

Reading Family Albums: Indian Immigrants in Tokyo, 1976-2010

Bakirathi Mani

Presidential Penn Compact Professor
of English, University of Pennsylvania

May 14, 2025 / 18:30-20:00

Room 301, 3F Building 10,

Sophia University

In Person only

No registration required

How do we enter into, look at, and make sense of family albums? In this talk, I examine archival practices that emerge out of working with a repository of albums that documents my own family's life as Indian immigrants in Japan between 1976 and 2010. These albums and the photographs they contain operate as material and ethnographic objects that decay over time. Writing about these albums demands that I occupy shifting positions: as a subject and critic of these images; as an archivist who preserves the albums; and a daughter inheriting the photographs, who has herself migrated. As the albums travel between Japan, India and the United States, I consider what it means to dwell within these familiar archives, reflecting on methods of reading and writing about images that are among the most intimate representations of selfhood and community that I have encountered.



Dr. Bakirathi in 1977



Recent portrait of Dr. Bakirathi

Bakirathi Mani is the Presidential Penn Compact Professor of English at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of *Unseeing Empire: Photography, Representation, South Asian America* (Duke University Press, 2020) and *Aspiring to Home: South Asians in America* (Stanford University Press, 2012). At Penn, she is Core Faculty in the Asian American Studies Program and the Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program. Mani's work on South Asian diasporic public cultures has been published in *Positions, Social Text, and Verge*. More recently, she has written on the circulation of photographs of anti-Asian violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, and photography's relation to imperial archives in the U.S. and South Asia for *Aperture, PIX*, and other public venues. Mani earned her Ph.D. from Stanford University, M.A. from Jawaharlal Nehru University, and B.S.F.S. from Georgetown University.

This talk is organized by David Slater (Professor of Anthropology, Sophia University).

