but a relationship of an affinity and correspondence.

Barthes was also not at all interested in the anatogical relationship between photography and reality. Both writers stressed the problematic connection between the photographic and the referent by opening up a new territory for investigation that examines fissures and correspondences between reality and representation, present and past, act of observation and process of imagination.

To Schudson (1992), memory not only is essentially social it is located in rules, laws, standardized procedures and records, books, holidays, statues, souvenirs. Memory may also characterize groups by revealing a debt to the past and expressing moral continuity. Memory is not a property of individual minds but a diverse and shifting collection of material artifacts and social practices (Schudson 1992, 130 cited in Kerwin 2000). Material objects appear but only as supplements to memory: Mnemonics. In his 'Perceptions of Jewish History'(1993) Amos Funkenstein argued how the archaic sense of memory with a new structural equation appeared in German historicism. Kerwin (2000) shows that Funkenstein cautioned about the careful use of collective memory since only individuals are capable of remembering but concluded that collective memory has important uses that occur within social contexts of environment and discourse. His was a position about memory as a system of differences:

'Collective memory…, like language, can be characterized as a system of signs, symbols and practices: memorial dates, names of places, monuments …The individual's memory-that is, the act of remembering-is the

instantiation of these symbols, analogous to "speech"; no act of remembering is like any other' (Funkenstein cited in Kerwin 2000, 133).

Kerwin argues that preferably, the memory will be a theatrically deficient piece of material culture. Such fragments of material are best if infused with pathos. Such memorial tropes have emerged as one of the common features of our new cultural history wherein monograph after monograph, readers confront the abject object: photographs are torn, memories faded, toys broken" (Kerwin 2000, 136). If defined in these terms, memory takes the shape of a Foucauldian field of study, where memory is located within the material, empirics and the tangible. This can potentially be an emancipatory moment, as authors can check out from the predicaments of discrete psychic actions to memories as a collective group consciousness to memories as a collection of artifacts and employ the same psychoanalytic vocabularies throughout. Pierre Nora (1989) while separating and critiquing loss of the 'real environments of memory' (*milieux de memoire*) in contemporary historiography compared to the rise of sites of memory (*lieux de memoire*) comments that:

'Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition. Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long

dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer… Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it again' (Nora 1989, 8–9).

Given such positions, in trying to read and see family albums from a specific context of history, it becomes problematic as how to read photos of women in family albums. It often borders on a breaking apart into two structures of history and memory. History as an apparatus of and created by modernism, the state, science, imperialism and androcentrism, and 'memory is postmodernism, the body, a healing device and a tool for redemption' (Struken 1997). She addresses the question of cultural memory in the 1980s and the 1990s, through the experiences of US participation in the Vietnam War from 1959 to 1975 'in the process of history-making as it relates to cultural memory— insofar as memory objects and narratives move from the realm of cultural memory to that of history and back'. Critiquing Nora's take on memory as highly nostalgic, she argues for the *entangled* nature between cultural memory and history rather the oppositional way in which Nora argued. The points and borders of distinction between cultural memory and history, according to Struken, are important ways of understanding the political intent of histories selective acceptance of memory. Memory, especially personal memory, can be subsumed into history. Cultural memory, here the memory of the woman in the

photograph, can exist in concert with the historical narratives (Struken 1997, 5-6).

One can choose from several alternative discourses regarding the work of memory in reading genres of representation such as the family album and photos of women in them. Therefore the task of streamlining memory or *M*emory slips from the apparently easy going framework that it seems to offer when compared to history. Trying to read history and memory(ies) in family albums incites towards an understanding of the problematic nature of the meanings of the word memory. Especially with all its horizon of religious and Hegelian meanings such as aura, *Jetztzeit*, messianic, trauma, mourning, sublime, apocalypse, fragment, identity, redemption, healing, catharsis, cure, witnessing, testimony, ritual, piety, soul. In 'Memoires for Paul de Man', Derrida (1986), reading through Proust says that the power of memory is not in resuscitating, but it remains enigmatically preoccupied with a thought of the future. He further points out the importance of translation and transference of/in language in finding the place to pose questions about whether a narrative which lays claim to a memory is possible or about the possibility of the narrative (Derrida 1986, 3-10).

Memory in its approach of the being "in us", the being "in us" of the other's bereaved memory cannot resurrect the other *himself* from the finality of the bodily death. This will plague the memory of the other and also all of us who

will not be spared from death. Also, memory will not have served its purpose in the 'simple inclusion of the fantasy in a subjectivity that is closed upon itself or even identical to itself (Derrida 1986, 22). The failure of memory, in creating the illusion that through memory continuity can be registered between past and present, is not a failure to Derrida. The apparent pessimism and its finitude, affecting its experience of discontinuity and distance can thought of as a power 'as the very of difference, indeed of ontological difference (ontic-onticological: between Beings and beings, between the presence of the present and the present itself) (Derrida 1986, 57–58). The memory of the photograph, and the woman in the photograph, read through Derrida becomes a tricky one, turning the impossibility of the untraced/unidentified photograph into an qualifying point of memory. I have discussed earlier, and I am repeating this again, that family album as a material site for historical reconstruction of women's history can be a failure to the extent that searching for 'exact data' to construct a specific history . The materiality of history, as in the tangibility or tactility of the photograph, will always be limited, cut-off from the figure of the woman whom one is attempting to decipher. This is by potentially terminating its traces only as past which it is not. Derrida (1986) argues that:

> 'If memory gives access to this (ontological) difference, it does not do so
> simply by way of the classical (originally Hegelian) schema that links the
> essence of a being to its past being (*etre-passe*), *Wessen* to *Gewesenheit.*
> The memory we are considering here is not essentially oriented toward
> the past, toward a past present deemed to have really and previously

343

existed. Memory stays with traces, in order to "preserve" them, but traces of a past that has never been present, traces which themselves never occupy the form of presence and always remain, as were, to come—come from the future, from the *to come*. Resurrection, which is always the formal element of "truth", a recurrent difference between a present and a presence, does not resuscitate a past which had been present; it engages the future' (Derrida 1986, 58).
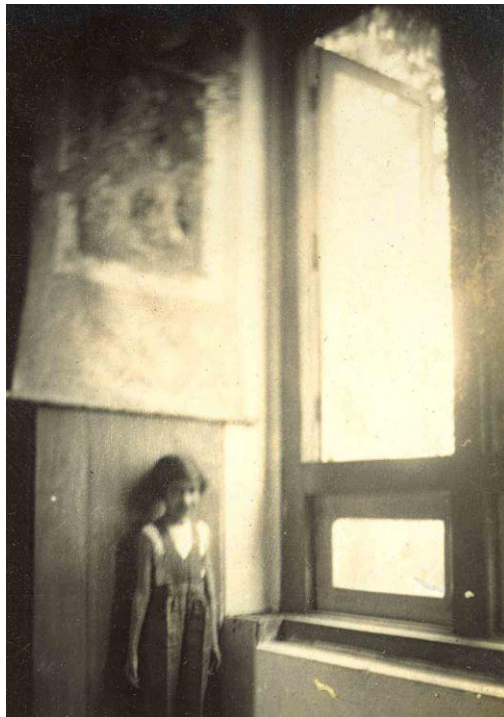
Figure 163.KekaBasu, 1965 [KDC]

The passage from cultural memory to the work of memory according to the Derridian move seems to be risking the loss of the specific history. Let me take the example of Fig. 163, a 1965 childhood photo of Keka Basu nee Dutta. The photograph beyond the usual descriptions of the metadata is a not sharply focused photograph. Generally speaking if it had been compensated for a technically superior photograph in terms of a crisp focus it would have suffced for the anxiety that it is causing. There is, one can think, a small network of information community around this photograph. The identifier, researcher and individuals connected to the photograph, all of whom might not be present at

a particular given time to further identify the photograph. This further identification can be varied and nebulous ranging from the type of the lens used, the time of the day, the colour of the dress the girl child is wearing, was she happy to pose beside the window or instructed to do so, is there a hanging *tankha* painting over her head, was it then some hill station in northern India where there is the predominance of the Buddhist art, and the list can be lengthy and apparently unimportant. To the specificity of the photo, it's not only the little girl but a girl who is posing for the camera eye beside a window from which light is streaming in. The photo is taken which is later developed into a print which is blurry and unfocussed. Why was a blurry picture part of the family album? A photograph which loses its identification—marked in its clear (well focused in case of the photograph) and naturally cognizable identity—may pose a risk for the future onlookers who could easily go astray with the blurriness and dump it.

The family album is one of the places/spaces where such images can be found to reside and risk its stability of identity formation.The family album in particular, in its reception invokes both the ideological and the personal at the same time. Ideological in the sense that it concedes to the genre of the familial looking and personal at the same time as it triggers the memory work of privileged onlookers related to the photograph. In case of the family photographs I have seen and identified with members of the family, there are many such examples of either a blurry photo or a blurry memory about a well-focused and easily readable photograph. Both the *insufficiency* of the

345

photograph in the first case and the *insufficiency* of the memory might act as the same instant.

Figure 164. Unidentified/undated. [ADC]

The blurry image in a way invokes the kind of cipher writing that Derrida instances in his argument on the communicability of communication. It takes away the specific history of the woman in the photograph only to give it back to the image through a trace. The idiosyncratic visual is there, beyond its comprehensibility, but it is a part of the family album and the family keeps it. The subject, here the woman probably eating (Fig. 164) however forgotten in the instant of recognition, can be thought of coming back through iterability. As Das (2006) argues:

346

'The mutual interaction of the 'user' and the 'language' has to give an account of the structuration *and* a radical undecidability in language—where every utterance is singular in its eventness—and an account of a similar constitution and singularity of the 'user'. The notion of *iterability* is one such 'name' which describes the 'event' of language in this manner[46]--of course, setting the correspondence of the name to an event problematic in its very enunciation' (Das 2006, 79).

It is here that the consideration of the difference between that which is present (in the photograph) and the presence of the thing (the subject along with backdrop) can take one to the work of the memory which again will generally think about the presence of the present and try to think through it. Similar to Benjamin's concept of the photographic shock,

> 'Barthes's notion of photographic reference revolves less around an image's visible content than around how photographs, precisely by disrupting temporal continuity, interconnect different instances of presence, refocus our sense of finitude, and thereby draw our awareness to the many ghosts that populate our own present. As it extracts a part of the photographic referent and hands it down to a future viewer, Barthes's photograph displays the survival of the photographed as a survival of its life as much as of its death' (Koepnick 2004, 99).

---

[46] Notions on language in later Wittgenstein may very well be compared to this thinking. *[Footnote by Das 2006].*

The photograph, in its disruption of time and changing time to space (the paper and the print from the negative) and the use of the memory in its recollection has been methodologically précised by Kuhn (2007). She uses Martha Langford's (2001) extensive work with family albums where Langford sees that the uses of family albums by people are governed by the same structures of the oral tradition. Photographs prompt verbal memory (here in case of the knowing onlooker only) and beyond that it presents itself in the classic horizontal structure of the oral narrative involving both the epic and anecdotal dimensions Through this method Langford (2001) has performed performative viewings of the family albums with donors and compilers of the albums and also with informants who did not have knowledge of the photographs. Her studies have shown, similar to what I have experienced, that even complete strangers to an unknown photograph would start to weave stories in the anecdotal and the epic styles. (Langford 2001 cited in Kuhn 2007). The singular task of visual history of women via family photographs, as I have shown, will generally restrict itself to the 'proper' identification of what can be seen—the subject here Keka Basu (Fig. 163). Yes, we have done that. But does the work of memory, of people connected to her, she herself, or people unconnected, only stop at the recognition of the name or her *littlegirlhood* as blissful as being generic?

In photographs there is an unsure and undecided mixture between the collective memory of a family history and individual memory that will inscribe the woman with various degrees of description. The collective memory is the studium, the base and the individual memory is the punctum, the specific utterance that legitimizes the value of the photograph in an individual family album. The travels between the past and the present through remembering and memory can come to the fore in an age of historiographic crisis precisely because it figures as a healing alternative to historical discourse (Klein 2000, 145).

With this survey I move to the next portion on a tightrope to address a few of the issues related to a historical reading and memory work vis-à-vis family albums and representation of women. With the interiorization of photography from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the Bengali middle-class milieu, simultaneous to the emergence of women in the nationalist pictorial imagination, a different, less looked into trend of family albums began to develop. Here, the economy of photographic discourse was different from what was in the public domain. The process of consumption, appreciation and retrieval of memories through photographs are often incompatible with dominant modes of representation in the public domain. Unexpected ruptures and overlooked possibilities appear in the play of memories and desires. The aesthetic of displaying, arrangement of photographs cannot always be subjugated by preponderant dictums of popular aesthetic choice in a specific time within

colonial/post-colonial urban space. The subjective nature of photographic albums, each with its distinctive narrative do not usher a closure of the possibilities of the visual but also open up scope of reading patterns of power, performance and gendering.

Figure 165. Naba. 1960. [JGC]

The non-public arena of family albums gives it a chance to preserve moments in it, which otherwise can be prejudiced in spaces beyond the limits of kinship ties within which such images of women are subject to discursive exchanges. Rarely seen in twentieth century family albums is the photograph of the domestic help. Fig. 165, a 1960 photograph of Naba, a domestic help, an

ubiquitous figure in the Bengali middle-class domesticity. Am I already trying to generalize and put forward an 'exotic' find from the albums? One can take a closer look to find the backdrop of a *rannaghar*, against which Naba (without a full name complete with a surname, a crucial part of Bengali middle-class identity formation) is seen washing dishes. She has a tired look, ruffled hairs and a smile of acknowledgement. In her representation, to the onlooker, who does not have access to her history will tend to reduce her to the genre of the female domestic, the other of the *bhadramahila*. The family album, keeps her photographic image, identifies her (even if partially) and imbues her with the possible acts of memory. In this, the woman, finds a space of representation through the act of photographic representation. The album moves beyond the 'official' documented histories of the Bengali middle-class family as in marriage, reproduction, education of the woman (also of the man, obviously enough), genealogy, lends a space for such representations. Before looking into the nature of the space that the album proposes to offer with respect let me again go back to Derrida's (1982) thoughts on the nature of representations:

> 'If *rendering present* is taken to mean the repetition which restitutes thanks to a substitute, we come back to the continuum or the semantic coherence between representation as an idea in the mind pointing to the thing (for instance as the "objective reality" of the idea), as the picture in place of the thing itself, in the Cartesian sense or in the sense of the empiricists and on the other hand aesthetic representation (theatrical, poetic, literary or visual) and finally political representation' (Derrida 1982, 309-310).

To observe the relational context of representation through/in space, in this case the family album, I will briefly go through Henri Lefbvre's (1991) concepts of space as produced socially. Social spaces are social products. He broke away with an understanding of the space as an independent material identity "in itself" to understand space as fundamentally bound by social reality. The synchronic order of the social reality is perceived as space as simultaneity and on the other hand the diachronic order of the time combines to form the historical process of social production. Lefebvre's materialist theory of space produces itself through the relationships of activity and practice between corporeal, sensuous, imagining, sensitive and ideological human beings. On one hand production of space happens in the dialectical interconnection of the triad of the triad of 'spatial practice', 'representations of space' and 'spaces of representation.' On the other, space refers to the 'perceived', 'conceived' and 'lived' spaces. The two series points to a phenomenological (in case of the earlier one) and linguistic or semiotic approach (in case of the latter) to space (Schmid 2008, 28–29). Given this dense nature of the structures of space covering potentially the largest part of human experiences, Lefebvre (1991) leaves the contestations regarding conceptualizing space open:

'At all events, a criticism of space is certainly called for inasmuch as spaces cannot be adequately explained on the basis either of the mythical image of pure transparency or of its opposite, the myth of the opacity of

nature; inasmuch, too, as spaces conceal their contents by means of meanings, by means of an absence of meaning or by means of an overload of meaning; and inasmuch, lastly, as spaces sometimes lie just as things lie, even though they are not themselves things' (Lefebvre 1991, 92).

In the Lefebvrian meaning that spaces can lie emanate not from abstraction in the general sense of the term but is a result of the perception and use of spaces in the broad social. He is thinking of space within capitalism and does not stop at the 'production' of space as birth or as beginning. Rather he is entwining the viewer, the user, the producer in the process of production:

'In Cezanne, and the cubists following him, what is painted is not so much reality as the act of perceiving reality. Cubism dispenses with the unified viewpoint of a sedentary observer, and shows movement through time in a spatial frame. Space—in the eyes of the observer—becomes differentiated, heterogeneous…As Lefebvre notes, space and time in themselves may not change, but our perceptions of them do—they become more fine, more subtle, more profound, more differentiated' (Elden 2004,182).

Also, Lefebvre understands that if space is cognized as quantifiable and controllable, it will allow social and technological dominion. Space is produced

in two ways of social configuration (mode of production) and as a psychological

construction (conception). Lefebvre gave space and spatiality importance to the

extent that it will carry with itself temporality and history in close conjunction.

As Elden (2004) points out that:

'space needs to be understood not in two ways—as conceived, abstract

thought of space, or perceived, concrete reality of space—but in three

ways, with the additional of space as *lived*, which resolves the conflicts

between the previous two, without being reducible to either. Lefebvre

notes that 'in traditional metaphysics, we find the (well known)

hypothesis that intelligible space has nothing in common with real space.

Intelligible space is not extensive.' Lefebvre's point is that it is an

abstraction to think 'real' space in this way too, and that it is precisely an

intelligible form of space imposed over the material world' (Elden 20024,

187-8).

As Elden reads Lefebvre, he brings out what is contextual here, that of

the notion of the lived between the two poles of perception and conception. From

such an understanding Lefebvre derives the conceptual triad of spatial practice,

representations of space and spaces of representation. This is further thought in

terms of perceived, conceived and lived respectively. The lived spaces are

spaces that are modified through use over time. Such spaces invested with

symbolism and meaning becomes the space of the cognizance of less formal or

more local forms of knowledge. The photographic album in Bengal in both being a place and a space of representation open to the work of memory and remembering become real and imagined and imagined space. This is specially invested with meaning making in case of the Bengali middle-class family albums. The images of Bengali women, as something to be 'really' shown and also to be imagined permeate the scope of the album. We are at this point seeing a spectrum of images of women, some of which I have discussed. The match making photo of the Bengali middle-class woman can be cited here. Here, the stress is more on the performance of gender and sartoriality to the extent the visual *imagination* and depiction of the woman as an experience of space appears to be natural. At the same time, in doing so, the structured communication of the image for example 'women to get married' might appear as 'too perfectly made' to be 'real'. The album with its 'threads of narrative' and 'unconscious intentions' attempts to close the act of communication in reproducing the ideological presentation of the woman and the family. By doing so, it potentially creates spaces of representation which are not possible for the Bengali middle-class women in other registers of social spaces.

The family album is a kind of lived space hovering in between the imagined and the cultural authority of the family in Bengal. This authority or the cultural politics based on the presentation of women in various spheres of the social. The middle class ethics of being educated and civilized produced a sliced view of women, mostly indoors, only after negotiating terms and manners of a

social exposure. Photographs of women from educated, well–off, middle–class and upper middle class families began to appear since the latter–half of the nineteenth century, mostly in family albums. The majority of them were posited against signifiers of their virtuous family life such as the husband and children. However, it will be altogether an injustice if it is inferred that every image of women that is preserved in family albums are all cast into stereotypes. Visual language, unlike literary language, does have greater possibility of multiple readings. Both are systems of signs, but the visual surpasses the primary fixitiveness of linguistic signifier or act like it in the multiple acts of communicability; the visual reproduction of the real is in a much greater state of flux with regard to the creation of meaning. Given this survey of the work of memory and thinking of the concept of space, I will move on to two specific moments of the dislocation of the representation of the Bengali woman in family albums and photographs. Firstly through couple photography and dressing up photographs. Secondly through death photographs in family albums. I will argue that these are kind of impossible moments in the genre of the family photography in Bengal. Such representations open up the possibilities of thinking newer representations of women, which otherwise might have not been there in the social registers.

5.2. Fantastic Couples and Masquerading Women: Photographs as Cultural Identity and Performance

Of the many genres of photographic types seen in the family album in the regional context, marriage photographs is one of the most popular and invoke the work of memory while attesting family history. In most formal or informal couple photographs from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the couple was seen blissfully separated from the complex and restrictive formation of the joint family system. The newly wedded couples made best use of photography and the studio space 'to create public and formal representations of the bourgeois couple from among themselves' (Majumdar 2009, 127). Photographs of formally dressed couples or the snapshots of the marriage rituals taking place are even accepted by courts of law in India in various marital lawsuits. Consequently while such photographs finds its ways in albums or displays within households, it acts both as history as a *res gestae*—of things that happened—and as *historicum rerum gestarum*—the commemoration and recording of these things. The ideas of romance and conjugality being on the rise since 19th century via various forms of the popular like poems, the novel form etc had its impact also on the visual world of photography. The attempt to represent what was private within a limited public was a curious process. The couple portrait form or the genre of marriage photography was a colonial modern intersection. Although the bride is seen posed with her husband it is as if they are

separated from the Hindu joint family structure into a frame of romantic conjugality, but 'a young girl was given in marriage to a family rather than an individual…The ideal bride was one who earned the praise of her husband's extended family, the in-laws in particular. The husband is almost peripheral to the daily life of the young brides, as described in the nineteenth-century Bengali memoirs' (Roy Chowdhury 2000, 351-352).

Beginning from the late decades of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century this form of photography has mostly remained unchanged. The purpose of factual history such photographs serve can be legible to a network of informed spectators or even to the general viewer to the extent that she can recognize the genre. The ensuing memory work such photographs entail refers to a more complex concepts of the mnemonic activities as not only the establishment of traces but a contextual re-reading of such traces leading to an intersection of public history and private memories in family albums.

Figure 166. K. C. Bannerjee and Uma
Bannerjee.1930. [GGC]
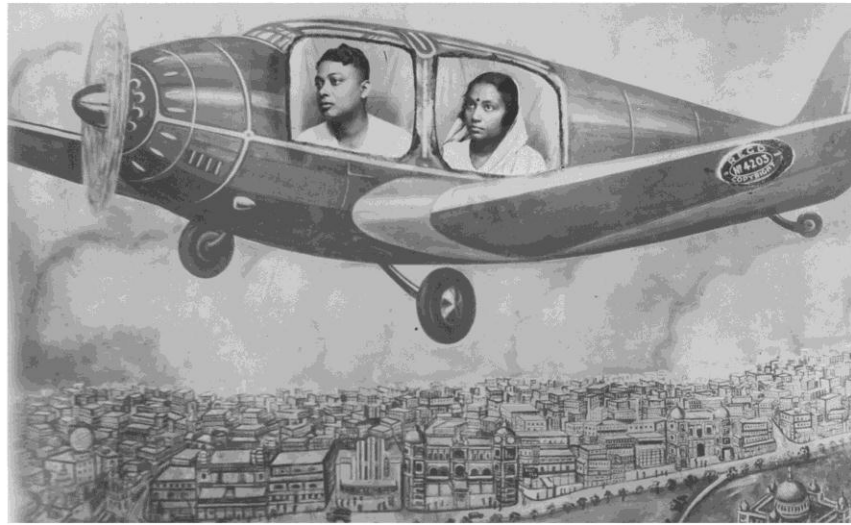
Figure 167. K. C. Bannerjee and Uma Bannerjee.1930. [GGC]

Figure 168. P. C. De and Snehalata.1903. [AGC]
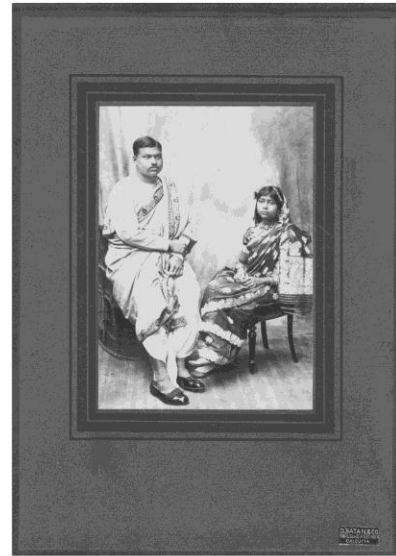
Figure 169. Promod Chandra Palit and Maya Palit. 1923. [AGC]

Figure 170. Margaret Ballardini and Fred Walson. Luna Park, St. Kilda, Victoria, 1927. Photograph– M.D. True, Electric Studio.
URL:
http://acms.sl.nsw.gov.au/item/itemDetailPaged.aspx?itemID=393973
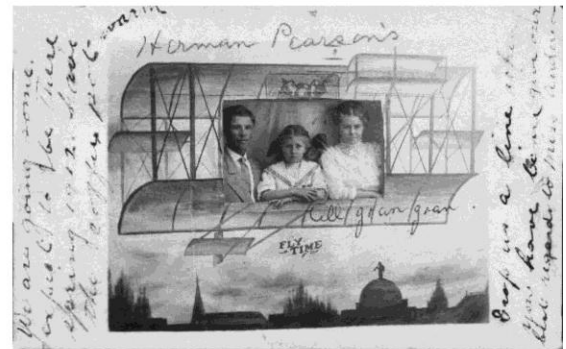
Figure 171. Studio Aerial Portrait. Postmarked in Phoenix, U.S.A., 1911.
URL:
http://www.vintagephoto.com/reference/aviation/1910aviation article.html
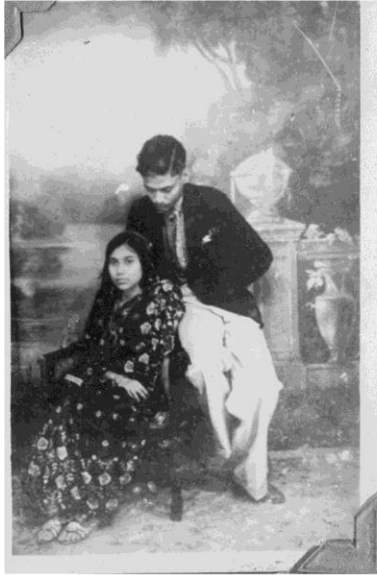
Figure 172. Madhurilata Ray and
Nripendranath Ray. 1936. [ARC]

Figure 173. Pradip Rakshit and Biva Rakshit. 1925-26. Gazipur/Balia.

Figure 174. Sris Mukherjee with his deceased wife. Hooghly burning ghat. 1930s

Figure 175. Unidentified woman and dead man. 1925. [AGC]

Figure 176. Niranjan Banerjee and Chinmoyee Banerjee. 1953.[SBC]
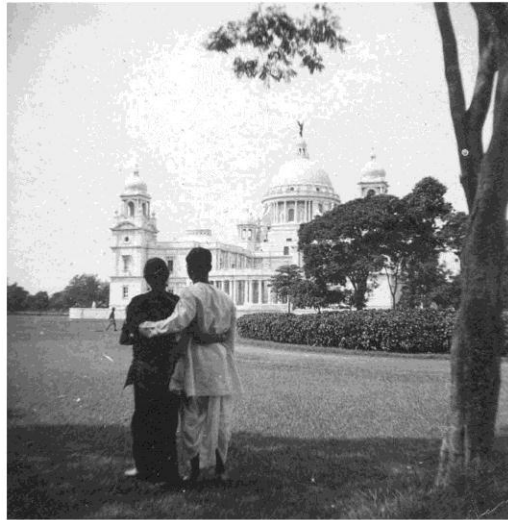
Figure 177. Niranjan Banerjee and Chinmoyee Banerjee. 1953.[SBC]

Figure 178. Unidentified. Mid 20th century? [ADC]

The two photographs (Figs. 166 and 167) above are from a family album in Sovabazar in North Kolkata. The Gangulys are a distant extension of the Sovabazar *Raj* family, quite famous in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Nabakrishna Deb (1733–1797), founder of the Shovabazar Raj family, was instrumental in a plot against Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula. He was known for the *Durga*

Puja he organised in the then newly constructed <u>Shovabazar</u> *Rajbari* in 1757 as well as for his patronisation of numerous performing artistes and philanthropy.

These two photographs neither reveal the splendours of a big *zamindari* family of Bengal nor a royal couple. They do not even attest to the reification of the high elitism in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth century, found in paintings or formal studio techniques for the 'royal' sitters much latter. On the contrary, the backdrops of the crescent moon and the airplane flying high over the city of Kolkata give the viewer a heightened sense of the 'modern' both in terms of the progress of conjugality and the advancement in studio techniques from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Taken in the 1930s and the 1940s in Kolkata neighbourhood studios, the two photographs of the same couple show a comparatively more liberal choice of posture and backdrop from the early formal presentations of the newlyweds in the late and early twentieth century. This is not to make an exceptional case for the two photographs selected but to treat and read them as symptomatic of the changing visual worlds of identity and representation vis-à-vis conjugality and family in the early decades of the twentieth century and to see how the questions of performance and identity are linked to the histories and cultures of power that produce it in the archives of the family album. Before approaching such particular photographs let me go back to the structures that produced the photographic image of the woman in the region.

The development of photography, its skyrocketing popularity, the emergence of compact families and changing roles of women are interlinked in a mesh of macro and micro changes in the realm of the social and the technical. Like other changes in the process of production and labour since the nineteenth century, the camera, and the dominant modes of representation pertaining to it, was controlled by a patriarchy more hegemonic than overtly repressive.

The desire to have a photograph of somebody who is away from home was historically conditioned by a redefinition of family brought about primarily by Industrial Revolution in Europe. It was intensified further by the rise of modern capitalism that destabilised the feudal self-enclosed territorialised family. For the first time in a major way in the history of mankind 'going away' to sell one's labour became widespread. Visual representations of women began to emerge in the light of the newly constituted, smaller families and sexual division of labour was justified by dominant male agency through generalised divisions between home/world, private/public and female/male.

Baudrillard (1976) further writes that it is clearly in the nineteenth century, beside developments of new industrial techniques and new forms of political power, a new kind of sign emerges. These new signs, 'potentially identical objects produced in indefinite series', herald the moment when the problem of mimesis disappears: 'The relation is neither analogy nor reflection, but equivalence and indifference. In a series, objects become undefined simulacra of each other…'(Baudrillard 1976, 86).

Crary uses Baudrillard's argument to show that amongst these new fields of serially produced objects, the most significant, in terms of their social and cultural impact, was photography. To quote Crary (1988):

'The photograph becomes a central element not only as a new commodity economy but also in the reshaping of an entire territory on which signs and images, each effectively severed from a referent, circulate and proliferate. Photographs may have some apparent similarities with older types of images, such as perspectival painting or drawings made with the help of camera obscura; but the vast systemic rupture of which photography is a part renders such similarities insignificant. Photography is an element of a new and homogenous terrain of consumption and circulation in which an observer becomes lodged. To understand the 'photography effect' in the nineteenth century, one must see it as a crucial component of a new cultural economy of value and exchange, not as part of continuous history of visual representation' (Crary 1988, 13).

Colonial modernity, in which the rise of the family album was witnessed, was not an antithesis to tradition. It is in mutual coexistence with tradition. It can at best be a twofold representation of the bourgeois ideology and tradition (Parayil 2003, 97-120). The ambiguous sign of science, as a multivalent sign 'traversed a vast arena, encompassing fields from literature to religion, economy

to philosophy, and categories from elite to popular. Such divisions overlook and conceal how politics and religion, science and the state run into each other, how it is precisely through spill-overs and transgressions that modernity penetrates the fabric of social life' (Prakash 2000, 7). It is in this specificity of the historical, women have been subjected to representations, which mostly have been the handiwork of a predominantly male gaze within the rubric of colonial modernity in Bengal. Hitherto 'private' modes of domesticity, deified repression of the women in the family could now be copied and preserved as documents of indigenous progress with the new technology simultaneously keeping intact the 'honour' implicated in women. Gendering and power could actually be played out in front of the camera with regard to positioning, dressing and choice of co-sitters for the women. The conquered space of domesticity could now be put into closer inspection of the institutions of conjugality and notions of romantic love which were rather facilitating than coercively restrictive among the middle-class milieu in Bengal (Raychaudhuri 2000).

The history of photography in Bengal was in many ways linked with the growth of Calcutta as the presidential city of the Raj and the emergence of *bhadra samaj*. The region was vital to the British and it is estimated that in 1856-57, Bengal, with Calcutta as the focus, contributed 44 per cent of the British Indian revenue. Besides, Calcutta was the focus of a growing public sphere, location for cultural interactions beyond the family and witnessed the emergence of the new white-collar worker. The home, too, became an arena for

367

change and adjustment; and the camera was a vital tool for recording roles and relationships. Photographers gradually replaced portrait painters.[47]

In most formal or informal couple photographs from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the couple was seen blissfully separated from the complex and restrictive formation of the joint-family system (Figs. 189 and 169). Newlywed couples made best use of photography and the studio space 'to create public and formal representations of the bourgeois couple from among themselves' (Majumdar 2009, 127). The romantic freedom in everyday lives and the ideals of the couple formation that were not so easily found in the space of the reconstituted joint family at the turn of the century, established a place of representation in the widely popular photographic images of the conjugal couple. On one hand, the ideal of the nuclear family where the husband and the wife shares a companionate space and, on the other, the everyday reality of the household with other members of the family where interactions between the husband and wife were few and far between, made couple photographs especially popular to the Bengali middle class. Popular displays of such photographs inside households, bedchambers, in lockets speak of the growing popularity of this form by the early decades of the twentieth century. Formal

---

[47] Besides studios and professional photographers, early pioneers in Bengal were Birchandra Deb Barman Manikya, the Maharaja of Tripura; Manmathanath Ghosh; Samarendrachandra Deb Barman; Nilmadhav Dey, the founder of the Bengal Photographers (1862); Charuchandra Dey; the Calcutta Art Studio established by Annadaprasad Bagchi (1878); Motilal Nag, father of Kalidas Nag; Gaganendranath Thakur; Upendrakishore Ray; Kuladaranjan Ray of the same Ray family; Hemendromohan Basu, more popularly known as H. Bose; Abinash Dhar; Parimal Goswami; Ramananda Chattopadhyay of *Prabasi* and *Modern Review* fame; D. Ratan and Company; Charuchandra Guha (C. Guha studio at Albert Hall, College Street, Kolkata); and others were pioneers of photography in this region.

couple photographs were probably the first of its kind to venture out of the pages of the family album and finding for itself other places of independent display.

With the growing popularity of such marriage memorabilia over the years, expressions gradually became relaxed giving the viewer a sense of the 'expected' bonding between the pair. The couple photograph, while doing its bit to attest to the conjugal identity of the subject with respect to the other sex in the frame, grew in popularity at a time that was fraught with differences between reformist projects and the Hindu revivalism at the end of the nineteenth century. Although poets and writers at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century valorised romantic love and ideals for the conjugal couple in their works, coeval to it was a growing body of advice manuals for women, pamphlets, poetry and farces that rebuked romantic ideals and the supposed freedom of the couple, especially of the woman, as destructive for the community and the nation alike. Hence, in a way negotiating the everyday was far more difficult for the couple and especially for the woman in the otherwise happy frame of conjugality.

Performances of the self before the camera can make representation go beyond the grasp of normative structural economy of framing. As representational spaces, studios and photographs opened up possibilities of identity formation and performance of the subject in a changed historical context. Economic, social and political events in the region and related forms of

369

knowledge in turn produced new sensibilities for the people within parameters of social spaces. It is where the inter-subjective communication and negotiation is made possible for the subjective refashioning and invention of the modern self. Rational or imaginative emotional histories also shape perceptions of the people through its workings in social spaces.

The complex question of performance surrounds couple photography, especially in the two examples reproduced here, that simultaneously brings in questions about identity formation and performance. The choice of the backdrops, almost non-natural in these two cases, cannot be fully understood only from the point of view of the material choice the couple had in the studio they had visited. The space where the props and the backdrops transfer the couple is also a real space where they aspire to soar above the mundane in an airplane or chose the crescent moon as the seat for their romance. A conscious self-presentation of ideal nature in the performance space of the studio not only represents internal aspirations but also an aspiration to be recognised as distinctive social subject (Parayil 2000, 284). The ideal values such as expression of wealth, luxury and class are incorporated in their performance as observed by Goffman (1990, 28-50). The objectivity of photographic process lends it a mass credibility within structures of visual modernity. To quote Bazin (1992 [1964]):

'Only a photographic lens can give us the kind of image of the object that is capable of satisfying the deep need man has to substitute for it something more than a mere approximation, a kind of decal or transfer. The

photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it. No matter how fuzzy, distorted or discoloured, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be, it shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is reproduction; it *is* the model (Bazin 1992 [1964], 14).

The two photographs of the Gangulys, on the one hand, borrows from the western neighbourhood studio tradition with regards to the choice of the settings they chose as evident from the comparison with the following early twentieth century photographs from the United States (Figs. 170 and 171). Such representations invoke the history of mentalities of the time. The rise of the scientific and the fantastic and a happy mixture of the both in the print literatures in the early decades of the twentieth century had also importantly informed the Bengali middle-class mind. Exploration, obviously removed from the colonial master's use of the word, had been a major trope in the finding and projection of the self in the cultural milieu of the Bengali middle-class. Apart from the translations of Jules Verne, Jonathan swift and Daniel Defoe, travelogues, diaries of expeditions and popular essays on natural sciences, the genre of the scientific romance was also popular. While in 1914 Rajendralal Acharya had begun translating Jules Verne's novels beginning with *Around the World in Eighty Days*, in the 1930s Kuladaranjan Ray had translated Jules Verne's *Mysterious Island* and Sukumar Ray was inspired by Conan Doyle in writing *Heshoram Hushiarer Diary*, other attempts in indigenous production of fantastic stories had begun much earlier. Hemlal Dutta's *Rahashya*, a scientific fantasy was published

in 1882 in an illustrated periodical *Shachitra Bijyan Darpan* in two episodes, edited by Jogendra Chandra Shadhu. Shortlisted later in 1897 for the *Kuntalin Purashkar* Jagadishchandra Bose's *Palatak Tufan* was published in 1886. Jagadananda Roy had published *Shukrey Bhraman* in 1914 which he claimed in his preface was written twenty-two years earlier (Bal 2006, 31-54).

The world of fantasy in the print literatures was not very far removed from the desire to soar high and above the mundane. The coming together of new innovations and experiments in flying and the near realisation of the desire to defy gravity, in the context of the modern, invoked a new representational space like what the camera did in the realm of the visual. Obviously enough, participation in such real attempts to fly was limited to a handful compared to thousands who had flocked to make their exact resemblances in the studios. Calcutta, the usual seat of the most unusual of happenings, witnessed the ascent of Ramchandra Chattopadhyay in his own balloon named 'City of Calcutta' on June 4, 1889. Earlier than that D. Robertson (1836) and a few other Englishmen have tried flying in a balloon over Calcutta. But Chattopadhyay's attempt caught the popular imagination because of his Bengali identity. The *Indo-European Correspondence* wrote about this 'babu-balloonist': '…the Bengali Baboo, overcoming his natural timidity, penetrated into cloud-land… We would hardly have expected to find a Bengali Baboo taking to ballooning, of all things, in the quest for fame and fortune' (Ghosh 1991, 92-109). Flying had even caught the popular imagination of Kalighat painters. In 1890, *Balloon e Bangali Bibi,* a

Battala farce by Rajkrishna Roy,referred to Ramchandra Chattopadhyay's flight while describing the whimsicalities of a Bengali wife pestering her husband for a balloon on which she really could enjoy a fantastic ride (Biswas 2011, 459-468).[48] Manindralal Bose's 1930 novel *Ajoykumar* serialised in the children's periodical *Mouchaak* also describes Ajoykumar's travels and feats from Bengal to Germany until he realises his dream of flying an aircraft (Sen 2000, 1-40).

These examples, although not exhaustive, are reflective of the contemporary investments in popular imagination. The photographic studio, with all its techniques, potentially had the ability to transform couples depicting them in front of backgrounds which reflected a spatialised imagination of romance within limits of social sanction. At the same time, photographic performance acted as agency to mediate history into present through the meaning of 'signifying properties,' where the subjects become 'social actors'. However, the couples in the studio photographs are constructed within the realm of an imagination, which is inter-connected with the disposition of habitus through social science. Further, considering the 'reality' in these photographs, neither the subject nor the object is simply the way s/he since. Similarly, they are not the way they appear in everyday life but on the contrary, they reproduce the cultural

---

[48] Hardik Brata Biswas ed. 2011. *Prahashaner Kalikaler Bangamahila. 1860-1909*. Kolkata: Charchapada Publication Private Limited, pp. 459-468. The wife (*ginni*)says to her child (*khoka*) in *Ballooney Bangali Bibi.*
"যা বোলচিস্ খোকা, তা ঠিক। এখনকার কালে সবি বিপরীত। পুরুষ-মেয়ে, মেয়ে-পুরুষ। তাতে আবার তোর বাবার কাছে একটু একটু ইংরিজি পড়েচি। ইংরেজের দেশে বিবিতেও বেলুনে চোড়ে ওড়ে। বেলুনে চড়ে যদি ইংরেজ বিবি, তবে কি দোষ কোল্লে ইংরিজিপড়া বাঙালী বিবি ?" (You are right my boy. Nowadays everything is turned upside down. The men have turned sissy and the women are virile. On top of that I have taken a few lessons in English from your father. Even the English ladies enjoy balloon rides. If the English dame is riding the balloon, then why not the English trained Bengali lady?" Rajkrishna Ray. 1903.*Ballooney Bangali Bibi.* Kolkata. 37 no. Mechuabazar Street, Binajantra cited in Biswas ed.2011. p. 466.

notions of the desired image of oneself. Here photographs are not functioning as a reliable natural sign, but accentuates—through the multiplication of appearances—a problem of reliability inherent in natural appearance itself (Kumar 2002, 161-192).

Although Judith Butler's formulations on performance and performativity is not specific to the area of photographic representation, her critique can be used in this context, with obvious reservations, as she deals largely with the problem of identity politics and processes of gendering. I will use here Gill Jagger's (2008) reading of Judith Butler. Butler shows that identity categories are fictional products in the sense that they do not pre-exist the regimes of power/knowledge but are performative products of them (Jagger 2008, 17). They become performative in the sense that the categories themselves produce the identity they are deemed to be simply representing. Identity becomes a matter of social and political regulation rather than any sort of innate property of the individual (ibid 20). Here, to peek into the sociology of the camera, the differences between 'performance' and the 'performative' should be taken into account. Performance of gender, according to Butler, produces a sense of an essence, which is nothing but repetition of sustained social performances which create the reality of gender, but which as Jagger (2008) points out are not separable from agents or actors, preceding the performances, as in a theatrical model. What is important is that what seems to be an apparent free choice to 'choose' the role one wishes to play, like in a theatre, is not so much of a choice.

The 'doer' is produced in and by the act.[49] She does not stand outside the act itself, or before it, or in a position to reflect.

A phenomenology of the body of the subject is necessary to such an understanding of identity and performance which are not matters of naïve volition. The performance before the camera, the neatly composed couple as it evolved in photographs since the late nineteenth century in Bengal, although at times liberatory and exceptionally framed (like here), generally iterates the cultural and religious values of the time and region. The value of a couple photograph, which is not scrutinised and appreciated by relatives and other members of the family, becomes lesser. If not displayed, looked at, cited and iterated, that moment of exception and individuality inside the studio would prove to be something in itself that largely would not produce the effect that a couple photograph is expected to do through corporeal styles; celebrating the couple form.[50] Family photographs strive for unity, stability, dignity and

---

[49] Most of the images I have faced of women and groups inside family albums are conditioned by durations of time exposure whose aesthetic structure was initially practised in the nineteenth century portrait tradition and which relied on having the sitters face the camera and remain immobile for long durations of time. Benjamin concluded that direct look of sitters encapsulated them in their cocoon while the stillness that was required of them by long exposure was felt in the general impression of silence they exuded. 'The procedure itself', wrote Benjamin, 'caused the models to lie, not out of the instant, but into it; during the long exposure they grew, as it were, into the image.'

[50] When I began to look into family albums and started talking to women about their reflections on albums and photographs, the structured mode of a closed and moulded representation began to break down fast. Women's interpretations of photographs were multiple and numerous. It varied with kinds of socialisation. While I was expecting more answers from the point of view of stereotyping of women in family albums, the respondents were more eager to respond and talk about their attachments to particular snapshots. They as a general pattern talked about particular photographs as sources of memory, lost possibilities in childhood and photographs that they are not ready to submit to any determined structures. Points of dress, make-up, postures, even photographs taken during illness resurface in the minds of the respondents. One of the interviewees mentioned about a set of photographs taken during a near-fatal illness after childbirth. She told more than once the she does not like the photographs but cannot exclude

character. Following Hirsch's argument, it can be stated that the family album is a more or less superficial psychoanalysis. We project onto the photographs and subtract from them too. Photographs in which women looks 'optimistic' are liked best in albums by other members of the family and kins. This poignancy is vested upon the figure of women as a site of exchange of cultural value. It might be referred here that Hirsch (1997) argues that the family photo has been prostituted into the politics. 'He is a family man' is always a note of praise and it seems that no one as yet used 'a family woman' as a character reference. The identities of the family and the woman are exchangeable. Therefore, the reference is not an extraneous one, but implicit within the body of the woman displayed in the album.

Idealised images and reality are in constant negotiations and argument in photographs, especially in family albums. The family is constituted through the iconography of significant occasions, through styles of dressing, appropriate demeanour, pose and positioning. Wedding photographs, or those taken shortly after a special event, became particularly popular and an ordeal for the bride, perhaps just out of parda or for the child bride. In the twentieth century, there is a certain relaxation and informality in poses of conjugal couple. In group photographs, the positioning of the patriarch, as well as who sat next to whom,

them from the album. It remains as part of her essence. She goes back frequently to that particular set of photographs. Locating such experiences inside dominant genres of visualisation is problematic. These are points where certain presumptions about visualisation in domestic photography start falling apart. Women (and also men) constantly reformulate meanings and positioning of photographs. Patterns of selection of 'favourite photographs' change with the passage of time. Same photographs are liable to be liked and disliked with time as happens with social relations. Memory work vis-à-vis photographs are problematic and experiential readings are at times baffling.

who was to stand, and so on were often very reflections of actual hierarchies within families (Karlekar 2006, xv).

Such questions of identity and performance overlap regarding this genre of photographs. On the one hand, it is an attestation of the newly achieved status of the subject and, on the other, it helps to blur, even if temporarily, the stricter everyday demands of marriage. With the nationalist movement in full swing, the 1930s and the 40s in Bengal's history were quite eventful decades. Events like declaration of the independence day on January 26 in 1930, police firing on striking *garoans* in Kolkataleading to five deaths, Chattagram armoury raids, Hijli jail killings, strikes by labour unions, an increased presence of the *Hindu Maha Sabha* in the region, communal tensions in various parts of Bengal, the famine of 1943—all had their impact on different cultural and religious communities in Kolkata and other parts of Bengal. The middle-class bhadralok and the *moddhobitto* family identity in the fields of representation do not seem to have been informed by such happenings on the ground as it appears from the photographs cited here or generally from the genre of family albums. The bhadralok imagination of conjugality and romance along with a distinct way of life had been firmly installed on a pedestal by the early decades of the twentieth century: These were characterised by sentiments of personal and familial attachment, a code of public and societal conduct, and a well-laid out system of values (Gupta 2009, 7).

The family album and its associated photographic cultures, throughout its evolution in Bengal sought to construct a stable and happy space for the family with the couple form being its staple foundation. Given such highly complex times and histories, the studio, even if misrecognised as performative, offered the Bengali conjugal couple a fantastic life of their own. To quote Bazin (1991):

'No one believes any longer in the ontological identity of the model and image, but all are agreed that the image helps us to remember the subject and to preserve him from a second spiritual death. Today the making of images no longer shares an anthropocentric, utilitarian purpose (Bazin 1991, 10).

As Butler (2002, 2011, 1997, 1988) has argued that the ways of gendering (practices) that constructs the ourselves as gendered subjects simultaneously provide the ways for resistance and agency (Jagger 2008, 89). Butler (1988) argues that according to Merleau-Ponty the body is not only an historical idea but a set of promises to be incessantly understood:

'That the body is a set of possibilities signifies (a) that its appearance in the world, for perception, is not predetermined by some manner of interior essence, and (b) that its concrete expression in the world must be un-derstood as the taking up and rendering specific of a set of historical possibilities. Hence, there is an agency which is understood as the process of

rendering such possibilities determinate. These possibilities are necessarily constrained by available historical conventions. The body is not a self-identical or merely factic materiality; it is a materiality that bears meaning, if nothing else, and the manner of this bearing is fundamentally dramatic. By dramatic I mean only that the body is not merely matter but a continual and incessant materializing of possibilities. One is not simply a body, but, in some very key sense, one does one's body and, indeed, one does one's body differently from one's contemporaries and from one's embodied predecessors and successors as well' (Butler 1988, 521).

Let me discuss this through a few photographs. Figure 111, a 1948 photograph of Minati Sengupta shows her dressed up in man's clothing with a drawn moustache. She is holding photographic album in right hand. This is an indoor photograph taken inside a room. Given the general trends of photographic representations, we have seen in this dissertation, this seems like an impossible rendition of the Bengali bhadramahila. The exact reason for putting on this attire and make up remains unknown. Do we really need to know the reason behind this? We can only conjecture. It might have been done for acting in a play or Ms Sengupta wished to see her as a man without any 'specific reasons'. Fig. 115, a 1951 photograph of Chinmayee Bandyopadhyay shows her in a *burqha* with a stick in her left hand and her right hand is protruded as if asking for alms. She, a Brahmin woman is masquerading as a Muslim beggar. Similar to Fig. 111, the photograph is taken on the roof of the Bandyopadhyay household at Hooghly in

West Bengal. This particular photograph is in fact one amongst a series of photographs of Chinmayee Bandyopadhyay (Figs. 114 and 116) taken on the same day at the same location in different costumes representing different role playing. Also Fig 110, a 1964 photograph of Bijoylaskmi Mitra, dressed up as an upcountry woman *methrani* have something in common with Fig. 114, which shows Rama Mukherjee and Chinmayee Bandyopadhyay posing as rural north Indian women going to fetch water. Both these photographs mimic the laboring body of the subaltern women in their activities and occupations. Such occupations, as of the *methrani* or the sweeper, are also marked to a large extent by caste markings with people from lower castes coming to these kinds of professions in India. Can these two photographs be accepted as a masquerade that breaks apart the entrenched play of gender inscribing bodies? Or does it reestablish the epistemic violence on the body of the other woman (here the rural upcountry woman), who is the other of the Brahmo/ Hindu educated upper caste woman? Does it entail a different *drag* act in representing the other of the self by making it visible in photography or is it the visual play of the caste based usurpation of the other in postcolonial India? These may be the result of an unsure mixture of the multiple reasons that I have just flagged in exhaustively.

If one takes Fig.111 and 115, one possibly enters the world of citation. As Derrida (1988) argues through Austin:

'Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a "coded" or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I

380

pronounce in order to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as conforming with an iterable model, if it were not then identifiable in some way as a "citation"? Not that citationality in this case is of the same sort as in a theatrical play, a philosophical reference, or the recitation of a poem. That is why there is a relative specificity, as Austin says, a "relative purity" of performatives. But this relative purity does not emerge in opposition to citationality or iterability, but in opposition to other kinds of iteration within a general iterability which constitutes a violation of the allegedly rigorous purity of every event of discourse of every speech act' (Derrida 1988, 18).

It is the general feature of all signs that there is the citing of the performative, through iterability. It necessitates, as Nakassis (2013) shows by reading Derrida that the sign must conform to some common codes which makes iteration of the other as the "same." But even when it is repeatable every sign has its context specific meaning carrying a force that breaks with its contexts toward a recontextaulization of the meaning. We arrive through Derrida (1988) that the sign simultaneously becomes a type and a token. The citationality, as the core of the explitive performative, in case of the man and the female Muslim beggar here is possible through the reanimating of the

'grammatical structure of the citational act, interdiscursively bringing into play multiple events that it sutures together through the very event of

its utterance. In doing so it balances the tension of iterability—the duality of the sign as token and type—that Derrida identifies (also see Derrida 2002). But more than balancing this tension, the performative effaces, or conflates, it such that this token event of utterance here and now is the type which it invokes. It evaporates that duality and tension, bringing the events which it calibrates into alignment, if only in that act and for that moment' (Nakassis 2013, 68).

This Derridian move, gives the act of dressing up as the other a possibly creative enunciation. The exactitude that is promised in the act of the photographed women masquerading as someone else, remain an act of citation in its obvious cognizability as citation. As Nakassis (2013) argues that the act will remain as the act in its failure and falseness. If the act of citation is not too explicative it might be bordering on plagiarism. It should be taken note of that the possibility of a citation not seen as citation is built within its structure. In its contextual failing (*the hand drawn moustache*), in bringing out and displaying its impossibilities, the citation comes through. It renders itself possible (Nakassis 2013, 70). The Bengali middle-class *bhadramahila* , in the momentary act which is otherwise an impossibility, turns herself into Bengali middle-class gentleman (or any man). It creates the sign, with its obvious failures, not by replacing the meaning but by displacing it. The being-present of the middle-class *bhadramahila* is rendered possible through the act of call to recognition or interpellation which at the same time through the acts of dressing up is displaced.

This displacement, at the level of the photographic representation is again, carefully recognized as displacement in the meaning—possible displacement of the familial look of the woman in family album. As Das (2012) observes that the specific cannot be interpreted in terms of the universal as a difference-deferral informs the iteration of the universal norm in the particular (Das 2012, 65). In the realm of the representation this can be a potentially liberating moment for the woman, who can through camera, can relocate herself into what she is not. Let us be watchful here. The dislocation/relocation/displacement of the sexed body of the woman in the family photography is not something that one arrives at with any sense of finality. This can be a move, to re-locate representation of women, with all its downsides and lacks in place. It is the nature of representation that can try to locate a different body for the woman through finding the place of a representational agency. As Jagger (2008) argues that agency might become the reworking of certain detrimental interpellations of woman. It also partially unsettles the passionate attachment to subjection that is an active part of subjectivation. The subject and the subjectivation can be found in the combined operations 'of social power and psychic regulation and in the possibility of resistance and resignification' (Jagger 2008, 104). To think this visual re-location in a structural mode, Das (2012) argues while thinking the body:

'If woman is equated to the body and the body is thought of in terms of the body of the man, the woman does not have a body. How does this phenomena look when the body we thus speak of is a different body,

383

involving other generalities, is a question that I raise…[and] want to keep alive in a bid to reach out to the singularity of the body in immanence, not reducible to the particular generality as the universal, nor to be an unquestioned presence. I see this gesture as a humble attempt to "base our ontological commitments on various forms of coding" (Spivak 1993, 16), not on singular code projected to be universal (Das 2012, 70).

The woman, as part of the heteronormative marital romantic couple, as the dressed up figure, possibly can think of themselves as going beyond the nodal modes of signification. The place (Crasswell 2004)—more in the sense of a surely known space than the immanent thinking of space itself—of the family album assumes the role of the substratum to archive such relocations. The ideologically presumed album also in a way, such as the figure of the woman in it, interrupts the general flow of woman's visual representation in it. Even if not emancipatory in the collective political sense, the album and such moments of representation archived in it, can be a way to read agency in two ways. Firstly through iteration of the figure of the woman, as new (not in the sense of the originally new, but contextually new) in the certain fantastic photographic representations. Secondly through agency leading to resistance and resignification simultaneously being aware of the fact that it 'does not necessarily mean that resistance will be successful' (Jagger 2008, 104). With these I move on to last section of the dissertation, to see the location of photographs of death and women in the Bengali middle-class family albums,

another moment which might open up the presumed thinking of women's visual representation.

5.3. Locating Death in Family Albums

Of the ten thousand family photographs that I looked at in course of the dissertation, I have only found eight photographs of death in the family albums. It seems that I am trying to make an exceptional case of its existence in the otherwise happy motif of the family album and women's representation in them. Choosing the most microscopic of the sources and reading it closely is a way of doing history. My purpose here is somewhat different. I will only cite two photographs of death where there is the 'presence' of the 'corporeal' woman and with her is the presence of the bodily man. I will do this in order to understand the

Figure 174 is a photograph of Sris Mukherjee and his dead wife. The print is heavily hand retouched almost giving it a graphic image quality. The photo was taken at the Hooghly burning *ghat*. The dead body of the wife was arranged at the crematorium before the photograph was taken. Probably, later the painted backdrop and the stairs were added. The husband with his left arm lifts up the face of his deceased wife and with the other hand rests his own face in a pensive mood. Possibly the wife, in her last journey, is carrying all the insignias of the

married Hindu woman in her body. In the popular regional belief, the married woman, who dies before her husband goes to heaven and she is considered a lucky compared to the figure of the Hindu widow in Bengal.

Figure 175 is a photograph of an unidentified dead man with his wife. The photo is from 1925. It shows the elaborate arrangement of the dead body being laid rest before funeral among wreathes of flowers. The wife is posing with the husband caringly touching the man's head. The wreathes were hand coloured in the original. The woman is looking out in the distance, as if to eternity and grief. From the Western dress and the style of arrangement of the body, it can also be a postmortem photograph of a Bengali Christian couple. But it came from the family album of a Hindu family. Often, there are instances of photographs arriving and leaving the pages of the album arbitrarily. The present owners of the albums are not capable of rightly accounting for the appearance and disappearance of such photographs. The practice of taking photographs of deceased persons began in the nineteenth century in Europe and in the United States of America. Especially dead children were often dressed up in their best, made to act like living and in the company of siblings, parents or family members they were photographed. The bodies were made to look as close as to the living. The mnemonic act producing a memory for eternity as such in a time when photography, especially organizing it in one's household was neither easy nor cheap exhibits the moral and emotional involvement users had with

photography. Photography was a technology but beyond that it went far to capture in 'exactitude' what would not have been possible otherwise.

Death as a notion, as a thing sure to happen, is generally known to humans. At the same time, death in its incommensurability as an experience intrigues the human mind. Throughout most of the dissertation I have discussed the heteronormative Bengali middle class morals remaining mostly unchanged in course of the last century beginning with social reformation in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The family, as the unit of continuity of the social in the Bengali middle-class milieu, is invested with distinct emotional economies. The family album is one of the ways through which the continuation of the family is practiced. As we have seen, this process is neither linear nor easy and often tries to destabilize the object of its preservation. Can we think of death photographs, especially of couples, in the albums as another way to think about the continuity of the family? Before going into that let me briefly read the ways in which we can see death.

Let me begin with what Heidegger (1996) thinks of the facticity of death:

'The publicness of everyday being-with-one-another "knows" death as a constantly occurring event, as a "case of death." Someone or another "dies," be it a neighbor or a stranger. People unknown to us "die" daily

and hourly. "Death" is encountered as a familiar event occurring within the world. As such, it remains in the inconspicuousness characteristic of everyday encounters. The they has also already secured an interpretation for this event. The "fleeting" talk about this which is either expressed or else mostly kept back says: One also dies at the end, but for now one is not involved' (Heidegger 1996, 234).

Heidegger (1996) further argues that "dying" is considered an event of the Da-sein but which belongs to no one particular in the ambiguousness of idle talk that falsifies it into a publicly happening event which people encounter (1996, 234). If it such and such it is, then why such visual representation of death occurs in the family albums? Is it just a move, a technical move, to show that one of the pair has passed away and the other is alive? Das (2012) observes that death as a word suggest the inestimable play of '(im)possibilities in the absoluteness of a future which—though inevitable—will never be fully present' (Das 2012, 74). Reading through Hiedegger in search of an existential analysis of "death" and not processes of dying, Derrida says that he prefers:

'"perishing." Why? Just because it turns up twice instead of once among these translations? No, rather because the verb "to perish" retains something of *per,* of the passage of the limit, of the traversal marked in Latin by the *pereo, perire* (which means exactly: to leave, disappear, pass-on the other side of life, *transire)…* As is self-evident, the

distinction between, on the one hand, death *(der Tod)* or properly dying *(eigentlich sterben)* and, on the other hand, perishing *(verenden)* cannot be reduced to a terminological decision. It involves decisive conceptual questions for whoever wants to approach what it is, properly, to die or what properly dying is. Above all, and precisely for that reason, it involves the very condition of an existential analysis of *Dasein,* of a *Dasein* that, as we shall see, reaches its most proper possibility and becomes most properly what it is at the very point where it can claim to *testify* to it, in its anticipation of death.' (Derrida 1993, 31)*.*

One is faced with an aporia when thinking about death. The feeling of the aporia or its structure is not of a failure or that of a simple paralysis. One is experiencing death as a border in the sense it has no border as found in any constant concept, an unquestionable experience or fixed 'thing.' The referent of the noun cannot be definitively fixed or identified in overflowing all limits. Taking aporia as an object of knowledge is also seemingly impossible. Dialectical sophistication or sensible analysis will always fail at this point.

'To endure the 'impossibility' of an aporia is thus to risk the chance of an 'other' possibility, an impossible possibility that is perhaps the only one worth its name. (An entirely 'possible' possibility would surely operate within an already existent field of 'potentials', and would thus open up no

possibility beyond what may already be established, predicted or prescribed.)' (Wortham 2010, 15).

In the aporia faced in trying to think death in its being one can see that Heidegger argues that Being-possible as Dasein for Heidegger is a living through possibilities rather than conceptually grasping them. Dasein's *ability-to-be* is in a negative relationship with being-possible (Das 2012, 91 and Thomson 1999, 32).

'Since it is "ability-to-be" [*Seinkönnen*] rather than "being- possible" [*Möglichsein*] that receives elaboration "in conjunction with the outer most possibility of death," Dasein embodies the possibility of an impossibility only as something which it is not yet. "Being towards one's ownmost ability-to-be [i.e., death] means that in each case Dasein is already ahead of itself." Heidegger holds that as being-toward-death I am ahead of myself, able-to-be what I am not yet. How is this to be under stood? (Thomson 1999, 32)

In 1928, Heidegger implicitly claimed that Dasein, by virtue of its ability-to-be projects itself ahead of itself in its relation to possibility. By doing so it opens up the temporal horizons of futurity where one can understand oneself futurally (Thomson 1999, 32-33). Das (2012) argues that taking death as the future anterior to presence is a source for futurity as such which is also beyond

the possibility that flows from the present (Das 2012, 92). Through the photographs, in their differences of the presentation of death, the couples also face in the photographic moment an aporia in feeling the structure of *death* and the *death-that-happened*. The ritual, if at all, of photographing the dead exists in case of the family album, it is through the working of this futurity in death and impassable aporia. Das (2012) observes:

'…a respect for death does not entail an embracing, a going forward to death. Or maybe there is an embrace, an embrace whose intimacy explain the love of life as nothing else but the love of death that sleeps within the warmth of living. And by the same logic, extended in its tortuous course, the respect for death enhances the responsibility to life' (Das 2012, 92).

In the case of the dead, photographed after death, mortally, for the responsible persons around her, nothing will remain as such. The photographs, the two cited here, signify in however prosaic ways this responsibility which will look beyond the body of the deceased by looking at it. The photograph here instantiates the memory of the body. The instantiation of *death* remains an impossibility through the photograph. The pictorial depiction of the dead in the family albums is not only as *death* represented in the body that is dead or perpetuation of the family but also about a kind of love. The woman-man based families in the structural framework of being cannot be reduced to the question

of hetero-normative violence only, in it, but love remains as a notion which binds them together.

As Badiou (2009) points out that love is not be reduced of two people meeting together followed by their inward looking relationship. Love should be seen as an empowering construction from the perspective of two (Badiou 2009, 29). A quote from his work drives me closer to the point:

'I think… that love encompasses the experience of the possible transition from the pure randomness of chance to a state that has universal value. Starting out from something that is simply an encounter, a trifle, you learn that you can experience the world on the basis of difference and not only in terms of identity… Provided it isn't conceived only as an exchange of mutual favours, or isn't calculated way in advance as a profitable investment, love really is a unique trust placed in chance. It takes us into key areas of the experience of what is difference and, essentially, leads to the idea that you can experience the world from the perspective of difference.' (Badiou 2009, 16–17)

This also give one back, however idealistic it reads, to some extent an assertion of love in our represented space and places inhabited by women. The space of the album and the technology of the camera provide the chance of capturing death, in its entire aporetic stance. The representational place of the

album can be potentially the field where approaching this futurity of the Being is rendered imaginable. The family album, as sites, mnemonics of memory, in its represented character can imagine a place where women, however ideologically enmeshed, can be looked at such moments with a responsibility. The processes of gendered signification remains through its own history (and the history of the woman) in family photography where we witness different kinds of bodies as if different but succumbing to structures of domination. The Brahmo/Hindu Bengali middle-class women, as represented in family albums and in visual histories based on their factic materiality might, as I have discussed earlier, end up woman in the photograph as the woman. Given this, through the reading of the Derridian sense of the archive I have critiqued the nature of unthought appropriation of history in recent and very few surveys of women and family photography in India and West Bengal. As I have mentioned earlier, my project is not doing away with history which itself is an important tool of feminism, but a move toward being notionally responsible for the expositions. The family album as such, in its standard classic sense of a blank book which is written upon by photographs through extended periods of time, does not exist. However, marriage albums do exist. With its steady weaning in the Bengali middle-class milieu it has really become a thing of the past. Women's photographs in it and its interpretations and ways of seeing should be a responsibility for the future to come—in the sense of delivering critical feminist thinking and politics. A typical anticipation of the visual representations of middle-class women as *what is seen*

in the albums might push one to further elucidate the larger questions of image based representations of women in Bengali middle-class societies.

Conclusion

The photographic representations of the Bengali middle-class women from the 1880s to the 1970s constitute the archive for this dissertation. The dissertation—at the intersections of visual and gender studies—prompts the researcher to look into the importance of the dimensions of representation and its complex enunciations informing the notion of the woman. The context here is the middle-class familial cultures of Bengal with its close interactions with colonialism, cultural nationalism and postcolonialism. Even if one ventures out of the limits of the regional context, questions about representation and representing the woman remains one of the primary ways of thinking the notion woman.

The site of the middle-class family in Bengal that gives shapes to representational stereotypes of women in its traditional patriarchal cultural practices and ideologies of a liberal orthodoxy is the producer of the family album form. The family album, with the majority of its photographs being of women, becomes one of the primary locations of narrativizing and representing the woman. The as such free form of the album which gives a free choice of putting and arranging or removing photographs presents, at one level, a representational narrative of respectable women in the family. I have noted and discussed this in the dissertation that the categorical representations of the women have not significantly changed across the time period of the dissertation

when one observes the macro economy of the representation of Bengal middle-class women in the family albums. This however doesn't limit the possibilities of reading the woman located in the family or otherwise if one invests in the critical enunciations of representation, woman and the archive. Harvesting metadata and historical information are often a basis for doing a history from such sources. The dissertation while acknowledging and discussing it have also moved onto providing a critique of it. By not taking into account the specific and complex nature of representation's relation to truth and its relations with the photographic representation of women in the family albums, often projects seeking histories of middle-class women in Bengal might be caught in the trap which it tries to avoid. Although a significant part of the photographic representations reiterate existing stereotypes of middle-class Bengali women, my argument here is that the album and the genre of family photography provides more possibilities of representations of women which have been traditionally overlooked in the visual exchange economies of family photography. While writing or seeing in case of this dissertation, about women can we overlook photographic representations which are less in numbers or maybe found in lesser number of albums? If we are doing that, what kind of women's histories are we attempting?

This brings us to the question of the archive and its relations with processes of history. I have discussed in detail the lack that informs the archive, potentially any archive such as the family album or the digitised photographs

that I have consulted in course of the dissertation. The dissertation has also debated the notion of realism and naturalism opening up the fissures in the realm of representation. Meaning making of the representational forms of art such as photography and its displacements via the post-structuralist critical thinking have been dealt with. The thesis while signposting the 'essentialised' identities of women as found in the genre of family photography critiques the fixitiveness of such meaning making. Before doing that I have critically surveyed the conceptual scope of photography in modernity and its various uses to document and archive the 'Other'.

The *bhadramahila* figure as represented from the early days of photography in Bengal has been dealt with in two spheres. The photographic representation of women in the family from the late nineteenth to well into the twentieth century have been surveyed from the perspective of an archive which is formed often unaware of the fissures that it produces. Even when it seemingly appears to be a place of knowledge production, the dissertation have discussed the ways in which not only the historical-political-patriarchal will might channelize the knowledge but also how the dimensions of knowledge about the woman might remain open to other representations. This happens through a reading of the notion woman, the Bengali middle-class woman here, and the impossibility of archiving the trajectories of her developments in social registers and in generally accepted ways of history writing.

The woman, appears in the photograph, only to be read and reread through the workings of the traces of history, image and memory amongst others which inflect and inform the representations of the woman in family photographs. I critique the inferential production of knowledge from the general use of the archive that presupposes a kind of knowledge that the archive already exists. I have surveyed this through the colonial and post-colonial contexts in Bengal. To me, the important move lies in trying to think of the notion woman in the specific context. Thereafter, the critique of the archive which tries to capsulate the figure woman in terms of generalized masculine history emerges. The woman and her representation in the family albums form an arena of aporetic knowledge which cannot be subsumed under neat categories of stereotypical classification. Categories of representation of woman that I have cited and discussed in the dissertation are only provisional. I have argued in the dissertation that photographic representation of Bengali middle-class women have remained limited to being aid to histories already available. In order to move towards conceptualizing the world of representation of the woman as such and Bengali middle-class women in the specific case, I have argued that one needs to move away from neat and linear production of histories through representations. The dissertation have shown that the beyond the tangible fact of family photographs producing a particular kind of knowledge about women in Bengal, the genre of family photography also becomes an enabling place/space for Bengali middle-class women's representations. The specific nature of photography and the place of the album provide a space for the representation of

the seeming impossibilities in the production of the notion woman. This I have argued through three moments— 1) of the fantastic romantic couple photography, 2) women masquerading as men and 3) death photography. The family album is a suspended lived space between the imagined and the cultural authority of family in Bengal.

I have consulted more than 10,000 photographic images ranging across two and half years of fieldwork in various places in West Bengal and especially in and around Kolkata. To me, a history of representation of Bengali middle-class women for about ninety years, need layered scholarly attention and feminist critical thought in trying to conceptualise the relocations of the visual economy necessary to grasp a history, if possible, of the subject woman I have been surveying. This dissertation have tried to locate the researcher delving into photographic representations of women more often than not finding herself grappling with silences and dead ends vis-à-vis information about photographs of women. I have argued that a possible move to 'get away' from this is to think through the notion woman in specific turns of the archive and specific economies of representation. At the same time, avoiding or being critically conscious the apparent neatness of a generally 'readable' representation of the woman is part of the representational machinations inflected and received by changing groups, intentions, emotions, moralities, memories and politics. In the Derridian sense, it can be stated that one way to get to the specific and the possible in the representation is look for its impossibilities. Moments which might lighten up the

399

historical-political gendered specificity of the Bengali middle-class women's representation in the web of family photography?

While doing the fieldwork and talking to donors and identifiers of the photographs in the families or individuals, I have encountered the fact that loss of memory as to the exact identities and events depicted in the image is widespread. This is a primary reason why I have done this dissertation based on the assumption that what happens when a researcher/archivist with no special knowledge of many such photographs looks at it from an academic perspective. Many kinds of histories are possible from photographs that I have used here. One possible scope for such further work, a tiny bit of which I have touched upon here in the interviews with the respondents, might be to see the reception of such photographs among the network of familial viewers of photographic album.

The family album and the representation of Bengali middle-class women in it is a necessary site for knowing the woman and the social which constructs her. The album is one such place among others, where Bengali middle-class women have challenged stereotypical depiction in so far exposing the fact that such depictions are also cast in the web of representational strategies and politics. The figure of the woman as such, here the Bengali middle-class woman, re-locates herself in her incommensurability, in marital romance, playful

concealment and death often forcing epistemology to organise different notions of perception and thinking to write her impossible histories.

Bibliography

Alpers, Svetlana. *The Art of Describing*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983.

Anderson, Benedict. *The Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* London and New York: Verso, 1991 [1983].

Anderson, Claire. *Legible Bodies: Race, Criminality and Colonialism in South Asia,* Oxford: Berg, 2004.

Appadurai, Arjun. "The Colonial Backdrop." *Afterimage*. (March/April 1997): 4-7.

Arnold, H.J.P. *William Henry Fox Talbot: Pioneer of Photography and Man of Science,* London: Hutchinson Bentham, 1977.

Arribert-Narce, Fabien. "Roland Barthe's Photobiographies: Towards an "Exemption from Meaning"." *Colloquy*, 18, (2009): 238-253.

Ashcroft, Bill et al., *Key Concepts in Post-Colonial Studies*, London: Routledge, 1998.

Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things With Words*, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984 [1962].

Badiou, Alian with Nicholas Truong. *In Praise of Love*. London: Serpent's Tail, 2012.

Bagchi, Jasodhara. ed. *Indian Women: Myth and Reality*, Hyderabad: Sangam Books, 1995.

Bagchi, Jasodhara. "Representing Nationalism: Ideology of Motherhood in Colonial Bengal." *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25:42-43, 20-27 (October 1990): WS65-WS71.

Bal, Robin. *Banglay Bijyan Charcha,* Kolkata: Shomila Press and Publications, 2006 [1996].

Bandyopadhyay, Sekhar. ed., *Bengal: Rethinking History. Essays in Historiography*, New Delhi: Manohar & International Centre for Bengal Studies, 2001.

———— *From Plassey to Partition: A History of Modern India*, New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2004.

Bannerji, Himani. *Inventing Subjects: Studies in Hegemony, Patriarchy and Colonialism*, London, New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2001.

Barthes, Roland. *Rhetoric of the Image in Image, Music Text,* New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.

———— "The Photographic Message." *Theorizing Communication: Readings Across Traditions*, 2000: 191-199.

———— *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, London: Macmillan, 1981.

Basu, Swapan. ed. *Sambad-Samayikpatre Unish ShatakerBangalisamaj*, *Vol.II.* Kolkata: Paschimbanga Bangla Akademi, 2003.

Batchen, Geoffery. "Burning with Desire: The Birth and Death of Photography." *Afterimage* 17, 6 (Jan. 1990): 8-11.

———— "Detours: Photography and the Camera Lucida." *Afterimage* 18, 2 (Sept. 1990): 14-15.

———— "Desiring Production Itself: Notes on the Invention of Photography." In *Cartographies: Poststructuralism and the Mapping of Bodies and Spaces,* edited by Rosalyn Diprose and Robyn Ferrell, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991.

———— "Orders Profoundly Altered: Photography and Photographies." *West* 1, 1 (1989): 18-21.

———— "Photography, Power, and Representation." *Afterimage* 16, 4 (Nov. 1988): 7-9.

Baudrillard, Jean. *L'échangesymboliqueet la mort.* Paris: Gallimard, 1976.

———— *La societe de consummation*, Paris: Denoel, 1970.

Bayly, C. A. *Empire and Information: Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780-1870*, New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Bazin, André. *What is Cinema?* Trans. H. Gray, California: University of California Press, 1992.

Beaton, Cecil and Gay Buckland, *The Magic Image: The Genius of Photography from 1839 to the Present Day*, London: Pavilion Books, 1989.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, eds, Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty and Thomas Y. Levin, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008.

———"The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, Translated by Harry Zohn, London: Fontana Press, 1992 [1973].

———*The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire*, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006.

Berger, John. *Ways of Seeing*, Vol. 1.Harmondsworth: Penguin UK, 2008.

Berman, Marshall. *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988 [1982].

Bhabha, Homi. *Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994.

Bhattacharya, Tithi. *The Sentinels of Culture. Class, Education and the Colonial Intellectual in Bengal (1848-85)*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Biswas, Hardik Brata. "Spatializing Families and Fantastic Couples: Photographs as Cultural Identity and Performance." In *Boundaries of the Self: Gender, Culture and Spaces*, edited by Debalina Banerjee, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.

Borthwick, Meredith. *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal.1849-1905*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984.

Bose, Pradip ed. *Samayiki: Purono Samayik Patrer Probondho Sangkalan*, *Vol 1& 2*, Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Private Limited, 2009.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, California: Stanford University Press, 1990.

Brewster, David. *The Stereoscope: Its History, Theory and Construction*, *1856*; Reprint, New York: Morgan & Morgan, 1971.

Buckland, Gail. *Fox Talbot and the Invention of Photography*, St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1980.

Burch, Noel. *Life to Those Shadows*, London: BFI Publishing, 1990.

Burke, Peter. *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence*, Reaktion Books, 2006.

Butler, Judith. "Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory." *Theatre journal* (1988): 519-531.

——— *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of sex*, Taylor & Francis, 2011.

——— *Excitable speech: A politics of the performative*, Psychology Press, 1997.

——— *Gender trouble*, London: Routledge, 2002.

Chakraborty, Dalia. *Colonial Clerks: A Social History of Deprivation and Domination*, Kolkata: K P Bagchi& Company, 2005.

Chakraborty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Post-colonial Thought and Historical Difference*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Chakraborty, Usha. *Condition of Bengali Women Around the 2nd Half of the 19th Century*, Calcutta, 1963.

Chambers, D. "Family as Place: Family Photograph Albums and the Domestication of Public and Private Space." In *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, edited by J. M. Schwartz and J. R. Ryan, London: I.B. Tauris, 2003.

Chatterjee, Partha. *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Chatterjee, Ratnabali. *From the Karkhana to the Studio: A Study in the Changing Social Rules [i.e. Roles] of Patron and Artist in Bengal*, New Delhi: Books and Books, 1990.

Chatterji, Joya. *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition, 1932-1947*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Chaudhury, Zahid R. *Afterimage of Empire: Photography in Nineteenth-Century India*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

Chowdhury, Indira. *The Frail Hero and Virile History: Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Clayre, Alasdair. ed. *Nature and Industrialization*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Cohn, Bernard. "An Anthropologist Among The Historians and Other Essays." In *The Bernhard Cohn Omnibus*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004.

——— "The Past in the Present: Indian as Museum of Mankind." *History and Anthropology*, Vol. 11, No. 1, (1998): 1-38.

Comte, Auguste. *A General View of Positivism [Discourssur l'Espritpositif 1844]*, London, 1856.

Confino, Alon. "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method." *American Historical Review*. Vol.5. (December 1997):13-86.

Costello, Diarmuid. "Aura, Face, Photography: Re-reading Benjamin Today." In Andrew Benjamin ed. *Walter Benjamin and Art*, London: Continuum, 2006 [2005].

Crary, Jonathan. "Techniques of the Observer." *October*, 45 (Summer 1988): 3-36.

——— "Modernizing Vision." *Vision and Visuality: Dia Art Foundation Discussions in Contemporary Culture Number 2.* edited by Hal Foster, Seattle: Bay Press, 1988.

——— "Notes on the Kaleidoscope and Stereoscope." *Journal 5* (Autumn 1985): 38-41

———*Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Massachusetts: October Books, 1992.

Crasswell, Tim. *Place: A Short Introduction*. Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Crimp, Douglas. "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism." *October*, Vol. 15, MIT Press, (Winter, 1980): 91-101.

Darnton, Robert. "How Historians Play God." *Raritan* Vol. 22, No. 1, (Summer 2002): 1.

Das, Anirban and Ritu SenChaudhuri, "The Desired "One": Thinking the Women in the Nation." *History Compass Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 5, (2007): 1483-99.

Das, Anirban. "Embodied Knowledges: The Limits and Possibilities of Knowing the Body." PhD diss., Jadavpur University, 2006.

——— "In Search of the Third World Woman: The (in) corporeality of Body–metaphors." *Margins*, Vol. 2, No. 1. (February 2002): 102–123.

406

———— *Toward a Politics of the (Im)Possible: The Body in Third World Feminisms*, London: Anthem Press, 2012.

Dasgupta, Rabindrakumar. et. al eds., *Rabindra Rachanabali: Granthaparichay*, Kolkata: Government of West Bengal, 2001.

Davenport, Alma. *The History of Photography: An Overview*, UNM Press, 1991.

deCerteau, Michel. "The Black Sun of Language: Foucault." In *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other,* Brian Massumi. Trans. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.

De Duve, Thiery. " "Time Exposure and the Snapshot": The Photograph as Paradox." *October*, Vol. 5 (Summer 1978): 113–25.

Derrida, Jacques and Christie V. McDonald. "Choreographies: Interview" In *Feminist Interpretations of Jacques Derrida*, edited by Nancy J. Holland, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997.

Derrida, Jacques. "Typewriter Ribbon, Limited Ink (2)." In *Without Alibi*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002.

———*Aporia*. California: Stanford University Press, 1993.

———*Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996.

———*Limited Inc*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press. 1993 [1988].

———*MEMOIRES for Paul de Man*. Columbia University Press, 1986 [1989].

———*Of Grammatology*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak Trans., New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2002.

———"Sending: On Representation." Peter Caws and Mary Ann Caws Trans. *Social Research*, Vol. 49, No.2, Current French Philosophy (SUMMER 1982): 294–326.

——— Restitutions of the truth in pointing [pointure][1978] in Truth in Painting, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 1987 [1978]

Didur, Jill. *Unsettling Partition: Literature, Gender, Memory*, New Delhi: Pearson Education India, 2007.

Dreyfus, Hubert L. and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermenutics*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Dutta Gupta, Sarmistha. *Identities and Histories: Women's Writing and Politics in Bengal*, Kolkata: Stree, 2010.

Duttlinger, Carolin. *Kafka and Photography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Elden, Stuart. *Understanding Henri Lefebvre: Theory and the Possible*, London and New York: Continuum, 2004.

Engels, Dagmar. *Beyond Purdah? Women In Bengal. 1890-1930*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Evans, Jessica and Stuart Hall, eds. *Visual Culture: The Reader.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001.

Falconer, John. "Ethnographical Photography in India: 1850-1900." *Photography Collector*, V, 1984.

Forbes, Geraldine. *The New Cambridge History of India IV.2, Women in Modern India*, Volume 4, New Delhi: Cambridge University Press and Foundation Books, 1999.

Foucault, Michel. *Power/Knowledge*, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980.

———— *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. A.M. Sheridan Smith Trans. New York: Pantheon Books, 1972.

———— *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, London: Routledge, 2002.

Friedman, Michael. *Reconsidering Logical Positivism*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Funkenstein, Amos. *Perceptions of Jewish History*, California: University of California Press, 1993.

Galassi, Peter. *Before Photography: Painting and the Invention of Photography,* New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1981.

Gernsheim, Helmut and Alison Gernsheim, *The History of Photography From the Earliest Use of the Camera Obscura in the Eleventh Century up to 1914*, London: Oxford University Press 1955; Revised edition Thames & Hudson, 1969.

Gernsheim, Helmut. *A Concise History of Photography*, Courier Corporation, 1986.

Ghosh, Siddhartha *Chobi Tola: Bangalir Photography Charcha*, Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Private Limited, 1988.

———*Kaler Sahar Kolkata*. Kolkata: Ananda Publishers Private Limited, 1991.

Giddens, Anthony. *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990.

Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. London: Penguin Books. 1990 [1959].

Graham, George and Farquhar Irving, *The Life and Work of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan,* New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Gray, Noel. Laughter in the Ruins, The Kaleidoscope: Shake, Rattle & Roll. B.A. Honors Thesis, University of Sydney, 1989.

Green, David. "Classified Subjects. Photography and Anthropology: The Technology of Power." *Ten-8*, 14, (1984): 32-3.

Grosz, E. *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2005.

Guha-Thakurta, Tapati. *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Post-Colonial India*, Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2004.

——— *The Making of a New 'Indian' Art: Artists, Aesthetics and Nationalism in Bengal, c.1850-1920*, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

——— *Visual Worlds of Modern Bengal: Selections from the Documentation Archive of the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences*, Kolkata: Seagull Books Private Limited, 2002.

Gupta, Amit Kumar. *Crises and Creativities: Middle-Class Bhadralok in Bengal c. 1939-52*, New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2009.

Gustavson, Todd and George Eastman House, *Camera: A History of Photography from Daguerreotype to Digital*, New York: Sterling Signature, 2012.

Gutman, Judith Mara. *Through Indian Eyes*, USA: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." In *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference* edited by Jonathan Rudeford, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.

Hall, Stuart. "Reconstruction Work: Images of Post-war Black Settlement." In *Family Snaps: The Meanings of Domestic Photography*, edited by Jo Spence and Patricia Holland, London: Virago, 1991.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" In *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990.

Halle, David. "The Family Photograph." *Art Journal*. Vol. 46.No. 3. (Autumn, 1987): 217–225.

Harries, Karsten. *Art Matters: A Critical Commentary on Heidegger's "The Origin of the Work of Art."* Vol. 57, Springer Science & Business Media, 2009.

Harris, Roy and Talbot J. Taylor, *Landmarks in Linguistic Thought I: The Western tradition from Socrates to Saussure*, London: Routledge, 1997 [1989].

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1996 [1953].

———— "On Time and Being" (New York: Harper and Row, 1972): 70, Cited in Nikolas Kompridis, *Critique and Disclosure: Critical Theory between Past and Future*, Boston: MIT Press, 2006.

Highmore, Ben. *The Everyday Life Reader*, Psychology Press, 2002.

Hirsch, Julia. *Family photographs: Content, Meaning, and Effect*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1981.

Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Post-memory*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Hirsch, Robert. *Seizing the Light: A Social History of Photography*, University of California Press, MacGraw Hill Education, 2008.

Holland, Nancy J. (eds). *Feminist Interpretations of Jacques Derrida*, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997,

Husserl, Edmund. *The Idea of Phenomenology*, William Alston and George Nakhnikian Trans., Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964.

Irigaray, Luce. *The Speculum of the Other Woman*, Ithaca & New York: Cornell University Press, 1985 [1974].

Jagger, Gill. Judith Butler: Sexual Politics, Social Change and the Power of the Performative, New York: Routledge, 2008.

Jain, Kajri. *Gods in the Bazaar: The Economies of Indian Calendar Art*, Duke University Press, 2007.

James, Daniel and Mirta Zaida Lobato. "Family Photos, Oral Narratives and Identity Formation: The Ukrainians of Beriso." *Hispanic American Historical Review*. Vol. 84. No. 1, (2004): 5-36.

Jameson, Fredric. *A Singular Modernity: Essays on the Ontology of the Present*, London: Verso, 2002.

Jay, Martin. "The Scopic Regimes of Modernity." In *Vision and Visuality*, edited by Hal Foster, Seattle: Bay Press, 1988.

Benjamin, Walter, Michael William Jennings, and Brigid Doherty. *The work of art in the age of its technological reproducibility, and other writings on media*. Harvard University Press, 2008.

Johnson, William and Mark Rice, Therese Mulligan, Carla Williams, David Wooters, *A History of Photography: From 1839 to the Present*, Taschen, 2012.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason,* N. K. Smith Trans., New York: St. Martin's, 1961, B xxvi–xxvii, 27.

Karlekar, Malavika. "Kadambini and the Bhadralok: Early Debates over Women's Education in Bengal." *Economic and Political Weekly* XXI, 17 (April 1986): WS-25-WS 31.

——— Re–visioning the Past: Early Photography in Bengal 1875–1915, New Delhi, Oxford, 2005.

——— *Visual Histories: Photography in the Popular Imagination*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Kaufman, Robert. Aura, Still, in Andrew Benjamin ed. *Walter Benjamin and Art*, London: Continuum, 2006 [2005].

Kent, Bach Robert M. Harnish. *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1979.

Keopnick, Lutz. "Photographs and Memories." *South Central Review*, Vol. 21. No.1. (2004): 94–129.

Khan, Yasmin. *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan*. UK: Penguin, 2013.

Kirby, Vicki. *Telling Flesh: Substance of the Corporeal*, New York: Routledge, 1997.

Klein, Keriwn Lee. "On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse." *Representations.*Vol 69 (Winter, 2000), 127-150

Krauss, Rosalind. "Photography's Discursive Spaces." In *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths.* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985.

Krell, David Farell (ed). *Martin Heidegger, Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, New York: Harper San Francisco, 1993.

Krishnamurty, J. ed., *Women in Colonial India: Essays on Survival, Work and the State*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1989.

Kristeva, J. "Women's Time." In *Feminist Time Against Nation Time: Gender, Politics, and the Nation-State in an Age of Permanent War*, edited by V. Hesford and L. Diedrich, New York: Lexington Books, [1979] 2008, 23–39.

——— *Proust and the Sense of Time*, Stephen Bann Trans., New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

Kudaisya, Gyanesh and Tan Tai Yong. *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*. London: Routledge, 2004.

Kuhn, Annette. *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*, London: Verso, 1995.

——— "Photography and Cultural Memory: A Methodological Exploration." *Visual Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 3, December 2007.

Kujundzic, Nebojsa and William Buschert. "Staging The Life-World: Habermas and The Recuperation of Austin's Speech Act Theory." *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*. Vol. 23. No.1. (1993):105-116.

Kumar, Radha. *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of Movement for Women's Rights and Feminism in India. 1800-1990*, New Delhi: Kali for Women, 2002 [1993].

Kumar, Udaya. "Seeing and Reading: The Early Malayalam Novel and Some Questions of Visibilities." in *Early Novels in India*, edited by Meenakshi Mukherjee, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2002.

LaCapra, Dominick. *History & Criticism*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985.

——— History and Reading: Tocqueville, Foucault and French Studies, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000.

——— "Intellectual History and Its Ways." *The American Historical Review*, Volume 97, Issue 2, (1992):425-439.

——— *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983.

Lalvani, Suren. *Photography, Vision and the Production of the Modern Bodies*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1996.

Langford, Martha. *Suspended Conversations: The Afterlife of Memory in Photographic Albums*, McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2001.

Langford, Michael. *The Story of Photography*, Focal Press, 1980.

Larrain, Jorge. *The Concept of Ideology*, place Hutchinson University Library, 1979.

Leech, Geoffrey. *Principles of Pragmatics*. New York: Longman Singapore Publishing, 1983.

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*, Donald Nicholson-Smith Trans., Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991 [1974]

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Cambridge USA: Blackwell, 1991.

Lucy, Niall. *A Derrida Dictionary*. MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Lukacs, Georg. "Realism in the Balance." In *Aesthetics and Politics*, London: New Left Books, 1977.

Macdonald, Gus. *Camera: Victorian Eyewitness: A History of Photography, 1826-1913*, Viking Press, 1980.

Macionis, John J. and Linda M. Gerber, *Sociology,* Sixth Canadian Edition, Pearson Education Canada, 2007.

Majumdar, Rochona. *Marriage and Modernity: Family Values in Colonial Bengal*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Manoff, Marlene. "Theories of the Archive from Across the Disciplines." *Libraries and the Academy*, Vol. 4, No. 1, (2004): 9–25.

Mathur, Saloni. *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display*, New Delhi: Orient Blackswan Private Limited, 2007.

Megill, Allan. "History, Memory, and Identity." *History and the Human Sciences*. Vol.11. (August 1998): 37-38.

Melberg, Arne. "The Work of Art in Age of Ontological Speculation: Walter Benjamin Revisited." In *Walter Benjamin and Art*, edited by Andrew Benjamin, London: Continuum, 2006 [2005].

Mertins, Detlef. "Walter Benjamin and the Tectonic Unconscious." in Walter Benjamin Revisited." In *Walter Benjamin and Art*, edited by Andrew Benjamin, London: Continuum, 2006 [2005].

Metz, Christian. "Photography and Fetish." *October*. Vol. 34 (Autumn, 1985): 81-90.

Mill, James. *The History of British India, Vol.1*, London, 1840.

Mirzoeff, Nicholas. ed. *The Visual Culture Reader*. London, New York: Routledge, 1998.

——— *An Introduction to Visual Culture*. London, New York: Routledge, 1999.

Mitchell, W. J. T. "What do Pictures "Really" Want?." *October*. Vol. 77 (Summer, 1996): 71-82

——— "The Panic of the Visual: A Conversation with Edward W. Said." *Boundary* 2 25.2 (Summer 1998).

——— *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. University of Chicago Press, 1994.

———The *Reconfigured Eye: Visual Truth in the Post-Photographic Era.* Cambridge, MA: MIT P, 1994.

——— *Iconology; Text, Image, Ideology*, Chicago, 1986.

Monk, Samuel H. *The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1935.

Morss, Susan Buck. "Dream World of Mass Culture: Walter Benjamin's Theory of Modernity and the Dialectics of Seeing." In *Modernity and Hegemony of Vision*, edited by David Michael Levin, University of California Press, 1993.

Murshid, Ghulam. *Reluctant Debutante: Response of Bengali Women to Modernization*. Rajshahi: Sahitya Samsad, Rajshahi University, 1983.

Newhall, Beaumont. ed. *Photography: Essays & Images.* London: Secker and Warburg, 1980.

Newhall, Beaumont. *The History of Photography from 1839 to the Present*, Secker and Warburg, 1986.

Nicholas, Mirzoeff. *An Introduction to Visual Culture.* New York: Routledge, 1999.

Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire." *Representations*. No. 26. (Spring, 1989): 7-24

Nwodo, C. S. "The Work of Art in Heidegger: A World Disclosure", Cultural Hermeneutics 4 (1976): 61–74.

Ogden, C. K. and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning,* New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1956.

Osborne,Thomas. "The Ordinariness of the Archive." *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 12, No. 2, (1999): 51-64.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2010.

Pal, Pratapaditya, and Vidya Dehejia, *From merchants to emperors: British artists and India, 1757-1930*. Vol. 7. Cornell Univ Press, 1986.

Pandey, Gyanendra. *Remembering Partition: Violence, Nationalism and History in India*. New Delhi: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Pang, Laikwan."Photography, Performance and the Making of Female Images in Modern China." *Journal of Women's History*.Vol. 17.No. 4. (2005): 56–85.

Panofsky, Erwin. *Early Netherlandish Painting, Its Origins and Character*, Harvard University Press, 1953.

Parayil, Sujith Kumar. "Photography and Colonial Modernity in Keralam." In *Space, Sexuality and Postcolonial Studies* edited by Manas Ray, Kolkata: Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 2003.

Paricharika (B.S. Kartik, 1287), Kolkata, 1880.

Pinney, Christopher. *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.

——— *The Coming of Photography in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel, *The Concept of Representation*, Berkeley: University of California, 1967.

Prakash, Gyan. *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Proust, Marcel. *Remembrance of Things Past, In a Budding Grove,* translated by Terence Kilmartin, vol. 1., Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981.

Price, Mary. "The Photograph: A Strange Confined Space." 1994.

Rabinow, Paul ed., *The Michel Foucault Reader*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.

Ramaswamy, Sumathi. *The Goddess and the Nation: Mapping Mother India*, Duke University Press, 2009.

Ramberg, Bjørn and Kristin Gjesdal , "Hermeneutics", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2013/entries/hermeneutics/ accessed on 3.5.2014.

Raychaudhuri, Tapan. "Love in a Colonial Climate: Marriage, Sex and Romance in Nineteenth-Century Bengal." In *Modern Asian Studies* Vol. 34, No. 2, (2000): 349-378.

Ricoeur, Paul. "Histoire de la philosophy et historicite." In L'histoireetses interpretations: Entretiensantourd'Arnold Toynbee, edited by R. Aron, (1961): 217-27. Cited in Jacques Le Goff, *History and Memory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992.

Rockmore, Tom. "Heidegger and Representationalism." *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, Volume 13, Number 3, (July 1996): 363–374.

Rorty, Richard. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton University Press, 2009 [1979].

Ryan, James R. *Picturing Empire: Photography and Visualization of the British Empire*, Reaktion, 1997.

Ryan, M. "Is There Life for Saussure After Structuralism?." *Diacritics*, 9, 4: 28–44.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985.

Sangari, Kumkum and SudeshVaid eds., Recasting *Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*, New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1989.

Sarkar, Sumit and Tanika Sarkar, *Women and Social Reform in Modern India: A Reader*, Indiana University Press, 2008.

Sarkar, Tanika. *Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism*, New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2001.

———"Many Faces of Love: Country, Woman, and God in The Home and the World" in Rabindranath Tagore's *The Home and the World: A Critical Companion*, edited by P.K. Dutta, New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003[1]: 27-44.

———"Nationalist Iconography: Image of Women in 19th Century Bengali Literature." *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol - XXII No. 47, November 21, 1987.

Sawicki, Marianne. "Edmund Husserl (1859-1938)", In *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: A Peer Reviewed Academic Resource*. URL= http://www.iep.utm.edu/husserl/ accessed on 12.4.2014

Schaaf, Larry. *Tracings of Light: Sir John Herschel & The Camera Lucida*. San Francisco: Friends of Photography, 1989.

Schapiro, Meyer. "The Still Life as a Personal Object." In *Reach of the Mind*, edited by M.I. Simmel, New York: Springer, 1968.

Schmid, Christian. "Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space: towards a three-dimensional dialectic." In *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre* edited by Kanishka Goonewardena, Stefan Kipfer, Richard Milgrom, Christian Schmid, New York and London: Routledge, 2008.

Schrag, Calvin D. "The Transvaluation of Aesthetics and the Work of Art" In *Thinking About Being: Aspects of Heidegger's Thought*, edited by R. W. Sheehan, and Schudson, Michael. *Watergate in American Memory: How we remember, forget, and reconstruct the past*. New York, 1992: 51 Cited in Kerwin, 2000.

Scott, Joan Wallach. *The Fantasy of Feminist History*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011.

Sekula, Allan. "The Traffic in Photographs." In *Photography Against the Grain: Essays and Photo Works 1973-1983*. Halifax: Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1984.

Sekula, Allan. "On the Invention of the Photographic Meaning,." In *Thinking Photography*, edited by Victor Burgin, London: MacMillan Press Limited, 1982.

Sen, Ashok. ed. *Advencharer Galpa*. Kolkata: Sishu Sahitya Samsad, 2000.

Sen, Samita. "Motherhood and Mothercraft: Gender and Nationalism in Bengal." *Gender and History*, 5:2, (Summer 1993): 231-233.

Shah, A.M. *The Family in India: Critical Essays*, New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1998.

Siegfried Kracaeur, 'On the Writings of Walter Benjamin', The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays, trans and ed. Thomas Y. Levin, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995, p. 264 cited in Noah Isenberg and Walter Benjamin, The Work of Walter Benjamin in the Age of Information, New German Critique, No. 83, Special Issue on Walter Benjamin, (Spring - Summer, 2001)

Singh, R. Raj. "Heidegger and the World in an Artwork." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 48, No. 3, (Summer, 1990): 215–222.

Sinha, Mrinalini. *Colonial Masculinity: The 'manly Englishman' and The' Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.

Solomon-Godeau, Abigail. "Calotypomania: A Gourmet Guide to Nineteenth-Century Photography." *Afterimage* 11, 1-2 (Summer 1983): 11.

———"Tunnel Vision." *Print Collector's Newsletter*, 12, 6 (Jan.- Feb. 1982): 175.

Sontag, Susan. *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Gironx, 1977.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*, Kolkata: Seagull Books, 1999.

Sri [Anon] 1881

Sripantha. *Battala*. Kolkata:Ananda Publishers Pvt. Ltd, 1997.

Srivastava, Sanjay. "The Voice of the Nation and the Five-Year Plan Hero: Speculations on Gender, Space and Popular Culture" In *Fingerprinting Popular Culture: The Mythic and the Iconic in the Indian Cinema* edited by Vinay Lal and
Ashish Nandy. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006.

——— *Passionate Modernity: Sexuality, Class, and Consumption in India*. New Delhi: Routledge, 2007.

Sturken, Marita. *Tangled memories: The Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic, and the Politics of Remembering*. California: University of California Press, 1997.

Tagg, John. *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, London: Macmillan, 1988.

The Complete Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary: Complete Text Reproduced Micrographically, Volume II, P–Z, Oxford University Press, 1971.

Thomson, Ian. "Can I die? Derrrida on Heidegger and Death." *Philosophy Today*. (Spring 1999): 29-42

Turner, B. S. ed. *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*, London: Sage, 1990.

Uberoi, Patricia. *Freedom and Destiny: Gender, Family, and Popular Culture in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Uebel, Thomas, "Vienna Circle", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Edward edited by N. Zalta, (Spring 2014 Edition),
URL http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/vienna-circle/ accessed on 16.7.2014.

Walton, Kendall L. *Marvellous Images: On Values and the Arts*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Wells, Liz, ed. *Photography: A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, 2015.

White, Hayden. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975.

———*Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.

Wigoder, Meir. "History Begins at Home: Photography and Memory in the Writings of Siegfried Kracaeur and Roland Barthes." In *History and Memory* 13.1 Indiana University Press, 2001.

Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, London: Fontana Press, 1988[1976].

Wills, Camfield and Deirdre Wills, *History of Photography: Techniques and Equipment*, London: Exeter Books, 1980.

Wollheim, Richard. "On Pictorial Representation." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. Vol. 56. (1998): 217-233.

Wortham, Simon Morgan. *The Derrida Dictionary*, London and New York: Continuum, 2010.

Yacavone, Kathrin. "Reading through Photography: Roland Barthes's Last Seminar "Proust et la photographie"." *French Forum*, Vol. 34, No. 1, (Winter 2009): 97-112.

Zamindar, VaziraFazila-Yaccobali. *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories.* Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2010.

Zizek, Slavoj. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, New Delhi: Navayana Publishing, 2008 [1989].

Zusi, Peter. "Vanishing Points: Walter Benjamin and Karel Tiege on the Liquidations of the Aura." *The Modern Language Review*, Volume 108, Number 2, (April 2013): 368–395.