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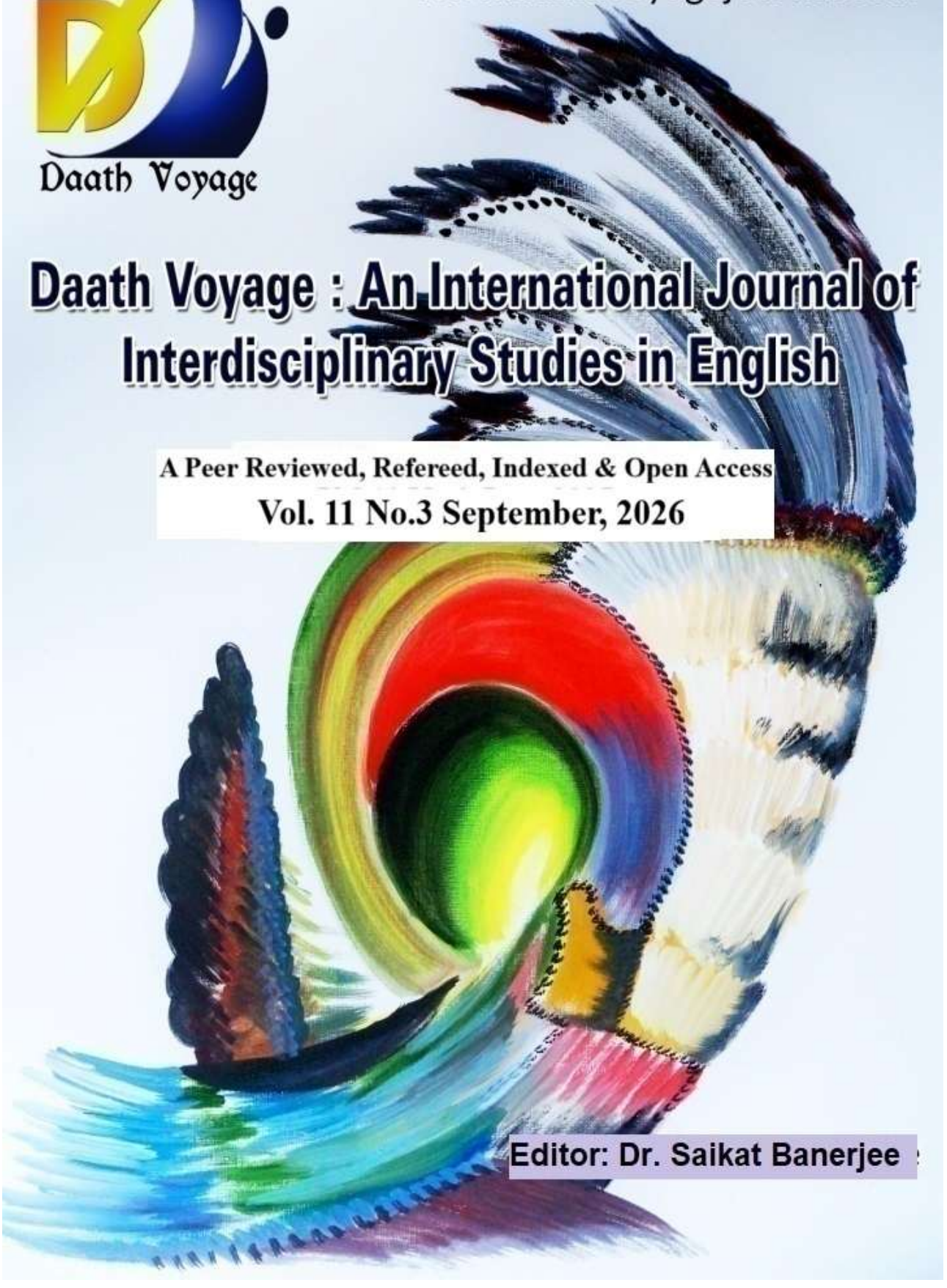

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The Unsung Motherhood of Kusum Bagdi and her Love for Motherland

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Abstract: Indian freedom struggle has always been an attractive site for literary works since pre independence. The colonial era is marked by continuous resistance from natives and incessant subjugation from colonizers. It is also a noticeable fact in the previous researches, that there is exclusion in the participation lists of the freedom fighters from the backward class. The struggle saga was comprehensively dealing with upper caste people's sacrifices. The emergence of Dalit doctrines shaped the historicity as well and hence, the forum of the Dalit struggle for their participation and contribution in the formation and culmination in spirit nationalism revisited. Later, the unheard Dalit women from various parts of India were acknowledged and identified with the same veneration with the upper caste women. As in the case of Rani Lakshmibai's companion Jhalkari Bai, was taken into consideration, due to this new approach of reinterpretation of history. Finding all these qualitative analysis and placing them together, to demonstrate the motherhood; this research paper enquires about a mother from backward class who walked for nation's sake and it is also an attempt to identify the nature of love towards the motherland. This paper exclusively brings forth the unrequited sacrifice of a mother from backward class who moves to jail leaving behind her lactating son. The discourse of motherhood is at present age, extremely vast and extensively researched. The struggle for independence in India, from women's participation has already been addressed. Though, the nation which is symbolized as a mother figure is not perceived from the sight of a

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Dalit mother. Therefore, this paper will measure the impact and intensity of love for motherland from the heart of an unknown mother.

Key Words: Dalit, freedom fighters, independence, motherhood, motherland

Introduction

It was in the year 1992, when *Dainik Bhaskar,* a journal from Uttar Pradesh points out the in an article "Narratives that never surfaced" argues that

> …while the contribution of men (in the public sphere) were 'recorded' and celebrated, there is no such mention of the women in the households, who stood as pillars of support for 'their husbands' throughout the movement. In the decades after Independence, newspapers and vernacular literature published the reminiscences of women's domestic nationalist activities. These articles referred to ordinary middle-class women, whose nationalist contributions, primarily in the domestic sphere, have been inadequately acknowledged in Indian nationalist historiography. (Thapar - Björkert 170).

Therefore, with this news paper article one incident was crystal clear that the previous narratives of freedom struggle were devoid of women. *Women in the Indian National Movement: Unseen Faces and Unheard Voices*, this book points out the presence of women in Indian freedom struggle on the basis of regional ground. The fifth chapter of this book 'Politicization of Domestic Sphere' deals with how women from the Hindi speaking belt to purdah culture; middle class *bhadromohila* sets the discourse of nationalism in women. This particular research paper formulates the two intersecting agendas with Indian nationalism; suggestively this paper enables the predicament of a woman who is also a mother. Motherhood, in India is seen from the perception of Vedic times; whereas contemporary literary theories avails motherhood as multifaceted. Indian freedom history sets the fervor of nationalism from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Anandamath,*nation as mother. This ideology of looking at nation with the eyes of child and seeking Mother Nature's unconditional love; was a cult in pre and postcolonial India. However, the biological mothers involvement towards nation was not considering at per say. The great Rani Lakshmi Bai memorized for her valour and also maternity; whereas, there are no other women than few who are visible in the pages of history for their visibility. The purpose of this writing is to define the nature of patriotism in mother from backward class and to measure the sacrifice and humiliation on the mother who is drenched in nationalist spirit and mothering instinct.

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Discussion

Traditionally, a patriot if a male then his life history becomes incomplete if his contribution of his mother remains untold. That is to say, conventionally a mother is always venerated and in this context it is acknowledged that it is the mother who is the primary source for the birth of a patriot. On the contrary if it is the mother who is originator of nationalism then why the ideology of nationalist cult from her view point remain unseen. So, the primary objective is to draw a definite discourse of motherhood from an identity of a mother. This framework allows considering a biological mother's struggle in supporting national resistance.

Woman's participation in India's freedom struggle started as ahead of schedule as in 1817. Bhima Bai Holkar battled intrepidly against the British Colonel Malcolm and vanquished him in guerrilla warfare. Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi whose bravery and brilliant leadership laid on remarkable case of genuine patriotism. Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi , Vijay Lakshmi savant, Annie Besant and so on in the twentieth century are the names which are recalled even today for their particular contribution in the freedom struggle of India.(Ganie and Sisodia 19)

On the basis of region, the women who were participated in national struggle against colonialism were categorically enlisted in various archives. What is most astonishing is the study behind the revisiting the data with the lens of immensely raise certain questions; one of them is absence of marginal's and profoundly women. From this envision, my argument is to focus on another challenge that is to confront a backward class mother moves for mother nation. This is a dual existence of a woman with motherhood expresses her love towards the country.

The freedom struggle included many pivotal movements which then collectively led to an Independent India. Such movements had included people from all over the country, which could help in uniting everyone in the struggle. One such movement was the Civil Disobedience Movement which brought people together from all parts of the country. There are some women leaders who took part in the various freedom movements. When we talk about the women freedom fighters in Purba Midnapur district Kusum Bagdi stands out. Kusum Bagdi became involved in the freedom struggle from an early age. She was particularly active during the Civil Disobedience Movement called by Mahatma Gandhi, and was even arrested in 1932 for her political activism. She is known to have left her newly born infant back home when she was jailed. Kusum refused to sign a bond that would reunite with her infant and at the same time

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would free her from jail as well. Instead, she chose to stay back in jail as a way of protesting against the British and not willing to give up. Her actions spoke louder than anything else and showed the sacrifices that she made for the country. (Kusum Bagdi)

It is this particular nationalist construction of reform as a project of both emancipation and self-emancipation of women (and hence a project in which both men and women had to participate) that also explains why the early generation of educated women themselves so keenly propagated the nationalist idea of the "new woman." (Chatterjee 129)

The above lines explicitly conjures that the upper middle class women is touched with new education and learning whereas, the absence of lower class women indicates their exclusion, indirectly. If that is the mainstream narrative of nationalism of women of Bengal only examined on upper class, then it confirms that a woman of lower class background does not carry the identical ideology of nationalism. It is different in expression and absorption. The present case of Kusum Bagdi is such an instance that is remained unseen for a long time. Becomes more evident when the companion Jhalkari Bai taken into consideration with Rani Laksmi Bai. Even though, there is a no reliable source about her motherhood despite of her marital status.

Comparatively, the unsung saga allows this work to delve deep into the biology of women and hence it captures the woman, Kusum who is a mother and her imprisonment leaving the infant has to be discussed with multiple dimensions. This paper renders the psyche of a mother who loves her nation so deep that she chooses the jail in front of her son. Interestingly, the life of Kusum is very similar to any other backward class women of Bengal moreover; the struggle behind her motherhood is somehow different. The basic dissimilarity appeared while she bore the seventh male child after six daughters, despite of the fact that a male heir in Indian family is much desirable than a girl child; Kusum Bagdi never deterred to compromise the love for nation. Another diverse element is visible is her humiliated motherhood. The state of humiliation is an emotional state where one feels belittle. It is an experience, which identify someone to be an inferior. Most importantly, the mental state of humiliation only to be felt when someone is intentionally dragging down. On these two levels of comprehension the notion of motherhood is dissimilar from traditional motherhood.

Humiliation in Kusum Bagdi is very subtle and less visible in the history of freedom struggle. It is also very notable that contemporary narration allows reinterpretation of grand narratives. This happened

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to decode all those invisible and inaudible dimensions to rediscover and thus the much unseen trajectory of unseen humiliated motherhood can be traced in the case study of Kusum Bagdi. From the digital repository of government of India, the incident of motherhood of Kusum is described in few words, which she was told to sign a bond for release. This event indirectly somewhere hints humiliation to her and that is how though she was suffered to be remain separated from her new born but disagreed to sign. This proposal was offered because whenever her son brought to the jail she started crying. This incident led to define her nationalism was little secondary compared her status of mother.

The split self of Kusum Bagdi is also one dimension for exploration. She is burdened with her double consciousness while in jail. Her companions persuades for signing the contract in prison, directly enforces that she is acknowledged as a less committed patriot who is vulnerable to motherhood. In this respect, the identity formation of Kusum as an individual cannot be consolidated in a single shade. It forms under a spectrum, and therefore she fluctuates between the two fundamentals of her being. Motherhood in India a gateway of completeness of any women on the other hand, the love for nation in colonial period was overwhelming. The impact of nationalism and the obligation of a mother do not run parallel, rather contrary. Denying any one of the above seemed unethical to choose.

The case of Kusum Bagdi allows this paper to investigate the state of intersection of the two forms of love. She is a freedom fighter, who whole heartedly involved in Civil Disobedience Movement from Bengal with Gandhi's ideology and a mother. Love for her children and the duty behind her role as a mother collided when she attempted to express the equal amount of love for her nation. Mathematically, intersection is a phenomenon when two straight lines share precisely at least one similar point. Hence, in this condition love is that emotion which overpowers Kusum. She loves her mother nation and also loves her children. It is very difficult to prefer one to other. Negotiation is the position of her existence which turned her personality into a diverse trance of living.

During the Civil Disobedience Movement at many places of Midnapore salt law was violated by women. Even the women gave prior notice to the British Government for meeting at different places of the district. One example may be cited here. On the 4th April, 1932, Sukhadamayee Roychowdhury gave prior notice to the District Magistrate is as follows: To,

The Hon'ble District Magistrate,

Midnapore

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Sir,

Two emergency ordinance had been issued to me. India is not a free country. The British Government has been rendering oppression on Indian people…I shall deliver lecture in a public meeting on 4th April 1932…on the occasion of Gandhi Diwas.

Yours faithfully

Sd/ - Sukhadamayee Roychowdhury

A few names of women –workers who took active part during the Civil Disobedience Movement may be mentioned here

Civil Disobedience Movement District

1. Charusila Jana….

7.Kusum Bagdi (Mishra 49-51).

Struggle of colonial India can be viewed from variegated slides of comprehension; a new approach for rendering is availing a novel insight. A very limited source of Kusum Bagdi is visible in digital repository. Though, with close reading of archives and application of emerging theory shapes her history in a different shade. The emergence of Dalit doctrines shaped the historicity as well and hence, the forum of the Dalit struggle for their participation and contribution in the formation and culmination in spirit nationalism revisited. Later, the unheard Dalit women from various parts of India were acknowledged and identified with the same veneration with the upper caste women. Her life can be read with a literal reading being a mother of multiple children and also a mother who turns her love into a new definition.

The identity of an Indian mother is preoccupied with ancient sacred testimonials which fundamentally place a mother to the highest summit. The process of child bearing and rearing from its very conception has been tracked in Upanishads. To bear a best progeny and avoid any anomalies all are directed in the ancient scriptures. Even the preference of male heir is also been discussed with an intense knowledge system. The ideation of motherhood is seen through the divine motherhood that demands an unconditional love. With due course of time, the discourse of motherhood is challenged and interrogated from West to East. Mainstream literature is now visible with the absence of marginal texts. Therefore, the grand narratives are under speculation so with this research paper. Kusum Bagdi, a woman from Midnapore in West Bengal also belonged to backward class as per her surname. She is a woman of extreme patriotic fervor and passionately moved by Gandhi's movement for freedom. She was jailed when she

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becomes mother of the seventh boy child. Leaving her son at home she chose jail. The ten month male child was less prioritized in front of the motherland.

The Indian society has always been marked with patriarchy and hence a mother is idealized when she gives birth to a male child. Even, Upanishadas are also told for the possible approach for the procurement of a male child. The status of motherhood completes her identity of a woman. While looking at Kusum Bagdi one can feel that it is so difficult to perform nationalism and forgetting the role of a mother. This where, this paper explores the possible question of role of a mother whose identity cannot be consolidated with a single nomenclature. Here, Kusum is profusely identified herself a human being who loves her nation. Moreover, her role of mother and a mother's duty towards her mother nation splits herself. She becomes dual, in her existence. The sense of patriotism and the completeness of bearing a male child shaped her psyche with a double consciousness. She fluctuates at times, but not overpowered with her motherly instinct.

In most of the cases of duality, there is a sense of humiliation runs in every human being. The incident of accepting jail over her son was an excruciating situation and the moment she cried when her son brought she faced hostile remarks for weeping for her son. It was certainly a mark of humiliation from her mates because of her vulnerability. The jail authority was told that she can get her child on a special bond. However, she was denied the option for the sake of Gandhiji's admiration of nationalism.

Lactation is a very significant milestone in the process of motherhood. In the case of Kusum Bagdi, enables this phase of mothering with a different vision. Leaving a lactating child is another mode of resistance that is visible in this situation. The child used to bring with her father for feeding and for that point of time being a mother she failed to refuse though also stuck to remain in jail; shows a deep psychological turbulence in the passage of motherhood. Lactating mother suffers deeply from the stigma of breast feeding. Being a lactating mother, who is participating in freedom struggle, opens a new dynamics of examination.

Conclusion

There is a long list of women unsung heroes of freedom struggle, but very few know a name that represents a mother's sacrifice of her son in the name of nation. Kusum Bagdi, a name that is enrolled in the state of West Bengal in the district East Mednipore archival document mere a testimony of participants in Civil Disobedience. It is also notified that she was left her ten month child and chose jail. However,

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this action her identity in reinterpretation which finds that how a mother looks at nation and what means nationalism to her. It is also evident that a great history appears to the watchers that the struggle and sacrifices for motherland is immeasurable. Moreover, the nation which is identified as a mother additionally shaped nationalism with a richer flavor. Nevertheless, the contribution of mothers to motherland is also a domain of exploration. In this paper, one tries to attempt the dissection of a maternal psyche with an intersection of nationalism. The spirit of motherland in a mother is profoundly visible in performing the research though, received lesser acknowledgement. The identity formation of a mother is deeply reshaped with the amalgamation of the love for motherland, is a juncture of negotiation which for a time fluctuated but Kusum Bagdi's contribution can be placed with any freedom fighter of gender or class.

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