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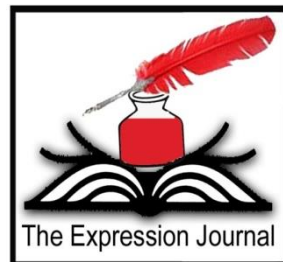
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RE-READING *BHARATMATA*: DETANGLING NATION AND GENDER

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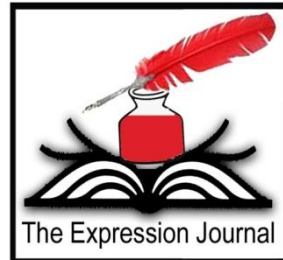
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Abstract

With the call of *Bande Mataram*, Bankim tied the nation and gender in a conspicuous relationship. The nineteenth century call for Independence came intertwined with hailing it as the mother and referring to saving her from the grips of the morally corrupt. Intellectuals exploited the psychosexual affection that a son has with his mother, and sold the symbolism of nation as mother so much so that it has been difficult to detangle the two threads even two centuries later. The colonial gaze, struggling with blames of effeminacy and threats of homosexual eroticism lead the man to become more masculine and hence tied the woman in Victorian standards of femininity. While Sara Suleri explains the gaze, Edward Said states how Orient was rendered feminine and Indian mythology was brought to the aid. Festivals like *rakshabandhan*, tales of masculine fervour like that of the Rajput kings and the promise of woman's purity like that of Padmavati filled the atmosphere with the roars of Independence and the conscience of a nation and martyrdom. The construction was so impeccable that India still struggles to distance itself from *Bharatmata* and the mothers struggle to break themselves from the eulogy and celebration of motherhood. My research paper is a psycho sexual theoretical analysis of how nation and gender became so entwined that they became metonymies. Understanding Kristeva's motherhood and castration complexes and applying them to Suleri, Sugata Bose, Lata Mani's understanding of construction of nation would help us understand the gender politics that is embedded even today.

Keywords

Bharat Mata, Nation, Feminism, Construction, Gender Politics.



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Womanhood had come out of its seclusion to share with manhood the struggle for gaining freedom for Bharat Mata-the Motherland. (Kumar 57)

M.E. Cousins described the 1917 Congress and the heroism of Sarojini Naidu through these words, a session that believed the power of women in the exercise of building a nation. Twentieth-century India was the age of a nation-in-making. While the revolutionary tones had asserted their intention of gaining Independence, the construction of the nation parallelly constructed gender. The birth of a new nation was to be baptized by washing away the learned fetters and embracing new stereotypes. The infant nation was crawling from under the colonial gaze, and in its attempt to establish itself as a separate identity it constructed the identities of its people. The call for women's emancipation echoed the grounds of the holy land since the nineteenth century. Reformists had begun a debate on *sati* and widow remarriage, and intellectuals came together in their fight against child marriage. The political fervor and the unrest beneath the layers reverberated through the structures that held the misogynistic foundation of a nation together. The call for Independence shook women out of their slumber of acceptance and they took to the streets, united in the greater cause of the nation. They were hailed for being the mothers, the heroines, the sisters, the torchbearers of Independent India. While the nation freed itself of its colonial fetters, it bound its women in the image of *Bharatmata*.

Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of Nationalism* claims how Nation is but an imagined concept that the people believe to be true and are patriotically devoted to. He explains how like any other -ism, Nationalism has a carefully constructed theoretical aesthetic. He theorizes in four steps

how a nation comes to be; through inhabiting the importance of partnership, through dividing the boundaries with politically constructed boundaries and setting up forces in protection of these borders, through invoking the sovereignty of the land by establishing its laws and languages, and through perceiving the unified conception of a community that unites beyond its differences. (Anderson 4) The imagined conception of the nation is a careful political study of invoking a sense of brotherhood in its people, who then are ready to sacrifice their lives in service of an imagined concept. This brotherhood is what was invoked through the cry of Independence and the becoming of the Indian nation-state. Women were inspired to break their glass bangles imported from foreign lands, and contribute to the brotherhood of the nation. The cost of a woman entering the brotherhood was her becoming a mother, the mother nation, the mother goddess. The imagined community required a face and a flow of unquestioned devotion, and *Bharatmata* was the perfect goddess to invoke the motherhood of women and the son complex of its men. Under this garb of Nationalism was constructed a woman, veiled behind the saffron sari of Abanindranath Tagore's painting of *Bharatmata*.

THE NATION AS MOTHER

Our history is the sacred biography of the Mother. Our philosophies are the revelations of the Mother's mind. Our arts – our poetry and our painting...our architecture and our sculpture, all these are the outflow of the Mother's diverse emotional moods and experiences. Our religion is the organized expression of the soul of the Mother. The outsider knows her as India...this strange idealization of our land, which has given birth to this cult of the Mother among us. (Bipin Chandra Pal 134)

Lord Curzon's political move of partitioning Bengal ignited the need to unite India in an image that can't be torn away. The 1905 Bengal patented the cultural ideation of its land with that of a mother. The land, the state, the nation became the mother, who can't be dismembered, and her sovereignty and honor became the son's burden to bear. The sons of Bengal came together in their literary endeavors and painted a well-thought image of the benevolent mother that their land was. Aurobindo Ghose in 1907 asserted that 'the patriotism that works [ed] miracles and save[d] a doomed nation [wa]s born' (Kumar 3) only after the nation had assumed the stature of a Mother. Bengal's women had been represented on the political stage for decades now, since the call for the abolition of Sati in the 1820's, but it was the first time they were hailed hierarchically. Becoming Mothers, the Aryan past was revoked and idealized, teaching the sons about their glorious past. British had institutionally colonized the Indian mindset during their rule and led the natives to believe that they were mere barbarians. Becoming the nation, a Mother evoked the feeling in Indian sons of the need to provide and fight for her honor irrespective of their intellectual stature. Constructing Mother Nation was the need for the revolution that would have otherwise crumbled, and both men and women were constructed in their rights to serve the idea of *Bharatmata*.

Freud's theory about the psychoanalytic and aesthetic experience identifies 'two kinds of revolt: Oedipal revolt and the return of the archaic. The first kind, Oedipal revolt, can be seen as a way the psyche is structured' (McAfee 114) It is this Oedipal revolt that forms the psychology of each individual in a society, 'the mind or personality of each individual develops in response to his desire for his or her mother – and the taboo that censors this desire.' (McAfee 114) When the Nation is constructed as the Mother, it evokes the Oedipal revolt of the suppressed infant in each individual. The Mother Nation then becomes the desire and the colonial ruler becomes the patriarch, that needs to be killed before the child could fulfill his Oedipal desire of reclaiming his mother as his own. As Freud related in *Totem and Taboo*, every civilization is born from the murder of the father. Julia Kristeva explains how every generation replays the Oedipal revolt when 'it imagines patricide as a way to maintain access to the maternal body.' (McAfee 115) The construction of *Bharatmata* thus constructed the psychology of its children; when the male child was eager to fulfill his desire of reclaiming the maternal body, the female child was busy being an imitation of the mother in the life of their sons and fathers and husbands.

Julia Kristeva was always enchanted by the idea of Motherhood and how it is the only innocent form of affection that a human being experiences, but she warns against the hailing of the idea of the mother as it in its wake constructs many more dangerous fetters and stereotypes. The way that the twentieth century India embraced 'the role of motherhood, it risks becoming another religion. Instead of God, it has "Woman" and "Her power".' (McAfee 99) When the nation becomes a mother, motherhood is internalized and equated with the ultimate power of the almighty God, thus binding its men in the ever unsatiated desire and its women in the unreal benevolence of the hailed motherhood. The roles were carefully situated, but the impact was so deep that even after a century it has left a stain. Mother India became a religion, she united diverse languages and religions to fight together for the greater cause, only to abandon them once the cause was fulfilled. Her existence provided a second thetic phase to the Indian infant, who fought to reclaim his mother but was left with a semiotic break, as Kristeva would put it. In the process of constructing a Mother and ultimately experiencing a thetic break, the ideals of traditional motherhood were hailed and the daughter of *Bharatmata* was prisoned in the unreal expectations that the New Nation was being built on. The Nation that was to provide a signified for the Phallic signifier that Mother India became.

Parashuram Myth was circulated during the construction of the Mother Nation. The Hindu reincarnation of Lord Vishnu, *Parashuram* was the Hindu ideal son who decapitated his mother at the order of his father. Parashuram, the youngest son of Rishi Jamdagni, was ordered by his father to murder his mother. At the command of his patriarch, he cut her head off with a single blow of the Parashu (axe). The mother's fault was that she cheated on her husband, and the son's command was to kill his mother. But the moment the father offered the son a boon, he wished for his mother to be resurrected from the dead. The *Parashuram* myth becomes an integral part of the

construction of a nation that hailed the Mother when it was about to be dismembered. Indian land was partitioned under British rule, and the dreaded day was recorded as the Parashuram who had to decapitate his mother, only to revive her later. The relationship of the imagined nation and motherhood seeped psychologically in the conscience of the nation and any foreign attack was considered an attack at the (patriarchal) honor of the mother. The Mother Nation was no longer a meager theoretical concept, it was revered as the God herself. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay wrote *Bande Mataram* as a filler in his journal *Bangadarshan* in 1875, it was later included in his novel *Anandmath* in 1882. Rabindranath Tagore set it to music and song publicly for the first time at the 1896 Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress. The song was a homage to the God that the Mother Nation is,

I bow to you, Mother...

Who says, Mother, you are weak?

Repository of many strengths,

scourge of the enemy's army, the Mother! (Bose 4)

BHARATMATA

In 1905, Abanindranath Tagore's painting *Bharatmata* gave a visual evocation to the idea of Mother Nation. 'Visualized as a serene, saffron-clad ascetic woman, the Mother carried the boons of food, clothing, learning and spiritual salvation in her four hands.' (Bose 5) The image that was first dedicated to the Mother Bengal was almost benevolently later titled as *Bharatmata*. The painting drew the expectations of a patriarchal nation from its women. She was not only a mother but a goddess. She was an ever smiling, subservient, benevolent woman who would endure all the wrong and still bless its children. Tanika Sarkar interpreted the 'concept of the Motherland-Deshmata' as a 'cultural artefact'. (Bose 6) Born in Bengal, the concept of Mother as Kali or Durga and the Mother as Tagore's *Bharatmata* were contradictory. While Bengal celebrated the fierce mothers and revolutionary Goddesses, it produced an 'archetypical, hapless, female victim', (7) in the painting of Tagore. She describes Abanindranath's painting as 'pale, tearful, frail' (7), probable how women were to be constructed in the making of a New India. "'Srinkhalita Bharatmata', the Mother bound in chains' (Bose 7) was a widely used image during the Nationalist struggle, to evoke the emotive pain of its children. The woman was inscribed in every piece of literature and through every painting, and her ideals of construction kept changing. From the fierce goddess Durga, who was summoned by Gods to kill a demon they couldn't, she became a frail woman wrapped in a saffron sari, unable to protect herself.

'The loss of value of woman as a human being that this entailed was considerable. The tyranny of divinity could only be countered by an invocation to humanity.' (Bose 9) The theoretical conception and the practical construction could not have been kept apart, as Abanindranath's *Bharatmata* was painted keeping his daughter in mind. The idea of divine intervention and human construction was accomplished once the literature and arts gave the patriarchal dream of a benevolent Mother Nation a tangible face. 'Even in the literature that glorified the nation as a mother, the ideals of

womanhood were mythical characters such as Sati, Savitri, Sita, Lilavati, Khana, and Arundhati.’ (Bose 8) The Hindu myths were used to construct new paradigms of femininity, the learned wives who were devoted to their husbands. The Aryan past was invoked to write the sermons of an independent future. The struggle for Independence did not suffice at freeing the nation from colonial rule, but it also constructed the paradigms of a New Nation. New Woman was to be constructed in New India and thus was required of the patriarchy to deliver newly ruled of becoming a woman. The concept of nation and mother tensed the relationship between the genders, it constructed new ideals and defined the margins of masculinity and femininity.

The call for Independence, the call for a nationalist struggle for the Motherland brought with it communal and religious divides between the sons of *Bharatmata*. The saffron-clad woman who was hailed as the Mother India metaphorically reverberated with the Hindu side of the protest, and Muslims were left with a sour taste. The personification of the Nation brought with it the question of Human incapacity to include every margin in its making. Bengal divided and intellectual critiques like Aurobindo blamed the imagery of *Bharatmata* for it. In his 1920 essay ‘The country and Nationhood’, he writes ‘Bharatmata’s undivided image has not yet been revealed...the Bharatmata that we ritually worshipped in the Congress was artificially constructed, she was the companion and favourite mistress of the British, not our mother.’ (Bose 22) Aurobindo blamed the spirit of Hindu Nationalism to have misinterpreted the political situation with Bengal’s partition. The political arguments of intellectuals ended up tainting *Bharatmata*, and in extension, the mothers of the nation. When an image is used metaphorically to personify the nation in the face of a woman, the woman bears the political failings of her sons. Aurobindo might not have agreed with Tagore and the Congress on their depiction of Mother India, but the binary drawn of a mother/mistress demeans the half population of a gender that stands to fight in solidarity. The men constructed the nation in the face of a woman and then blamed her to have been disloyal when they lost the political battle of sovereignty.

The century of Independence struggle was not only one of constructing an archaic past and hailing Motherhood, but also of rejecting the European ideology. India was constructed under the colonial gaze, with the proud declaration of *Bharatmata* being the face of a New India, it began to reject the Western ideals and celebrate its Indian roots. Decolonization is a long and psychologically exhausting process, but the immediate need was to tell the colonial rulers that the native Indians were capable enough of ruling themselves. ‘Tagore’s writings on nationalism and modernity disdainfully rejected European forms of the nation-state while accepting universalist ideals of humanism.’ (Bose 27) Intellectuals were bent on constructing a nation that depended on its reason, rather than depending on Western wisdom. The breaking free from the shadow of colonization tensed the gender roles further, as they now were performances put up to satisfy ‘self’ and prove to the ‘other’ the ability to govern its own. The men struggled to break away from the European ideology of an ‘effeminate Indian man’ and women were placed under strict Victorian guidelines of femininity.

CONSTRUCTING FEMININITY

The New Nation required a New Woman, An Indian woman who was proud of her past and was amicable of the Victorian fantasy of the Indian man. The society was torn in binaries of the Inner and Outer, of Home and the World and the Spiritual and the Material. Sāṃkhya philosophy believed in *prkṛti* (Nature) as the Mother and all that was associated with the Mother Earth were to be inherited by the Indian woman. She was expected to be passive, nature-loving, devoted, and all-encompassing. The post-colonial *Bharatvarsha* expected its women to be all this but with the sophistication of a Victorian lady. She was expected to shed off her natural barbarianism and adopt the grace of the Western woman. Her dressing styles changed, her cuisine shifted, her mannerisms were modified and her habits were put under strict scrutiny. Born from the patriarchal debate on the abolition of Sati, acceptance of widow remarriage, and abolishment of child marriage, she was the object of the Indian patriarch trying to prove its master that he has outgrown his servility. Women were never present in the debates about her; the abolition of Sati was decided in a court of men, tried by men and judged by men. The New Indian Woman was to learn from the obedience of a Victorian lady and inherit it in her mannerisms, any exception was pushed to the margins of the binary.

In 1864, the Contagious Diseases Act was passed, for the British to regularize prostitution. The Act made the registration and medical examination of the prostitutes compulsory. This Act was a ploy to harass the women-gone-wrong and show them their place in colonial India. This Act not only worsened the exploitation of vulnerable women but also categorically abandoned any distinction between prostitution and courtesanship. Many 'kept' women were also affected by this Act and the stature of 'respectable' society washed off from the filth of the women who came from the margins of the binary. The Act was a testimony to 'the contempt the British felt for their native subjects, for it reduced courtesans and mistresses to the status of common prostitutes, and thereby reduced the status of the masters of the former to that of the customers of the latter.' (Kumar 35-36) This was the time when women were replacing men in the entertainment industry, to play the role of women. The Victorian patriarch could not tolerate such indignancies in his colonized state and focused his doctrine on defining 'respectability'. The mindset that suddenly categorized every woman who performs as a prostitute, stole from the Indian tradition a precious dance form and degraded it to the hollows it still lies in. The performance of *nautch*, an expression performed at public and private meetings was denigrated so much so that it was ultimately labeled obscene, and the performers were called prostitutes. Missionary-dominated organizations petitioned the British government to ban all *nautch* performances in public functions, and towards the last decade of the Nineteenth-century Indian reformers followed suit. In 1897, Ranade declared that 'almost all social reform organizations were committed to it, pledging that they would neither allow nautches to be performed at their marriage celebrations, nor attend any functions at which they were performed.' (Kumar 36)

'The internalization of Victorian morality grew so deeply that almost any kind of public display of emotion began to be frowned upon.' (Kumar 36) In the drive to cleanse

the Indian morality of any loose stains scorned at by the Victorian moralists, even festivals like Holi were aimed to be sanctified. The seventh National Social Conference decided to 'purify' Holi and resolutions were passed to ban drinking or doing drugs and dancing. The British had a particular distaste for the way Indian 'barbaric' citizens expressed emotions, and their distaste was voiced by the reformers. The National Social Congress passed a resolution against *siapa*, public mourning performed by the women of Punjab by beating their breasts and crying loudly. From dancing and mourning, every expression of the Indian woman was customized to suit the Victorian standards of morality. Even the act of Rape was filtered through the colonial lens. It was not treated as violence against women but as a violation of the honour of the community. Rape was a taboo subject and discussed only when the culprit was an outsider. The silence of nationalists in the case of the death of Phulmoni Debi, who was raped by her elder husband, sang the discrimination and objectification of women in the construction of a moral Nation.

Swarnakumari Debi, Rabindranath Tagore's sister, was an eminent name in the construction of a nationalist idea of femininity. In 1886, she started a women's organization called Sakhi Samiti that trained widows to teach, so they could become self-reliant. She also organized the annual *mahila silpamelas* (women's craft fairs), where the crafts made by native Indian women were sold. Sarala Debi Ghoshal, Swarnakumari Debi's daughter started Bharat Stree Mahamandal at Lahore in 1910, which was dedicated to providing appropriate textbooks for women, selling their handicrafts, and making affordable medical care available for them. The 1905-1908 Swadeshi Movement witnessed an increase in women's participation in the national struggle. Hundreds of women became politically aware and started participating in public meetings, though only as an audience. At around the same time, Sister Nivedita became a member of the National Revolutionary Council, where she worked closely with Tagore. She was active in organizing women's meetings where she asked them to revive *charkha* spinning post the Bengal floods and famine. There was a realization in the women of zenana to buy and use spinning wheels, a symbol of their revolt against Western capitalism, to which an English critic complained:

The revolt seems to have obtained a firm hold of the Zenana and the Hindu woman behind the purdah often exercises a greater influence upon her husband and her sons than the English woman who moves freely about the world. (Kumar 42)

The blatant comparison of the Indian and Western woman by an English critic shamed Indian femininity and taunted the Indian man at the same time. At around the same time in Bengal, the call for Independence grew stronger and the demand was now of *swaraj* (self-government). The rhetoric was constructed on a dominantly Hindu vein, where goddess-centered nationalism found new grounds. Kali *puja* was used in the campaign of raising the age of marriage in 1891, and she was invoked again in the national struggle for gaining Independence. 'Kali had been invoked to protect conservative Hindu tradition from Westernized reformers: now she became the

liberator of Mother India and a beacon for her nationalist sons.' (Kumar 45) Mother Kali became the national icon for the goddess who would fight the war of Independence with her sword and protect her sons. She became synonymous with Mother India, the mother's hunger that could only be satiated with the enemy's blood and by a band of followers. Durga and Kali puja began in the nineteenth century to mark the amalgamation of margins to the leader of elites. They were traditionally the goddesses of thieves, dacoits, and prostitutes and were now accepted by all who called themselves nationalists. The women in the national struggles were thus constructed as the binary of *Bharatmata* and Durga, the Victorian binary of femininity, while one was the passive and benevolent mother, the other was the fierce and bloodthirsty warrior goddess. Durga puja could also be read as the sign of shaking patriarchy, where the complex image of Durga and Kali were hailed.

With Durga and Kali rising to dominance, new mother images created new spaces for women. 'Nationalist adoption of these images was crucial in creating these spaces.' (Kumar 47) With the changing space for women, came into question the women who failed to belong to either binary of becoming a woman in Nationalist India. Indian social milieu was even more afraid of the *Shakti* than ever before and thus did all in its capacity to tame it. Bouts of witch-hunting were witnessed where women were punished collectively for their fault of asserting their voice. Widows became a threat to the Indian Nationalist conscience and were thus subjected to *Sati*. Ashis Nandy explains how the first third of the nineteenth century witnessed a rise in the cases of Sati in India. According to Nandy, 'Kali became the new symbol of a treacherous cosmic mother' (47) and it was her glorification that became proof of the moral decline of the Hindu nationals. The widows thus proved to be a threat to the nation-in-making, and would rather be met with befitting punishment. Widows came to be blamed for their husband's death as she threatened the cultural obligation of a wife to perform rituals that ensure her husband's long life. The Indian patriarchy could not tolerate transgressors, and thus even when *Sati* was abolished, the widows were forced to observe strict rituals and confined to secluded spaces because they were erotic threats to masculinity. A widow would be a fountain of unfettered sexual energy and thus it was the obligation of the men of her society to enclose her in an asexual identity. The agrarian and social reforms met by the British government were major to ensure that patriarchy remains to rule the land, though the face of patriarchy would shift to adapt to the Western mold.

The education of women came to hold much importance in the twentieth century, but the form was altered to please the British lords. Debates were organized and women nationalists came to structure women's education in a mold that would suit the patriarchal nationalist needs of the country. The primary role of a woman was to be a mother and a wife, and her education must be fitting for her roles in nation-making. Annie Besant in 1904 elevated the debate of women's education into a national quest, 'the national movement for girl's education must be on national lines; it must accept the general Hindu conceptions of women's place in the national life... India needs nobly

trained wives and mothers, wise and tender rulers of the household.' (Kumar 50) Post-1905, this argument was modified to assert the birthright of a woman to her education, as she was the mother of the nation. Sarojini Naidu in her speeches repeatedly asserted the importance of educating women, but she placed the responsibility on the shoulders of the men of the house. She even kept reiterating how education would play a key role in constructing the mothers of tomorrow. Funds were set up to pay for the training of women doctors in India, so she could give birth to a 'healthy empire' as she was solely responsible for the production of a healthy race. Working-class mother was thus to preserve her role as the mother of the nation for she would be producing healthy workers. *Bharatmata* constructed a new form of femininity that seemed to boast of an increased political presence and more educated women, but it ultimately bound woman in her objectification as a womb. The women of the Nation Mother were reduced to their role as the mothers producing a healthy race, and all her endeavors in life were to facilitate her primary motive of life.

CONSTRUCTING THE INDIAN MAN

Sara Suleri in *The Rhetoric of English India* writes that the 'colonial gaze was not directed to the inscrutability of an Eastern bride but rather to the greater sexual ambivalence of the effeminate groom.' (16-17) She explains how the British ruler mocked the masculinity of the Indian man and compared him to an effeminate groom. Victorian morality wasn't limited to restrict the wife and purify the household, but also defining the role of man of the house. The Nationalist reformers saw how the Victorian gaze viewed the Indian men, and thus intellectual was dedicated to constructing a macho Indian man who could fit in the Western mold. Swarnakumari Debi founded *Bharati*, a monthly journal with her brothers dedicated to the cause of *atmasakti* (self-reliance) and swadeshism. It was through this journal that Sarala Debi Ghoshal organized 'a physical culture campaign, asking young men to form an *antaranga dal* (intimate circle) for self-defense, and the defense of their women against molestation by British soldiers in streets and stations.' (Kumar 39) She tied *rakhis* around the wrists of the men as a token of vow of the women's safety. She declared that she wanted to wash off the Bengali man of Macaulay's blame of being a race of cowards. To make them physically strong, she inaugurated defensive exercises such as boxing and wrestling and fights including swords and clubs. She organized *bratas* (fasts) on the second day of Durga Puja where men would swear to become physically strong. She celebrated *Birashtami*, to worship swords as a symbol of the newly empowered Indian man and organized rallies that included a display of fights and masculine prowess.

At the *antaranga dal*, she would draw out the Indian map and place the hands of the men over it to pledge for protecting their mother nation's honor. Her main aim was to invoke a sense of nationalist-warrior hero pride in the hearts of her male students, and she thus narrated storied invoked from the past, some fact some made up. She selected Pratapaditya, a Hindu landlord and parricide, and sang of his praises of his masculine courage and strength to fight the Muslim imperial power. She hailed him at the *Birashtami* festival where she would invoke other Hindu mythological heroes

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known for their macho courage and masculine strength like Krishna, Rama, Drona, Arjuna, and Bhishma. According to Sumit Sarkar, it was in the 1905 *Pratapaditya brata* that Sarala Debi tried to use *Bande Mataram* as a national call. The nationalist reformers took it on them to propagate widow remarriage as a symbol of being a savior, 'Marry a widow, be a saviour' resonated through the Nationalist struggle in India.

While women were to become the mothers of the nation, men were groomed to be the Parashuramas, the obedient sons of the patriarchy who would sacrifice their lives for the sake of their motherland. While the cases of violence against women soared, Nationalist men were burdened with the task of protecting their women from the corrupt desires of the outsiders. Though the rape cases by a fellow Indian patriarch were usually hushed over, the rape inflicted by an outsider was publicly criticized. The becoming of a man included the construction of an enemy. While in the beginning, the other was the British, towards the later stages of a National Hindu inception, the Muslims became the enemy and the other. 'Demands for Hindu self-defence groups began to be made, and the spectre of the British soldier-rapist was now replaced by the spectre of the Muslim rapist of Hindu women.' (Kumar 41)

CONCLUSION

Tagore regarded Nationalism as 'one of the most powerful anaesthetics that man has invented.' (Tagore 133) When mixed with the correct dose of patriarchy and the need to control its women, it becomes even more potent. *Bharatmata* is the depiction of the struggle of a Nation fighting against foreign rule and claiming what is rightfully its own, but it also hides in its wake the construction of the identity of its subjects. The hailing of Mother Nation produces in its wake an era of women trapped in the mold of expectations of a nation. The Nationalist struggle never allowed the women to break free from the fetters of traditional existences but bound her further. In the debate of home and the world, she was locked behind the confines of home, only to let free if she agrees to the constructed notions of her becoming. She is not an organic identity; she is a carefully constructed subject. Indian woman through the Nationalist struggle assumed many roles, from social to political to financial, only to be retired to the confines of *zenana* once her ideal is met. Sarala Debi Chaudhurani's life is a living testament, she fought actively in the struggle for her nation and when her time for her nuptial arrangements came, she retired to her natural duties of being a wife and a mother. The women like Bikhaji Cama, prominent political figures who actively participated in the struggle succumbed to an end of anonymity for she refused to obey the patriarchal norms of her construction.

Nation and Gender are intertwined so minutely that a careful study at deconstructing their relationship reveals complicate points of overlap. It is only through Re-reading the construction of both that their unfortunate co-existence becomes evident. Indian independence is not merely a historical and political struggle, but a social struggle that broke the stereotypes only to bind itself in the new ones. The Independence struggle is an important time in the history of this country for every citizen, irrespective of her caste or gender came from the shackles of her existence, and

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fought for a Nation that would be revered as the Mother Goddess. It was in breaking away from the 'Other' that India realized its 'Self'. The twenty-first-century Indian frenzy of patriarchy and Hindu Nationalism owes its roots to the Struggle for an Independent India, when all means came together for a commonly hailed end.

I am only a woman...when you need standard bearers to uphold your banner and when you die for want of faith, the womanhood of India will be with you as the holders of your banner, and the sustainers of your strength. And if you die, remember that the spirit of Padmini of Chittoor is enshrined with the manhood of India. (Kumar 57)

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