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Bharat Mata by Rabindranath Tagore and MF Husain: A comparative study

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Abstract

Since ancient times, every country has its own identity by which it is known. Writers, artists, and culture have made a huge contribution to bringing this identity into existence. There has been a provision of worship of God and Goddess in India since the Vedic period. According to the Vedas, God resides everywhere. Thus, India has been called the "Land of the Gods" since ancient times. The culture, art, and literature here have contributed much to making this land the "Land of the Gods." The residents here call the land of India "Motherland." In this context, there is a verse in Valmiki Ramayana that "Janani Janmabhūmishcha Swargādapi Garīyasi". This verse describes the mother and birthplace as greater than heaven. In this way, the people of India consider the land their mother. Hence, the people of India call India "Bharat Mata." With the changing times, artists have made many changes in the pictures, designs, icons and symbols of Mother India. Artists Abanindranath Tagore and M.F. Hussain painted "Bharat Mata" from his observation and presented it to society. Thereby the artists have given a new look to "Bharat Mata."

Keywords: Bharat Mata, Rabindranath Tagore, M.F. Hussain, Icons, symbol and Hindu iconography

1. Introduction

India has been called the motherland since time immemorial. We find proof of this in the Vedas as well. There is a clear mention of motherland in a verse of Atharvaveda. However, Vande Mataram written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay also took forward the concept of motherland. The first written evidence of the present time is found in the satire 'Unbimsa Purana' or 'Nineteenth Purana' written by the famous 19th century Bengali writer and litterateur Bhudev Mukhopadhyay. This article was published in 1866. In this article the word 'Adi-Bharati' was used for 'Bharat Mata'. The credit for addressing India as 'Mata' also goes to Bengali litterateur Kiran Chandra Banerjee. In 1873, the word 'Mata' was used for India in his play 'Bharat-Mata'. In pre-independence Bengal, Durga Puja remained a medium to unite people and discuss Swaraj (freedom). During this period, Maa Durga had a profound influence on the writings and compositions of writers, litterateurs and poets of Bengal and in their writings, plays and poems, the people of India were addressed as 'Motherland'. (Bhaskar)

After watching this play, the slogan "Bharat Mata ki Jai" started spreading all over India. Seeing such a wave, Abanindranath Tagore first made a picture of Bharat Mata. Through this picture, he displayed India's culture, costumes, food grains and education. (Nehru) Opposite it, M.F. Hussain painted the painting Bharat Mata in starting of the 21st century. In this painting, he has shown before the independence of India.

2. Literature Review

- **Rajkamal Prakashan published the book "Who is Bharat Mata?"** during continuous debates in the country regarding nation and nationalism. Senior writer Purushottam Agarwal has edited this book, which introduces you to the intellectual legacy of Jawaharlal Nehru, the hero of the freedom movement and the first Prime Minister of India. According to Ashok Maheshwari, Managing Director, Rajkamal Group of Publications, "Who is Bharat Mata?" provides a perfect opportunity to understand the personality, thoughts and policies of Jawaharlal Nehru.

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- **Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru (1945) in their book "Hindustan Ki Kahani" Published by Sasta Sahitya Mandal.** In this book, the author makes us aware of the inexhaustible source of India's strength, due to which our country has survived despite conflicts and upheavals, upheavals and indecision, empire and expansion, decline and slavery, foreign invasion and internal revolutions etc. Has happened. The author has discussed in detail all the aspects of historical, political, social, economic, philosophical, scientific, cultural, national and international from his point of view. In the fifth chapter of this book, the author discusses Bharat Mata and her citizens.
- **Sumathi Ramaswamy in their book "The Goddess and the Nation Mapping Mother India" published by Duke University Press.** In this book study, the author discusses how Mother India has been depicted in many diverse representations of patriotic art. The author discusses its origin from a visual and historical perspective in this book. In the study of this book, the author presents Bharat Mata as the embodiment and unifying symbol of the Indian nation and national territory.
- **In their article "Painting That Had the Idea of Bharat Mata" (2021) [6] published by Get Bengal.** In this article has discussed on the painting of "Bharat Mata" and Abanindranath Tagore. This study article talks about the concept of Bharat Mata and the partition of Bengal. This study is discussed "Bande Mataram" and "Anandmath." This article discusses the Iconography of Bharat Mata.
- **Dhruba Ghosh (2022) in their article "The Story Behind Abinindranath Tagore's Bharat Mata Painting".** The study of this article discussed the form of Bharat Mata's spiritual, calm, beautiful and motherly goddess. In this article, the writer has told the concept of Bharat Mata and the story behind the Bharat Mata. This article describes how the artist got inspired to paint Bharat Mata.
- **Aishwarya Walvekar (2017) [12] in her article "Comparative Analysis of Bharat Mata by M.F. Husain, D. Banerjee and Abanindranath Tagore" published by Art and Aesthetics.** The study of this article discusses the personification of a woman as a country of India and Bharat Mata as an Indian goddess, the existence of Bharat Mata, and the symbol of the freedom struggle. M.F. Husain and Abanindranath Tagore to Bharat Mata as an Indian goddess and two different depictions of Bharat Mata are discussed in this article.

Apart from the books, magazines, journals, and articles given in this paper, other books, magazines, e-newspaper articles and journals have also been used to complete this research paper.

3. Analysis and Research Methodology

In this research paper, I have studied and analyzed those scripts and artifacts that help uncover art's main dimensions and the untouched area through related literature. After studying the works of art done so far by artists related to Hindu iconography, I have explained the symbols. I have explained the different paintings of Bharat Mata made by Hindu iconography. Moreover, it studied the books written by learned and great writers related to the artists' work and

provided more confidential information about the untouched area related to it. The author has used secondary data and various data sources in this paper. Books, journals, research papers and artifacts have been used. It uses descriptive research methods to note the various changes in Bharat Mata forms through Hindu iconography.

4. Objective

The purpose of this study is to trace the influence of Hindu iconography on the various forms of "Bharat Mata" created by artists in India. Also, it explores the relationship of icons and symbols in visual arts with developments in modern Indian art and changes in art forms over time.

5. Meaning of Bharat Mata

Bharat Mata is the dream of every Indian, which they saw after many atrocities, miseries and sacrifices. Bharat Mata is hope and enthusiastic for those people who the British exploited. He was the ray of freedom that people saw as soon as they visualized Bharat Mata and their hope of freedom manifested. (Nehru, "Hindustan Ki Kahani") Bharat Mata is not only the geographical location of India but also the culture and symbol of India; Mother India is the embodiment of unity. All Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, and Christians together complete this framework. Bharat Mata is also the voice of the lower Taqwa in India. Whose first form is found in Bankimchandra Chatterjee's play "Bharat Mata," after which Abinindranath, a famous painter of Bengal, made a beautiful picture of Bharat Mata. This painting depicts the India of that time, in which he created a yogini in the form of Bharat Mata, who has four hands. After that, people visualized the formation of Bharat Mata in different forms. Like Bharat Mata with a lion, Bharat Mata and Map of India made by Saree and Bharat Mata with Elephant and Lion with Trishul.

6. Bharat Mata by Abinindranath Tagore

Abanindranath Tagore created the painting based on Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's novel "Anandmath". Today we all know those songs by the name of our national song, 'Bande Mataram.' Bande Mataram was the slogan of the freedom fighters. The author's novel was based on the context of the Bengal famine of 1770. The novel was among the earliest fictional works with an anti-colonial theme. In this novel, the author refers to the nation for the first time as 'Mata', which means mother. Thus, the author revealed the strength of Shakti in the novel. ("Painting That Had the Idea of Bharat Mata")

He created the Bharat Mata painting after being influenced by Anandmath. He made this painting in 1905. The independence movement was going on in India. In this painting, he depicted Mother India as a woman wearing a saffron garment, the colour of saffron being a symbol of sacrifice and renunciation. In this painting, they depict Mother India as a goddess, like Hindu Gods and Goddesses. In this painting, they show him with four hands. He holds a book in one hand which represents education.

On the other hand, there is a pile of rice showing India's food grains. The third hand holds a Jaap mala or pearl, which represents spirituality. Moreover, the fourth hand, a white cloth, shows India to be indigenous. There is a halo around his head called Sahasrar Chakra, which means thousand, infinite, and innumerable. Moreover, white lotuses bloom under the feet, which is a symbol of purity.

He has made them extremely calm and peaceful. She has shown strength and love, both the qualities of all mothers. Moreover, with songs, novels, and the recent turmoil in his mind. He has expressed his feelings in this immortal painting. In this painting, they depict Bharat Mata as an ascetic figure; She is calm, restrained, divine and spiritual. Through this image of Bharat Mata, the artists sought to represent the identity of India. The image seeks to inspire devotion towards Mother India as a motherly figure. ("The Story behind Abanindranath Tagore's Bharat Mata Painting")



Source - Source
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/3a/bharat_mata_by_abanindranath_tagore.jpg

Fig 1: Bharat Mata

Nivedita, a disciple of Vivekananda, praised this artwork in the Modern Review magazine as the first masterpiece by an Indian artist to accurately portray the motherland. She went on to say that she intended to reprint it and distribute copies throughout India 'until there was some farmer's cottage between Kedarnath and Cape Comorin where this image of Mother India was not displayed on the walls.' ("Painting That Had the Idea of Bharat Mata") These representations of Indian motherhood, which have emotional value for both Hindus and Muslims equally, are at the heart of Tagore's quest to create a "spiritual" identity for his people in stark contrast to Europe's perceived "materialism." (Chaggar)

7. Bharat Mata by M.F. Hussain

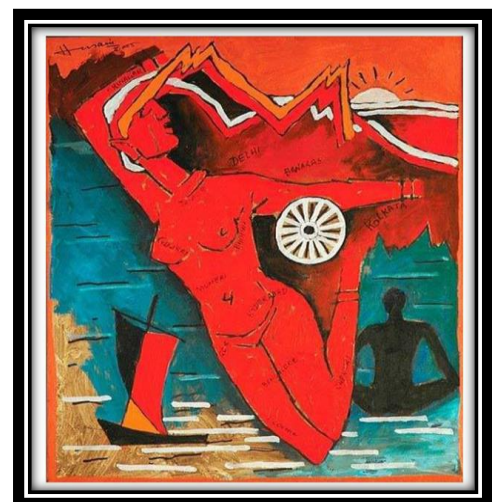
The artist made this painting in 2006. There is much controversy regarding the title of this painting and the picture of Bharat Mata depicted in the painting. In this painting, they have made Bharat Mata in the geographical position of India, which displays the map of the whole India. He is shown naked. (Walvekar) According to the researcher, the depiction of a female nude in this painting implies that in the five-thousand-year history of Indian art, nudity has been a recurring issue, with human and divine female

figures influencing sculpture and temple architecture. (Johnson Courtney)

The whole body of women is painted matte red. This colour works in both positive and negative ways, but here the artist has shown the negative side of the colour, which includes impulsiveness, aggression, lust, anger, oppression and violence. Vivid colour and shades of red, blue, and yellow ochre are used in this painting in contrast to black and white. ("Red Colour Meaning and Symbolism")

The depicted woman's pose and facial expressions are very uncomfortable, restrained, and forced. It feels as if his hands and feet are bound by something that is not defined. The weeping woman in this painting may indicate India's post-colonial influence on slavery; ("These Are the 10 Most Controversial Paintings of M.F. Husain") Black lines are made on the wrist and ankle. It shows the mountains coming out of his head, symbolizing the Himalayas. Moreover, with him is the shining white sun. There's a white wheel on his right hand, representing the innovation of the wheel by a man from the Stone Age. It can also represent the Ashoka Chakra on the national emblem and the spiritual teachings of Gautama Buddha. On the body of the woman portrayed in the painting are written the names of various cities and states of India, including Mumbai, Srinagar, Kerala, Chennai, Bangalore, Cochin, Delhi, Kolkata, Gujarat, Banaras, and Goa. It depicts that distinct parts of the same body are named and controlled by the states; the human is seated in a straight body position with his hands resting on his knees like a meditator, is naked, and has his back to the audience, which represents the Yog Darshan of India. There is a yacht on the woman's right side in this painting. The black hull and black, red, and yellow ochre mainsail refer to the Aryan base (the black hull) and the multicultural products of India (the variegated mainsail) respectively. (Walvekar)

Which shows the beginning of trade route and Hindu religion in India. Moreover, at the same time, it also shows how foreigners came to India through trade and India was looted. The female body is not painted crimson, but has black scuffs and marks that represent the atrocities committed by various Indian rulers. The remaining background is blue to signify water, and the waves are depicted using only horizontal black and white lines. The black figure is seated on these white waves. (Walvekar)



Source: - https://img.quackreview.com///w_600_h_725_c_fit/assets/2020/05/bharatmata.jpg

Fig 2: Bharat Mata

8. Comparison

There are several comparisons between the paintings of Bharat Mata by both artists.

Depiction: In his painting Bharat Mata, Abanindranath Tagore depicts a woman wearing a saffron-coloured saree. There are four hands on him. In his palms are rice buds, singing rosaries, Vedas, and white cloth. He has a halo behind his head, and white lotuses are visible close to his feet. Mother India is shown as a deity in this picture. These components have been used to define India's greatness and history. Hussain's artwork Bharat Mata, on the other hand, shows a red-coloured figure with Indian geographical features. This painting has a boat, a black-painted figure in a yoga pose, and a chakra. The woman's body is adorned with the names of numerous states, while her head hair depicts the Himalayas. In addition, the rising sun is portrayed. The state of India under British dominion is shown in this artwork. (Wikipedia contributors)

Symbolism: Mother India has been portrayed as a goddess by artist Abanindranath Tagore. Through this, individuals were able to learn about the pride and history of their nation, connect with the Swadeshi and liberation movements, and actively participate in the cause. As a result, Bharat Mata Ki Jai became a household mantra throughout India.

In his artwork "Bharat Mata," Hussain depicted the state of India during the British colonial era. India was referred to as the golden bird in the past. India's wealth and valuables were looted during the British era. The artist attempts to depict the same sight. That may be why he depicted a woman's body in crimson on the India map. (Kumar)

Posture and facial expressions: The posture and facial expressions of the woman depicted in Hussain's painting are very uneasy and restrained. The posture and facial expressions of the woman depicted in Abanindranath Tagore's painting are very delicate and the posture is like that of a goddess. (Kamal)

The Reaction of Society: The artistic creations of Abanindranath Tagore have a deep impact on society. In his artwork, he calls the figure "Bharat Mata," which has four hands and is wrapped in a saffron-coloured saree. Furthermore, Bharat Mata is considered to be an incarnation of the Goddess. Which people also worship. Indians chant "Bharat Mata ki Jai", which honors Mother India, also known as Jagatarani Durga, in Kolkata. In contrast, after observing Hussain's depiction of Bharat Mata, society reacts differently. In this artwork, he used a naked female figure to depict the geographical map of India. This has given society a negative message. Since Mother India is revered as a goddess by Indians. As a result, society has highly criticized this painting. (Kamal)

9. Conclusion

In every period, artists have expressed their expressions and ideas ever since on rocks, caves, palm leaves, paper, and canvas. A writer expresses his feelings and thoughts by writing. Similarly, an artist expresses his thoughts and feelings through art. The time in which the type of situation, environment and demands of society remain. The artist also gives shape to his art in the same way. At the end of the 19th century, when the freedom struggle was at its height, the Renaissance artist of Indian art, Abanindranath Tagore, created a painting titled "Bharat Mata" as the identity of India. He has shown India's education, clothing, food, and spirituality through this painting. The painting depicts the

gentle form of Mother India. At the beginning of the 21st century, M.F. Hussain also composed "Bharat Mata." In this painting, he has probably depicted the condition of India before independence. They show "Bharat Mata" being damaged due to external attacks on India, possibly indicating the beginning of trade by boat. He has shown a nude figure in the painting of Bharat Mata. Due to this nude figure, this painting has been in much controversy. According to the researchers, they had shown the condition of India before the British Raj in India with nudity; at that time, women's nudity was common in temple sculptures, cave paintings and society. In this way, he has put those aspects of society before independence in front of the society of the 21st century. Furthermore, According to Scholar, the business symbol effectively conveys this by depicting a boat and a portion of land, which are not geographical symbols. On top of the woman are depicted natural elements such as the sun and mountains that are intertwined with her. The painting deals with man's control of land for political and power purposes, as well as how man has taken control of natural elements and misused them. In contemporary times, Hussain's works represent a critique of India and humanity. Both artists used their work to convey a sense of national identity and pride. However, their approaches and the elements they chose to highlight differ significantly, reflecting their artistic visions and the contexts in which they worked.

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