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Problematizing the Panegyric: Violence, Woman's Body and Songs of the Nation

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Abstract: The Partition of India was a cataclysmic event that altered the socio-political topography of the Indian subcontinent. Coming at the heels of the grand narrative of India's glorious independence, the cartographic negotiation of borders that partitioned India and Pakistan into separate nation states became the problematic occasion the echo of which still reverberates in contemporary conflicts. Although the effect of the Partition was overwhelming for all, its impact on women as gendered subjects was stupendous. With national songs illustrating the symbiosis between women's sexuality and the grandiose project of nationalism, the embodiment of female sexuality in the dialectic of nation-building became a leitmotif leading to large-scale inter-communal and intra-communal violence on women's bodies during the Partition. With issues of female honor and national shame at stake, women's bodies became grounds of combat for the men. The paper seeks to read the representations of gendered psychosomatic violence on women during the Partition against the background of the national eulogies that deify women as the holy matriarch of the nation. The paper argues that it is the panegyrics directed at women, in general, embodying the devotion of nation-building that throws in sharp relief the unspeakable acts of inter-communal and intra-communal violence on women during the Partition. The paper will read selected short stories on women's experience of India's Partition as well as oral history accounts vis-à-vis the lyrics of selected songs of the nation to underscore the dichotomy between the eulogistic deification of women as a symbolic



signifier of the nation and the actual defilement of the said human signifier as a gendered commodity during the Partition.

Keywords: Partition, Woman's body, Violence, Songs of the Nation.

Introduction: Nationalism, according to Deniz Kandiyoti, involves “a highly fluid and ambivalent field of meanings that can be reactivated, reinterpreted and often reinvented at critical junctures of the histories of nation-states” (Kandiyoti 378). In the project of Indian nationalism, the cartographic demarcation of national boundaries as a factual crystallization of the ideology of patriotism via the construction of the cult of Mother India or Bharat Mata as the gendered somatic/ cartographic metaphor of modern India is an important point of critical study. As the geopolitical connotation of the Indian nation became entrenched in the ideology of motherhood during the colonial period, the symbol of Bharat Mata as a point of reference to Indian nationalism became a hyperreal icon deified as a signifier of the Indian nation. With the foundation of the Bharat Mata temple in 1918 in Varanasi, the abstraction that was the Mother India visualized by Abanindranath Tagore in his painting *Bharatmata* and immortalized by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in his canticle *Bande Mataram*, metamorphosed into a marble sculptural map that not only anticipated the ultimate spiritual devotion to the motherland, but also became a sculptural reality forever linking the Indian nation through the somatic metaphor of the female body. I propose that with the construction of the Bharat Mata temple and with the propagation of the metaphor of the female body of the Hindu nation mother in distress in popular national songs, the simulation that was Mother India, a symbolic “artificial construction” (Bose 22) became something more than spatial reality imagined in female terms. Between early 19th and 20th century, Bharat Mata emerged as a sacred symbol with the “potential to be represented as the mother of all nation” (Gupta 4295) requiring protection and with the gendered identity of the female body directly equating to the metaphorical boundary of the nation, gradually becoming the simulacrum of the female itself reminding one of Jorge Luis Borges short story "On Exactitude in Science" where the mapmakers of a fictional nation beget a map so exact in proportion to the original landscape that the simulation becomes a double of the original and attains a hyperreal existence of its own. The icon of Mother India that was invoked and deified



in national songs like *Bande Mataram* to inspire the sons of the nation eventually became the conduit that occasioned largescale intra-communal and inter-communal psychosomatic violence on women during the Partition. As Bharat Mata transmogrified into Sharifan (Eponymous heroine of Manto's short story "Sharifan"), Sakina (Manto's raped and traumatized protagonist in "Open It") Asifa (the child raped and killed in Kathua,) their bodies became battlegrounds on which the men of the warring communities fought their battles. They became the female cultural symbols of their particular community such that a somatic molestation on their being led to a symbolic castration of the patriarchs of their community who failed in their duty to protect the honour of their women and by extension the honour of their community.

Aim of the Paper

The paper examines and problematizes the deification of the anthropomorphic Bharat Mata in swadeshi songs as a hyperreal representation of the Indian/Hindu nationalism in distress. It reads such representations of Mother India as a "cultural artefact" (Sarkar 21) based on the male fantasy of the feminine. This reading is done against the background of actual acts of violence on the female during the Partition when intercommunal tensions between Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims, and intra-communal tensions within the Hindu community especially revolved around the *honour complex*, a term I use to designate the violent fixation of the men of the contesting communities on the sexuality of the female body. The paper reads heterosexual violence on the female psychosomatics as a contingency linked to the psychological equation of the female body as a gendered icon of a religious community by examining intra-communal and intercommunal violence on women during the Partition imaginatively represented by writers like Saadat Hasan Manto, Rajinder Singh Bedi and others as well as oral history accounts of actual acts of violence witnessed and experienced by women.

The paper makes two important observations: first, by placing the "richness, fecundity, life and dialectic" (Foucault 70) of male voices in national songs against the silence of violated female



voices in the context of India's Partition, the paper underlines the irony of how the female whose body is imaginatively eulogized in one hand in national songs is culturally occluded, raped and molested during the Partition. Second, the paper draws attention to the "tyranny of divinity" (Bose 10) that subalternizes women (victims of Partition violence in this paper) by embedding an insurmountable burden on women as a representation of the idealized matriarch and thereby placing an injunction to their speech furthering trauma.

In their book *Borders and Boundaries*, Ritu and Bhasin show us how communal violence against women during Partition instituted a violence against the patriarchal honour of her community. From the range of violence meted out to women during Partition – "stripping; parading naked; mutilating and disfiguring; tattooing or branding the breasts and genitalia with triumphal slogans; amputating breasts; knifing open the womb; raping' of course, killing fetuses"—they forcefully conclude that "women's sexuality symbolizes 'manhood'; its desecration is a matter of such shame and dishonour that it has to be avenged," (Menon and Bhasin 58).

Methodology

In order to apprehend the dystopic reality of Partition, a transmogrified twist to the nationalistic utopia of freedom from colonialism, the paper would now study two short stories by Saadat Hasan Manto "Sharifan" and "Colder than Ice" that fictionalized the reality of somatic violence on women during Partition and act as imaginative registers illuminating us about the contingencies that exist in gendered appropriation and objectification of bodies of women as metaphors of nationalism, enshrining them as the representative trope of a particular community. This the paper would do by positioning Manto's short works against Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Bande Mataram* to underline the dichotomy between lyrical imagination of womanhood and actual violation of the same womanhood during the Partition, a close corollary of Indian national independence. Next the paper would study Rajinder Singh Bedi's short story "Lajwanti" and Sayeed Mustafa Siraj's short story "India" (Bharatbarsha) vis-à-vis Atul Prasad Sen's hymn to the Indian mother nation "Utho Go Bharata Lakshmi" (Rise, o goddess of India). Finally, the paper would read Gouri Prasanna



Majumdar's Swadeshi song "Maa Go Bhabna Keno" in relation to intra-communal acts of violence within the Hindu community documented in non-fictional accounts to underscore the problematics of the concept of honour and martyrdom and situate them as essential hypothetical binaries imaginatively concocted by patriarchy and emotively represented as ideals in creative renderings like national songs. This section will stress the essential role of female as dependent, passive and disposable in the discourse of nation building and protecting.

I

Reading *Bande Mataram*:

If there is an ultimate paean of topophilia, one that acts as the composite constellation of the national consciousness where the maternal metaphor of Mother India is painted to perfection, that paean is unequivocally Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's *Bande Mataram*. By directing a eulogy to the beautiful bounty and geographical perfection of India, *Bande Mataram* paints Mother India as a glorious deity with a unique cultural history. The vocabulary as well as the imaginative potential of this dramatic master-narrative of nationalism *Bande Mataram* is a glorious invocation to the spirit of patriotism. Speaking of this hymn, the revolutionary thinker Aurobindo Ghosh said in 1907: "It was thirty-two years ago that Bankim wrote his great song and few listened; but in a sudden moment of awakening from long delusions the people of Bengal looked round for the truth and in a fated moment somebody sang *Bande Mataram*. The Mantra had been given..." (Ghosh qtd. in Bose 3) Originally published as a minute filler for an empty page in *Bangadarshan*, *Bande Mataram* was later interleaved into the novel *Anandamath* in 1882. In 1896 Rabindranath Tagore having set it to music sang it publicly at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress. Because of the deeply communal nature of Bankim's *Anandamath* which Nehru thought was "likely to irritate the Muslims" (Qtd in Bose 18) and the triumphal celebration of Hinduism that the song performed the first verse of the song, on the advice of Tagore, was detached from the rest for public performance. The translation of the first verse which Tagore found "appealing" because of the "feelings of devotion and tenderness as well as the evocation of the beauty of Bharatmata" (Bose 19) reads as follows:



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I genuflect before you, Mother
You are the fertile one,
The one laden with nature's bounty,
Your soothing zephyr cool
Rich fields of verdant green
Oh, Mother
Pristine moonlight regale the nocturnal hour
Laced with bough of flowering trees
Dear Mother, your smile so sweet, your speech honeyed smooth
Mother, giver of ease Laughing low and sweet! Mother I kiss thy feet, Speaker sweet and
low! Mother, to thee I bow.
Your benediction, your boon of contentment is what we seek, holy Mother
Seventy million raise their uproarious chant
Twice the number raise their swords in their hands
Who dare condemn you to weakness, mother?
The issuer of might, I bow to you.
Eradicator of the adversary, our Mother! (Translation mine)

In Chattopadhyay's work of eulogizing the Nation as an all-powerful leitmotif of fecundity, a transaction between a utopic perfection of dialect and somatic is created which in turns builds a project of nationalism that "came to include the appropriation of bodies of women as objects on which the desire for nationalism could be brutally inscribed" (Das 68). *Bande Mataram* may have been conceived with the spirit of nationalism, but its linguistic structure and imagery steeped in Hinduism have marked the limitations of its appeal in a secular nationalistic scenario leading to significant ideological contradictions between Hindus and Muslims. This happened in my belief because *Bande Mataram* being an invocation of Durga and Lakshmi, deities' essential to the Hindu cultural diorama, may have sounded as a triumphal panegyric of Hindu communalism to the



minorities especially Muslims who are non-idolaters. Already demeaned and neglected by Hindu majoritarian cultural practices, to the Muslims “the symbol of Bharat Mata ...expressed Hindu nationalism” in songs like *Bande Mataram* alienated the “Muslims further,” (Gupta 4293). Such ideological contradiction on the subject of nationalism and fundamental rights in a postcolonial scenario, led to the “reconfiguration of relationships amongst Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs and the division of India along communal lines” (Menon and Bhasin 109). The reconfiguration of communal relations that Menon and Bhasin talk about took place “in part around the body and being of” the women of all “three communities” who “delineated the relationship between India and Pakistan as they typified the two principal ‘communities’, Hindu and Muslim eternally and irrevocably locked in battle with one another. Each was projected as an essentialized collectivity: Hindustan, land of Hindus, and Pakistan, Muslim homeland, closed to non-Muslims, non-believers. In the classic transposition, the woman’s body became the body of the motherland (Women-as-Nation) violated by the marauding foreigner,” (Menon and Bhasin 109).

“Sharifan”

In “Sharifan” Saadat Hasan Manto represents the grotesque reality of embodying female sexuality within the praxis of patriarchal/communal/national honour. The contingency of violence that such an association leads to is illustrated with utmost horror as the violence committed at a moment of frenzy alchemically results into a hermetically sealed environment of infinite violent acts repeated without cessation. In the story we see Qasim returning home with a bullet wound only to find his wife and his young daughter lying dead. The sight of his dead child’s naked body unhinges him and he goes out on a killing spree that ultimately concludes with his raping the young daughter of a Hindu, an *other* counterpart of his own raped Sharifan.

What is remarkable about the story is that although Manto suggests that the violence perpetrated by Qasim is a result of a “loss of judgment, of a sense of proportion, at a moment of frenzy,” (Pandey 58) the plot demands a reading of the story from the point of view of female sexuality as embodying male honour. Qasim’s discovery of Sharifan’s dead, naked body symbolically castrates him, mutilating his manhood and emasculating his community. The only way left for him to alter



this act of symbolic castration is to rape a Hindu girl, foreclose the *other* community's prospect of reproduction and thereby, retrieve his manhood. In *The Colours of Violence*, the noted Indian psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar talking about the outrage associated with the transgression of a community's moral code says, "the emotional reaction of Muslims to any violation of the community's moral code of conduct is intense and especially violent in cases involving a Muslim woman's sexualized interaction with the Hindu man (*as we see in "Sharifan"*)....To penetrate the Other, whether a woman or another group, is to be superior, powerful and masculine; to be penetrated is inferior, weak and feminine" (Kakar 181). Therefore, the violence between the two religio-ethnic communities of Qasim and Bimla's father, both inflicting violence on the Other community, becomes a struggle "over the assignment of gender, a way of locating the desired male and denigrated female communities," (Kakar 182) Further, as Qasim was operating against the backdrop of Hindu-Muslim rioting, he was definitely seeing his environment through the monocle of depersonalization as individual Hindus became for him homogenized entities belonging to the social category of Hindus. Their personal dispositions lost, in the perpetrator Qasim's eyes all his victims—the Sikh man, the group of Hindu rioters and Bimla—had one social identity, i.e., the *Other* community that emasculated his social identity. Nevertheless, the retrieval of manhood doesn't occur, and therein lies the irony of the story, as Qasim after raping the Hindu girl only realizes that his victim is the equivalent of his own Sharifan. He feels further emasculated on his inability to remove the specified enemy, the Hindu. The dystopic continuation of violence despite the humanistic streak of realization that Qasim displays is affected by Bimla's father leaving the house wailing in a telling manner perhaps to avenge himself for his own symbolic castration. Therefore, "Sharifan" ends with Manto's suggestion that violence never faces a closure, it only repeats itself. Although "Sharifan" dramatizes "the patriarchal ideology that constructed women as male, communal property," (Daiya 80), it also presents the unequivocal argument that communal chauvinism has "a special affinity for male society, and together with the concept of respectability" it legitimizes "the dominance of men over women" (Mosse in Parker, Russo, et al 6).



“Open It”

In Manto’s story “Open It” the idiom of the female body, mutilated and raped, placed within the praxis of patriarchal power dynamics point out that gender and sexuality take on diverse extensions during moments of ethnic cleansing. The story stands out as Manto’s vociferous rejection of the essentialist ideals of nationalism and the sanctification of particular acts of violence like the suicide and murder of one’s female kin during the Partition (the story of Thoa Khalsa) under the honourific rubric of martyrdom. Written against the backdrop of Partition violence, the story displays a modernist “encounter of language and gendered intra-ethnic violence against women during Partition” (Daiya 82). It begins with Sirajuddin regaining consciousness at a refugee camp in Lahore and trying to remember the events on the train in which he had been traveling with his wife and daughter. As fragments of memory flash across his mind, he remembers the “dead body of his wife, her stomach ripped open,” and his frantic escape from the scene of violence with his daughter Sakina. A bulge in Sirajuddin’s pocket reminds him of his daughter’s dupatta that he had stopped to pick up during their run leading to their ultimate separation. The loss of Sakina’s dupatta prefigures the prospect of rape, or a loss of self and community honour that Sirajuddin tries to prevent by retrieving it. The anticipation of such a prospect further deepens the reader’s interest in Manto’s story. It may be noted that by mentioning this incident, Manto does two things, first, he underlines the symbolic hypothecation of women as bearers of national and communal honour and their sexuality as a mark of “manhood” the “desecration” of which is a matter of “shame and dishonour” for the entire community,” (Daiya 79) and secondly, he lays the spadework for the later climax and the denouement of the story. Sirajuddin’s retrieval of the dupatta and the subsequent loss of his daughter in his attempt to do so suggest Manto’s critic of the hollow symbiosis of women and nationhood and further underscores Sirajuddin’s ironic failure to act as vigilant “border guards” who in Rada Ivekovic’s words, ensure the protection of the “vulnerability and seduction of women/borders” (Bagchi 108) a role that is expected of him.

Traumatized at the loss of his daughter, Sirajuddin approaches a band of armed young volunteers at the refugee camp who promise to rescue her. Eventually, we are told that the volunteers do



retrieve Sakina, provide her food, offer her a jacket to cover up and generally act as the benevolent saviours of the utopic Muslim community, the proper “border guards” of her vulnerable sexual/communal honour.

However, the story takes on an unusual turn when the battered body of Sakina, after a long hiatus, shows up on the railway tracks near the refugee camp. She is taken to the camp hospital where her father sees and recognizes her with immense relief. Next we see the doctor examining her prostrate body and directing Sirajuddin to open a window as he does so. His command, however, evokes a strange reaction in his patient. She slowly and painstakingly reaches for her salwar, unfastens the chord and pulls the garment down. The grotesque incident causes the doctor to perspire and convinces Sirajuddin that his daughter is alive, a prospect that makes him shout with joy.

The climax of the story thus presents the ironic reversal of the motif of community honour saved by its own armed vanguards. It suggests an objectification of Sakina’s body as a commodity desired and consumed not by the virulent “others” but by the benefactors, the protectors of her own community. The abjection, the negation of Sakina’s pain of repeated sexual violation by Sirajuddin is eerie too. With the contingency of the loss of community honour gone, her sexual violation at the hands of fellow community members doesn’t perturb him anymore. He doesn’t shun his daughter either as a damaged good, instead he is overjoyed to see her alive. All this is because despite her loss of piety, she hasn’t ushered in community disgrace by allowing her to be defiled by men of the *Other* community and leading to the symbolic castration of her father and her community which would have refused her “entry into the domestic space of the new nation” (Daiya 74) of Pakistan. The honour of the community intact, the symbolic castration we see Qasim encounter in “Sharifan” post his daughter’s rape, is conspicuous by its absence here. As long as Sakina is silent, which the story suggests she would forever be, there is no harm in accepting her into the patriarchal aegis.

Manto’s story dramatizes the disintegration of “the hegemonic rhetorics (sic) of nationalism” (Daiya 84) and represents sexual violence against women as lacking consistency within the discourse of politicized nationalism. Here, violence against women is embedded within the



community and is held in sharp relief by the author. Sakina's violation is a mark of patriarchal objectification of women as sexual commodity consumed like "luscious fruit" (cold meat) for pleasure. Here the men of the inter and intra ethnic communities do not represent themselves as distinct alternative markers of two societies but act as replications of one another inhabiting a section of the world where patriarchal ideology sustains dehumanized commodification of women as sexual object.

Manto's narrative is therefore laden with paradoxes that problematize the myth of nationalism as an ideology he despised.

II

"Lajwanti", "Bharatbarsha" and "Utho go Bharata Lakshmi"

In Rabindranath Tagore's *Ghore Baire* we encounter an illustration of symbiosis between women's sexuality and the grandiose project of nationalism when Sandip, the nationalist revolutionary, expresses a desire of magnifying the pedestrian image of Bimala and deifying her as a goddess. He believes that "unless they can behold the nation with their own eyes, our people will not awaken. The nation needs the icon of the goddess." (Qtd. in Das 72) In Atul Prasad Sen's hymn to Mother India titled "Utho go Bharata Lakshmi" (Rise, o goddess of India) the icon of the nation as the nurturing mother emerges with a splendid glory of femininity. Here, Mother Nation is a benefactor, a healer, and a sacred deified symbol of a sacred space that will be revitalized from its present moribund state of colonial servitude by her sons who vow to bring back the glory of olden days. The translation of the poem reads as:

Rise, o goddess of India,
Rise up, dear goddess, to the beauteous glory of the days of yore
Destroy our pain, destroy our paucity,
Eradicate our shame
Shed your attire of mourning,
Adorn your chamber again with the boon of mellowed



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harvest!

O, Mother, embrace us, wipe our tears,

Behold your children weeping at your feet

There is no helmsman to wield the ship in this Bharatbarsha laced with misery

We are afraid, the turbulent blue surrounding us instils fear

With your calming touch, we are reassured,

With renewed vigour, we shall now sail the ship

To the shores of our promised land

O, Mother, embrace us, wipe our tears,

Behold your children weeping at your feet

Transform the deserted landscape

To a garden rich with birdsong

Trample on our hatred, erase our envy

Make the land resonate the sonorous buzz of humming bees

Expunge our sins, bless our India with the touch of your holiness

Rise, o goddess of India (Translation Mine)

Recognized as the combined emblematic of the sexuality of mothers, wives and daughters, “who designate the space of the nation and are, at the same time, the property of the nation” (Ivekovic and Mostov 11), the icon of the nation as the mother in Atul Prasad’s hymn acts as a national marker and national property “that require[s] the defence and protection of patriotic sons,” (Ivekovic and Mostov 11). Here, the symbol of Bharat the nation as mother “produces an image of the allegorical mother whose offspring are the country’s guardians, heroes and martyrs.” This point of men acting as unequivocal protectors of women’s/national’s honour is problematized by Rajinder Singh Bedi in his short story “Lajwanti” where the abducted, raped, rehabilitated protagonist is invoked as *devi* by her husband to counter her efforts to speak about her experiences of somatic violation. The embargo of forced divinity on Lajwanti transmogrifies her from a voluble human to a mute goddess, the *abala* in Bankim’s *Bande Mataram*. Here, the emphasis on the muteness of Bharat



Mata in national songs must be noted. Lajwanti's anti-verbality stands as a representation of the divine injunction of silence imposed as a criterion necessary for the avoidance of the contingency of symbolic castration of her husband and his community by extension because "National honour: the honour that was staked on the body of Mother India" (Butalia 189) eulogized in national songs ultimately rested on the women and the abduction and rape of those women "represented a violation of their bodies as real— not metaphorical—mothers" (Butalia 189) whom the men of the community had vowed, as the national songs vociferously declare, to protect and had failed in their endeavour. The paper suggest that within the givens of patriarchal social structure, the only way defiled women could be included, accepted and legitimized as members of their community is by precluding any attempt from them to speak and share their experience because "A woman raped and speaking of her shame must accept that she can no longer occupy any available and acceptable social space; she were in fact, better dead" (Bahri 220). This silencing could be done in several ways, Bedi's story shows one such way: that of deifying the woman. Sayeed Mustafa Siraj's short story "India" (Bharatbarsha) acts as a fitting creative-imaginative rebuttal, a surreal subversion of the metaphor of the silent, "saffron-clad ascetic woman, the Mother [who] carried the boons of food, clothing, learning and spiritual salvation in her four hands" (Bose 5) painted by Abanindranath Tagore and Eulogized by Atulprasad and Bankim Chandra in their hymns to the mother nation The story can be read in the context of gendered nationalism as a transaction between utopic and dystopic, wherein the antiphony of creative eulogizing of somatic and moral perfection of womanhood in national songs and the reality of the national matriarch at a human level without the panegyric of divinity forcefully imposed on her reconstitutes a world where the subaltern mother brutally proscribes any objectification.

III

On 15th of April, 1947, The Statesman, a leading English daily, reported an incident of mass suicide in the Thoa Khalsa region in the Rawalpindi district. The incident was reported in the following manner:



The story of 90 women of the little village of Thoa Khalsa, Rawalpindi district ... who drowned themselves by jumping into a well during the recent disturbances has stirred the imagination of the people of Punjab. They revived the Rajput tradition of self-immolation when their menfolk were no longer able to defend them. They also followed Mr. Gandhi's advice to Indian women that in certain circumstances, even suicide was morally preferable to submission... Ninety women jumped into the small well. Only three were saved: there was not enough water to drown them all.

This grotesque incident of mass suicide was one of many incidents of intra-communal violence that are hardly reported being laced in the rhetoric of martyrdom. The reference to the Rajput tradition of self-immolation, a leitmotif of Indian cultural history, in *The Statesman* report actively equates the stimulus behind this incident of mass suicide during the Partition with synonymous incidents of extreme "sacrifice" (Butalia 209) by self-immolation by Rajput women when their menfolk failed to "protect" them. The Rajput festival of "Jauhar Mela" annually held in Chittorgarh, Rajasthan, still commemorates the spirit this martyrdom exhorting women to "remember the sacrifice and bravery of their sisters and to cast themselves in the same mould" (Butalia 209) Although the two incidents mentioned above are not synonymous in anyway, the fact that the newspaper report considered them analogous and even Gandhi acquiesced and advised to such an act of self-immolation "under certain circumstances" lead us to the conclusion the "rape and violation of women becomes symbolically significant in nationalist discourse and the politics of national identity as a violation of the nation and an act against the collective men of the enemy nation" (Ivekovic and Mostov 11). It is the actual or imagined fear of this rape and molestation that begets the anxiety of symbolical castration in the men and their community by extension such that to avoid that contingency, the sexuality of women needs to be controlled even if that control means somatic "sacrifice" of "daughters" by making "them martyrs" (from the oral history account of Bir Bahadur Singh talking of Sant Raja Singh who martyred his daughter; Butalia 206). The dilution of the female agency by thrusting acts of intra-communal violence under the rubric of martyrdom performs the tyranny of divination mentioned earlier in the paper robbing women of their voice, individuality and forever hypothecating victimhood from women, the vertical feminine signifier



/communal/patriarchal honour, to men as suggested by Bir Bahadur Singh's reiteration to Butalia on the sacrifice of his father, who was forced to kill his daughter: "A father who kills his daughter, how much of a victim, how helpless he must be..." (Butalia 212)

Basant Kaur, who was one of the survivors of the Thoa Khalsa drowning and was the mother of Bir Bahadur Singh quoted above, was interviewed by Urvashi Butalia and in that interview she said that "I was frightened. Of course, I was, but there was also...we were also frightened that we would be taken away by Musalmans" (Butalia 200) proving that the ideology of community honour and its untainted upholding was so important for men that for its sake even a violent disposal of a somatic being directly by honour-killing or indirectly by indoctrinating women in the vocabulary of patriarchal honour to such an extent that they take their lives and in the process corroborate the ideology that "Should the *quam*, the race, the *dharam*, the religion ever be in danger," it is the duty of women to offer "themselves up to death to save their religion" (Butalia 209) becomes an imperative, not an option when men "the natural protectors" by the "reckoning" that the "honour" of a "community lay in 'protecting' its women from the patriarchal violence of an alien community" fail to perform their duty (Butalia 213). National song *Maa go bhabna keno* (Why do you worry, mother?" and *Bharat Amar Bharatbarsha* (India, my India) and *Aye Mere Pyare Watan* are three instances in which the nation imagined as mother is represented as "passive, receptive and vulnerable" (Ivekovic and Mostov 11).

All three of the aforementioned national songs are steeped in gendered nationalism and consciously uphold the "Practices of nation-building" that "employ social constructions of masculinity and femininity and support a division of labour in which women reproduce the nation physically and symbolically and men protect, defend and avenge the nation," (Ivekovic and Mostov 11). The first song "Maa Go Bhabna Keno" sung by the noted Bengali singer Hemanta Mukherjee is one of the patriotic songs that enjoys popularity among the Bengali populace.

The English translation of the lyrics of the original song composed by Gouri Prasanna Majumdar reads as follows:



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Dear Mother, Why do you worry
We are your peace-loving sons
Still, we know how to pick up arms against enemies
Fear not, mother, we know how to protest

We will not be defeated
We will not relinquish one iota of your land
We know how to build fortresses with the bones of our ribs
Fear not, mother, we know how to protest

We will not accept defeat
We will not survive as your weak children
We know how to die laughing
Fear not, mother, we know how to protest

We will not accept humiliation
We will not be cornered like the scared
We know how to steal thunder from the sky
Fear not, mother, we know how to protest.

(Translation mine)

A study of the lyrics of this poem suggests a group solidarity among the patriarchs of the nation, the sons of mother India, who are forever conscious of the sexual and topographical dangers that surround their mother and forcefully affirm their roles as protectors of their matriarchal topographical/sexual space if the contingency of enemy attack is conspicuous in the vicinity. According to the poem the genealogy of male off springs of Bharat Mata may seem non-violent, but



if their mother was to face the threat of physical or symbolical molestation, which in turn means figurative castration for her sons, they would readily take up arms to reconfigure the shifting paradigm of power and install the enemy to the gallows of oblivion.

Conclusion

The paper has examined and problematized the deification of Bharat Mata in swadeshi songs as a hyperreal representation of the Indian/Hindu nationalism. It has read Bharatmata as a metaphor of Indian/Hindu nationalism fashioned after the male fantasy of the feminine as a symbol that legitimizes male-controlled social ordering and violence on women. This reading has been done against the background of actual acts of violence on the female body during the Partition. The paper has read creative imaginative works by Saadat Hasan Manto, Rajinder Singh Bedi and others as well as non-fictional accounts of violence on women as theoretical moorings for the critical study that is the aim of the paper.

The instrumentalization of the ideology of protection as a given in nationalist discourse represents the larger patriarchal concern of regulating women's sexuality and ascribing roles to women that construct a social order where gendered division of labour is evident with women acting as the reproducer, the essential homemaker, the one who manages the *ghor* and men taking the world outside and acting as the protector of the home, the sanctified sacred space. The usage of such gendered icons of motherhood, essentially disembodied and imaginary, in the evocation of patriotic/national emotion is a project laden with dichotomy. For such gendered representation of metaphorical nationalism reinforces the danger of psychosomatic violence on women during moments of war, social strife. What the reading of the nationalist song vis a vis fictional and non-fictional accounts of psychosomatic violence on women has suggested is that "Motherland" is essentially a submissive, amenable and susceptible concept, a gendered equivalence of the ideal female that men have constructed as a sacred symbol of the nation to highlight the emotional appeal of women/nation in distress under communal rule and inspire men, the natural protectors of the women/nation to rise up to the duty of serving the nation.



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