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Concept of ‘*Bharata Mata*’ has its roots in Atharvaveda

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Abstract

A review of Indian literature, religion, and culture reveals that the concept of Bharat Mata is deeply ingrained in Indian culture, notwithstanding the claims of certain scholars and writers. The goddess tradition started spreading throughout Bengal, coinciding with it coming under Mughal and then British rule. Bharat Mata or Mother India is a name that evokes a deeply emotional veneration in almost all Indians. Often portrayed carrying the national flag and riding a lion, she is to most Indians, a goddess in her own right. In the Caturvedas, the references of Prthivi and Bhumi are presently and well described, but in this article it is confined to the references extracted from the Atharvaveda. It is also included with some vibrant thoughts of few patriots.

Discussion

“What is a nation? What is our mother-country? It is not a piece of earth, or a figure of speech, nor a fiction of the mind. It is a mighty Shakti, composed of the Shaktis of all the millions of units that make up the nation, just as Bhavani Mahisha Mardini sprang into being from the Shaktis of all the millions of gods assembled in one mass of force and welded into unity. The Shakti we call India, ‘Bhavani Bharati’, is the living unity of the Shaktis of three hundred million people ...”

— Sri Aurobindo (Bhawāni Mandir)

It was during invasion and domination of Mughal then British that fires of liberation were stoked through Sakti-Puja. Bengal was entirely under brutal British clutches that led to famines and mass starvation deaths. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee authored Ananda Matha that ignited sparks of Sannyasi rebellion. Those rebels of freedom were dubbed ‘Thugs’ and ‘Dacoits’ by British occupiers of Bengal and their Kali Mandira-s are still known as

‘Dakatiya Kali’ or ‘Thagadia Kali’ by the rural populace. Sannyasi rebellion witnessed emergence of Ma Kali as the divine inspiration and unifying Sakti for all rebels including Muslims. They usually undertook their operations under cover of darkness during Krsna-Paksa after worshipping Her in their Mandira-s. Muslim rebels too, followed the tradition as a mark of amalgamation of Sannyasi and Fakir Traditions. Majnu Shah of Birbhum in Bengal was active in this approach of resolving Hindu Muslim differences. British occupiers distorted the entire narrative, dubbed them ‘Thugs’ and worshippers of Kali, an evil religion that motivated them to waylay and strangulate travellers. British even went to the extent of sending decapitated ‘Thug’ heads to Edinburgh where so-called British doctors used to conduct ‘Phrenology’ studies and conclude those ‘Thug’ skulls as “representative examples of normal Hindoo type” of the “apathetic, weak and lazy

Hindoo” obsessed with “natural inclination for the work of death”. All these used to be widely reported in British newspapers. Distorian (prejudiced historian who distorts) Kim Wagner of the University Of Edinburgh ‘discovered’ that Bhagavat Purana established Ma Kali patronising a ‘band of thieves’ as most of the ‘Thugs’ captured, tortured and executed by those British brutes, referred to Devi Bhavani as their deity, also Kula-Devi of Marathas and Rajputs.

East India Company had to encounter first episode of the War of Freedom in 1857 and adoration of Devi Bhavani / Kali exerted a significant role in triggering the uprising in addition to interconnecting multiple communities. British occupiers discovered a poetic invocation of Devi Kali in possession of one Gond King Shamkar alongwith his son after he was blown away tied at canon’s mouth addressing her as ‘Mata Chandi / Mata Kali’ praying Her to ‘listen to entreaties of hapless poor, act immediately and slay British brutes, protect Shamkar and all Her disciples’. Whenever oppressive regime transcended confines of civility into excessive brutality, emphasis on Sakti-Puja rose to unprecedented levels in manifests of Bhavani- or Kali-Puja as well as ‘Candi di Var’ of Guru Govinda Singhji. Dacoity, in spite of being a criminal offence, came out to be regarded as a rebellion against oppressive British regime, State neglect of natural calamities, plunder and devastation of natural resources. So explicit was James Ker, PA to Director of Criminal Intelligence (1907-1913) when he remarked on Devi-Sakti, “Her lion or tiger is labeled ‘Bahiskar’ (Boycott) and is attacking the bovine monster labeled ‘Pardeshi Vyapar’ (Foreign Trade), on whose back the goddess

has placed her foot after, apparently, cutting off its head. The demon near the severed head of the monster is labeled ‘Vilayati Mal’ (English Goods) and is being bitten in the arm by a snake called ‘Swabhimani’ (Pride of Self), which is held in one of the hands of the heroine, while the same demon’s head has been injured by the knife labeled ‘Svavalamban’ (Self-Independence). The demon being held by the hair is labeled ‘Desa-Droha’ (Disloyalty to Country) ... the hand which holds his hair is labeled ‘Desa-Seva’ (Service of Country).” Thus, She is fierce and benign manifests both simultaneously even as battle prepared essence of *Bharata Ma*. Abject poverty, lack of governance, heaps of miseries compelled people to resort to armed revolt against brutal regime of the day.

The concept of *Bharata Ma* does have roots emanating from *Bhumi-Sukta* of *Atharvaveda* (12th Kanda) wherein the Planet Earth is declared as ‘Queen of all’, deified, sanctified and venerated. In this Sukta, there are 18 mantras/liturgies. These mantras with meaning are provided here below:

सत्यं बृहदृतमुग्रं दीक्षा तपो ब्रह्म यज्ञः पृथिवीं
धारयन्ति ।

सा नो भूतस्य भव्यस्य पत्न्युरुं लोकं पृथिवी नः
कृणोतु ॥१॥

Ardent pursuits of Satya i.e. ultimate reality, Rta i.e. infinite divinity, Diksa i.e. initiations into Adhyatma, Tapa i.e. asceticism and Yajna i.e. offering oblations into sacred fire, all undertaken to realise Param Brahmatma, have sustained the earth. Consorting past and future, may She expand our entire existence devoid of confines unto infinity.

असंबाधं बध्यतो मानवानां यस्या उद्धतः प्रवतः
समं बहु ।

नानावीर्या ओषधीर्या बिभर्ति पृथिवी नः प्रथतां
राध्यतां नः ॥२॥

She extends uninterrupted, unrestricted freedom over Her multiple mountains, descents and prairies to humanity. She bears the boon of medicinal herbs of varying efficacies for us be benefited.

यस्यां समुद्र उत सिन्धुरापो यस्यामन्नं कृष्टयः सं
बभूवुः ।

यस्यामिदं जिन्वति प्राणदेजत्सा नो भूमिः पूर्वपे
ये दधातु ॥३॥

In Her being are intertwined all rivers and oceans, in Her being is contained food that She extends when harvested. Being abode of all lives in her being, may earth bless us with that life.

यस्याश्चतस्रः प्रदिशः पृथिव्या यस्यामन्नं कृष्टयः
संबभूवुः ।

या बिभर्ति बहुधा प्राणदेजत्सा नो भूमिर्गोष्वप्य
न्ने दधातु ॥४॥

Being abode of four *Disa*-s, earth is repository of grains that manifest when harvested. Being abode of various manifests of life that she sustains in her, may She bless us the ray of life existing in grains.

यस्यां पूर्वे पूर्वजना विचक्रिरे यस्यां देवा असुरा
नभ्यवर्तयन् ।

गवामश्वानां वयसश्च विष्टा भगं वर्चः पृथिवी नो
दधातु ॥५॥

In Her being She sustained our ancestors, enabled them to enact their *Karma*-s of yore. In Her being She sustained virtuous *Deva*-s overthrow felonious *Asura*-s of yore. In Her being She sustained cows, horses, birds and

other manifests of life of yore that flourished. May the earth bless us prosperity, glory and splendour.

विश्वंभरा वसुधानी प्रतिष्ठा हिरण्यवक्षा जगतो
निवेशनी ।

वैश्वानरं बिभ्रती भूमिरग्निमिन्द्रऋषभा द्रविणे नो
दधातु ॥६॥

She is universal mother, originator of wealth, foundation to dwell upon, endowed with golden bosom, She is abode of the world. She holds in Her being Universal *Agni* that invigorates *Indra* and *Risabha*. May She bless us that glory and tenacity.

यां रक्षन्त्यस्वप्रा विश्वदानीं देवा भूमिं पृथिवीमप्र
मादम् ।

सा नो मधु प्रियं दुहामथो उक्षतु वर्चसा ॥७॥

Whom *Deva*-s guard so vigilantly even without going into slumber, She is all benediction for all. May She generate the gratifying ambrosia for us to impart that ethereal resplendence.

यार्णवेऽधि सलिलमग्र आसीद्यां मायाभिरन्वचर
न्मनीषिणः ।

यस्या हृदयं परमे व्योमन्त्सत्येनावृतममृतं पृथि
व्याः ।

सा नो भूमिस्त्विषिं बलं राष्ट्रे दधातूत्तमे ॥८॥

Seated higher than ocean or meditating immersed in it's enormous expanse, *Manisi*-s pursued Her by the dint of their extra-ordinary faculties. Her bosom dwells in the highest domain of *Satya* i.e. truth and *Amrit* i.e. immortality. May Earth bestow Her glory, vigour and grandeur upon us and our Kingdom.

यस्यामापः परिचराः समानीरहोरात्रे अप्रमादं क्ष
रन्ति ।

सा नो भूमिर्भूरिधारा पयो दुहामथो उक्षतु वर्च
सा ॥९॥

Within Her being, entire expanse of water flows all over incessantly with diligence and tranquillity underneath. May the Earth grant us milk gushing out of multiple plenteous streams and bedew us with Her grandeur.

यामश्विनावमिमातां विष्णुर्यस्यां विचक्रमे ।
इन्द्रो यां चक्र आत्मनेऽनमित्रां शचीपतिः ।
सा नो भूमिर्वि सृजतां माता पुत्राय मे पयः
॥१०॥

Her *Aswinas* have appropriately measured her entire being out with their medicinal and curative endowments. *Saci-Pati Indra* rendered Her completely bereft of foes like a mother for Her progeny. May She ever spring forth her milk with forbearance and magnanimity.

गिरयस्ते पर्वता हिमवन्तोऽरण्यं ते पृथिवि स्योन
मस्तु ।

बभ्रुं कृष्णां रोहिणीं विश्वरूपां ध्रुवां भूमिं पृथिवी
मिन्द्रगुप्तम् ।

अजीतेऽहतो अक्षतोऽध्यष्ठां पृथिवीमहम् ॥११॥

O *Prthvi* ! May your hills, snow-laden mountains and jungles exhilarate all! Your multihued manifests in reddish brown, intense blue and red albeit resolute like *Dhruva*, are guarded by *Indra*. On Her invincible, unravaged and inexhaustible being of *Prthvi*, do I stand resolutely!

यत्ते मध्यं पृथिवि यच्च नभ्यं यास्त ऊर्जस्तन्वः
संबभूवुः ।

तासु नो धेह्यभि नः पवस्व माता भूमिः पुत्रो अ

हं पृथिव्याः ।

पर्जन्यः पिता स उ नः पिपर्तु ॥१२॥

Within Your being is Your navel emitting vigour and vitality manifesting all around. May we be vested in that and be consecrated O *Bhumi Ma* as I am son of *Prthvi. Parjanya* is my father and may he bless us with that.

यस्यां वेदिं परिगृह्णन्ति भूम्यां यस्यां यज्ञं तन्वते
विश्वकर्माणः ।

यस्यां मीयन्ते स्वरवः पृथिव्यामूर्ध्वाः शुक्रा आहु
त्याः पुरस्तात् ।

सा नो भूमिर्वर्धयद्बर्धमाना ॥१३॥

Her entire being is *Yajna-Vedi*, an abode all activities that are solemnised within as manifests of *Yajna* as well as all proceeds accepted by Her. Entire *Spandana* emanating from *Yajna-s* by recitation of *Mantra-s* rises to consecrate all around. May *Bhumi* provide a dimension for us to expand our *Cetana* and prosperity!

यो नो द्वेषत्पृथिवी यः पृतन्याद्योऽभिदासान्मन
सा यो वधेन ।

तं नो भूमे रन्धय पूर्वकृत्वरि ॥१४॥

O *Bhumi* ! Vanquish all those inimical to us in various ways as You have been in past.

त्वज्जातास्त्वयि चरन्ति मर्त्यास्त्वं बिभर्षि द्विपद
स्त्वं चतुष्पदः ।

तवेमे पृथिवि पञ्च मानवा येभ्यो ज्योतिरमृतं म
र्त्येभ्य उद्यन्त्सूर्यो रश्मिभिरातनोति ॥१५॥

All the bipeds and the quadrupeds, born to You and moving about, dwell in the abode of mortality within Your being. Fifth is man in *Prthivi* bearing effulgence of immortality just as orb of rising sun engulfs earth, abode of mortality!

ता नः प्रजाः सं दुहतां समग्रा वाचो मधु पृथि
वी धेहि मह्यम् ॥१६॥

May we all Your dwellers
derive *Rtm* prevailing in You by assimilating
enormously mellifluous orations and
recitations.

विश्वस्वं मातरमोषधीनां ध्रुवां भूमिं पृथिवीं धर्म
णा धृताम् ।

शिवां स्योनामनु चरेम विश्वहा ॥१७॥

Bhumi of *Prthivi*, held resolutely by *Dharma*,
allows herbs to germinate for us, medicinal
and nutritional to sustain us like mother. And
the earnestness pervades all around the
universe like *Siva*.

महत्सधस्थं महती बभूविथ महान्वेग एजथुर्वेपथु
ष्टे ।

महांस्त्वेन्द्रो रक्षत्यप्रमादम् ।

सा नो भूमे प्र रोचय हिरण्यस्येव संदृशि मा नो
द्विक्षत कश्चन ॥१८॥

Magnificent is our dwelling abode governed
by mighty forces restraining Her terrific
resonance and reverberations. Glorious
is *Indra* protecting Her so vigilantly.
May *Bhumi* consecrate us gleaming like gold
devoid of malice or rancour towards anyone!

Patriots

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee manifested
the concept and rendered it accessible in folk
language through his legendary
masterpiece *Ananda Math* and the song *Vande
Mataram* therein, precisely
what *Goswami Tulasidas* did to *Valmiki
Ramayana* by creating *Ram Caritra
Manas* that could reach every household. Art
historian *Vidya Dahejia* said in so explicitly,
“Since the land itself is spoken of in Sanskrit
as *Prithvi* or *Devi Dharati Ma*, it is perhaps not

surprising that kingdoms, cities, districts, and
boroughs are gendered feminine. India is
Bharat Mata or *Mother India*.” So said *Swami
Vivekananda*, so prophetically, “I do not see
into the future; nor do I care to see. But one
vision I see dear as life before me: that the
ancient *Mother* has awakened once more,
sitting on Her throne rejuvenated, more
glorious than ever. Proclaim Her to all the
world with the voice of peace and
benediction.” So observed *Arkotong
Longkumer*, scholar of *Heraka* movement
among north-eastern tribals, “The pan-Hindu
idea of ‘*Bharat Mata*’ (*Mother India*) as a
territorial deity correlated with the image of a
‘mother’ in *Heraka* contexts, and ‘Goddess’ in
Gaidinliu’s biography, portrays an imagery as
uniting and including disparate groups in
India, such as the *Heraka*, under the wings of
‘*Bharat Mata*’.” For *Vinayak Savarkar*, She is
the ‘Deity of Liberty’ and adored Her with his
famous poem ‘*Jayostute*’ scribbled on walls of
his cell in *Andamans*. He addressed the Deity
as ‘*Sivastmate*’, ‘*Bhagavati*’ and related Her
with *Moksa* aspired by *Sadhaka*-s. Thus
political liberation is
rendered *Adhyatmika* emancipation signified
by *Bharata Mata*. Even first proponent of
separate *Tamil* identity under *British* influence
Maraimalai Adigal (1876-1950) also
composed a hymn on *Bharata Mata* i.e.
Mother India similar to *Anandamath* –
“*Oh Mother India who gave the world many
riches,
Thou art the lamp of light to the entire world!
Thou art dear to me as very life of my life!
How can I with my little knowledge
Elaborate upon the multi-splendored
greatness of Thee!
Thou with wealth that can never be lost,*

*Stand today impoverished by plundering
aliens!*

*That shame shall be wiped out by thy
children!*

*Enlightened they toil to revive thy glory in
fields diverse!*

*May they flourish and succeed in their efforts
and May our minds cease suffering!”*

In all her depictions, she stands alone as *Bharata Mata*. Though Hindu minds identify her with *Devi Durga* or *Ma Kali*, She is mostly alone with no consort. Tamil poet Subramanya Bharathi prominently depicted Her with *Siva* as His consort. He hummed –

Demonic Our Mother can be

Great Madness carries She

She loves dearly the Mad One

He who carries the Fire scorching

Bharat Mata (Mother India for colonial secularists) is abundantly venerable, portrayed as carrying national flag and riding a lion. She is hated and feared by colonial secularists who grew on ‘McCaulay’s Venom’ as their protein supplement. A Dravidian politician also claimed, only Tamil was his mother!! Prof. Sumathi Ramaswamy of History and International Comparative Studies at Duke University regards “...imagery’ of *Bharat Mata* as the undoing of European enlightenment (!!?) through the recuperation of old myths and the return of fancy”. She was ‘wise’ enough to rue, “modern secular and scientific mapped knowledge is hijacked to assist that unraveling”.

Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar had “not heard of *Bharat Mata*” at all!! As a diehard Tamilian, he saw it as one more example of ‘north Indian imperialism’ over Tamilians. Anti-Hindu Marxist historian Irfan Habib declared “the idea of *Bharat Mata* was

an import from Europe and there was no evidence of any such imagination in either ancient or medieval India”.

Only if these deluded ones had studied legendary *Sanatana* history, they would not have been so constrained to cut a pathetic figure for themselves so abjectly.

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Fig. 1: Bharata Mata holding the Indian National flag and riding a lion

About Author

Dr. Ramakant Tiwari, MSc., PhD - After an illustrious career in corporate world, Dr. Ramakant Tiwari has stepped into the world of Sanatana dharma and deeply involved in studying ancient scriptures and writing commentaries (*bhashyas*) on Srimad Bhagvadgita, Svadharmayoga Upanisad and Mysticism of *Samkhya Darsana* are published. He is currently working on Valmiki Ramayana.



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The Chaturvedas said to have 1131 shaakhaas right up to the time of Aadi Shankaraachaarya and thereafter during last more than ten centuries, many shaakhaas are out of practice due to various reasons and presently only seven shaakaas are in the practice of Guru shiShya parampara.

There is a need to continuously preserve these available shaakhaas which may likely to disappear in future due to various external forces acting in the country vigorously with the power of money and global politics. It is time for the intellectuals of Bharata dEsham to wake-up and work collectively to protect and preserve Veda Samskruti of Bharata dEsham, by empowering the Youth of Bharat dEsham, the future care takers of this great Indian Heritage , with suitable education of our correct history and culture.

The above background lead to formation of this Veda Samskruti Samiti which is registered under Societies acts of Government of Telangana, with Regd. No. 961/2016 by Sri A.H. Prabhakara Rao, who is the Founder and President of the Samiti.

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