

From Fragmented Earth to the Icon of Bhairavī: A Critical, Philosophical, and Postcolonial Reading of Krushna Kumar Mohanty's "Deśa"(Country)

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Abstract:

Krushna Kumar Mohanty's "Deśa" ("Country"), published in the poetry anthology *Rubi Rāe (Ruby Roy)*, is a remarkably condensed yet philosophically expansive meditation on nation, geography, history, colonial violence, famine, war, civilization, identity, and the elusive idea of belonging. Rather than presenting "country" as a stable geographical territory enclosed by political boundaries, Mohanty transforms it into a wounded, wandering, gendered, historically sedimented and cosmically displaced presence. The poem's central figure is simultaneously woman, earth, nation, civilization, refugee, historical survivor and mythic icon. Through startling juxtapositions—guava and silk, famine and pelvic bone, Mongolian face and Nile, Vasco da Gama and the national flag, radium-coloured blood and green earth, Mohenjo-daro and Bhairavī—the poem dismantles conventional nationalist rhetoric and reconstructs the nation as an unstable archive of violence and memory. Its poetics is profoundly dialogic, postcolonial and deconstructive: "country" is never simply one country, but a palimpsest of countries, civilizations, migrations and imperial encounters. The poem's linguistic texture is equally significant. The transliterated Odia, with its striking hybrid vocabulary such as "pel-bik," "skrab," "Maṅgoliān," "Bhāskodāgāma," "reḍiyam," and "triraṅgā," dramatizes a world in which indigenous linguistic consciousness encounters global historical terminology. Its sonic form, perceptible through the IPA transcription, further reveals how the poem converts phonetic movement into philosophical movement. The present study reads "Deśa" through postcolonial theory, deconstruction, ecocriticism, feminist criticism, Marxist criticism, historical consciousness, cultural memory, myth criticism, psychoanalysis, cosmopolitanism and the philosophy of identity. It also places the poem in dialogue with major works of national and anti-national poetry, including Walt Whitman's "I Hear America Singing," Claude McKay's "America," Langston Hughes's "I, Too," W. B. Yeats's "Easter 1916," Allen Ginsberg's "America," Faiz Ahmed Faiz's "Subh-e-Azadi," and Rabindranath Tagore's "Where the Mind Is Without Fear." The study argues that Mohanty's "Deśa" ultimately moves beyond patriotism and nationalism toward an ethics of planetary memory: the country survives not in flags, borders or monuments alone, but in wounded bodies, archaeological fragments, ancestral memories, rivers, blood, soil and the mysterious persistence of human consciousness.

Keywords—Nationalism; Postcolonialism; Deconstruction; Cultural Memory; Colonialism; Archaeology; Bhairavī; Ecocriticism; Nation, Identity.

I. INTRODUCTION:

WHEN "COUNTRY" BECOMES A WOUNDED BODY

Krushna Kumar Mohanty's "Deśa," translated as "Country," is one of those poems whose apparent brevity conceals an extraordinary philosophical magnitude. Published on pages 25–26 of *Rubi Rāe (Ruby Roy)*, the poem refuses to define country in the conventional vocabulary of cartography, patriotism, citizenship or territorial sovereignty. Instead, it constructs "country" as an enigmatic female presence who traverses continents, civilizations, famines, rivers, wars and archaeological epochs. The poem opens not with a flag, a map, a

constitution, a battlefield or a patriotic declaration, but with an astonishing bodily image: "She wears the ripe guava / like a silk sari." The original transliteration intensifies the strangeness: "Pācīlā pijulikū pāṭasādhī pari piṁdhe se." The corresponding IPA sequence, [pa:ʈʃi:la: piḍʒuli ku pa:ʈʃa:ɽʰi pəri piṇdʰe se], allows the reader to hear the materiality of the Odia utterance even when its semantic world has already become transcontinental. The country is therefore immediately personified, but not as the majestic motherland of conventional nationalist imagination. She is an eccentric, wounded, migratory and almost surreal body. Her garment is a guava; her anatomy contains the residue of famine; her face is Mongolian; her river is tributary to the Nile; her historical destination is associated with Vasco

da Gama; her flag is assembled from the wind; her blood is radium-coloured; her soil becomes green; her ancestors are commemorated on ice; her history speaks through an earring excavated from Mohenjo-daro; and finally she appears among moon-people as *Bhairavī*. The poem consequently replaces the static noun “country” with a process of perpetual metamorphosis. “*Deśa*” is not a territory. It is an ontological journey.

The poem’s extraordinary achievement lies in its ability to make geographical identity epistemologically unstable. What does it mean to belong to a country when the body of that country carries traces of multiple continents and civilizations? What does a nation become when its historical memory consists simultaneously of famine, colonial discovery, national flags, nuclear imagery, warfare, archaeological remains and mythological consciousness? Mohanty does not answer these questions propositionally. He converts them into images. His method is therefore fundamentally poetic rather than discursive. The country is made visible through metaphor because the nation, as Benedict Anderson famously argues, is an “imagined community”: it exists through collective representations, narratives and shared acts of imagination. Mohanty radicalizes that insight by making the imagined nation literally imaginary, unstable and surreal. His “country” is imagined through a chain of incompatible historical and geographical signs. The result is not conceptual confusion but a sophisticated poetic critique of the fantasy that national identity can ever be pure, homogeneous or territorially self-contained.

II. THE POEM AS A PALIMPSEST OF CIVILIZATIONS

The most striking characteristic of “*Deśa*” is its palimpsestic structure. A palimpsest is a surface upon which successive inscriptions remain partially visible, so that the newest writing never completely erases the earlier writing. Mohanty’s country possesses precisely such a layered consciousness. The poem moves from famine to Mongolia, from the Nile to Vasco da Gama, from national flags to radium, from war to ancestral monuments, from Mohenjo-daro to the moon and *Bhairavī*. These are not random geographical decorations. They are historical strata. The country becomes a living archaeological site upon which successive civilizations have written themselves. The line “*with a pelvic bone / left over from the Famine of the Ninth Annum*” is particularly devastating because famine is reduced to skeletal residue. In the transliteration, “*Na-aṅka durbhikṣaru pāithibā / goṭe pel-bik haḍare*”, the English-derived anatomical expression

“pel-bik” collides with the deeply historical Odia expression “*Na-aṅka durbhikṣa*.” The IPA, [*nə:ɔŋkə durbhikkʰɔru pa:itʰiba:*] / [*gɔṭe pel-bik hɔṛɔre*], preserves the sonic awkwardness of this collision. The hybrid vocabulary is itself a linguistic palimpsest: indigenous memory and imported scientific terminology coexist within one grammatical body.

The phrase “Famine of the Ninth Annum” is particularly significant because it transforms historical famine into anatomical history. The famine is no longer an event external to the nation; it has entered the skeleton of the country. The country does not remember famine intellectually; it remembers it bodily. The pelvic bone becomes an archive. Here Mohanty anticipates what contemporary memory studies describe as embodied memory, where historical trauma persists through bodily traces rather than merely written documents. The country’s body is therefore a museum without walls. Its bones constitute historical evidence. The image also destabilizes the rhetoric of national progress. Nations frequently celebrate development, industrialization, technological advancement and political sovereignty, but Mohanty forces the reader to look beneath the rhetoric toward the skeletal remainder of hunger. The country is prosperous only superficially; underneath its silk sari remains the bone of famine.

This movement from body to geography is reinforced by the astonishing image of the “Mongolian face” being washed in an unnamed tributary of the Nile: “*she scrubs her Mongolian face / in a nameless tributary of the Nile*.” The transliteration—“*se skrab kare tā Maṅgoliān muhaṃ / Nīlanadīra goṭe nāmahīna upaśākhāre*”—creates a strange fusion of English lexical modernity, Asian ethnographic identity and African geography. The IPA transcription, [*se skrəb kɔre ta: mɔŋgɔlija.n muhɔ̃*] / [*ni:ɔnɔdi:ɾɔ gɔṭe na:mɔhi:nɔ upɔʃa:kʰa:re*], is especially revealing because the phonetic sequence itself carries the multilingual texture of the poem. “Skrab,” rendered as [*skrəb*], sounds like an English technological or bodily verb inserted into the Odia phonological environment. This is not merely a stylistic eccentricity. It dramatizes the cultural hybridity that Homi K. Bhabha theorizes as the “third space,” where identities are produced through encounters rather than preserved as pure essences. Mohanty’s country has no ethnically pure face because its face is Mongolian and its water is African. It is a composite civilization.

III. COLONIAL CARTOGRAPHY AND THE PARADOX OF “DISCOVERY”

The poem’s reference to Vasco da Gama constitutes one of its sharpest postcolonial gestures. The country “*wafting and drifting continuously, / reaches the vicinity of Vasco da Gama’s discovery.*” In the transliteration, “*bhāsibhāsi Bhāskodāgāmāra ābiṣkāra pākḥare / pahumce se,*” the name “Vasco da Gama” is absorbed into the phonological and grammatical texture of Odia. The IPA renders the movement as [b^ha:sib^ha:si b^ha:skodaga.ma:rɔ a:biṣka:rɔ pa:k^hɔre] / [pəhũtʃe se].

The poetic irony is profound: a country that has existed through millennia of civilization is made to appear historically adjacent to a European “discovery.” The quotation marks around the concept of discovery are implicit rather than explicit, but the irony is unmistakable. How can something already inhabited, cultivated and historically meaningful be “discovered”? The poem thereby exposes the epistemological violence embedded in colonial cartography.

The phrase “*Vasco da Gama’s discovery*” is particularly important because colonialism did not merely conquer territories; it also reorganized knowledge about territories. To “discover” a land is to assume that the land becomes historically visible only when recognized by the discoverer. Postcolonial criticism has repeatedly challenged this epistemological structure. Edward Said’s analysis of Orientalism demonstrates how imperial knowledge systems produce representations of the colonized world, while Bhabha emphasizes the ambivalence and hybridity generated by colonial encounters. Mohanty’s poem condenses this entire problem into one surreal geographical gesture.

The country “reaches” the vicinity of discovery, as though history itself were a drifting body arriving at the colonial gaze. The verb “reaches” is crucial: the country existed before the moment of European discovery, but colonial history retrospectively reorganizes its identity around the discoverer.

The poem consequently reverses the colonial gaze. Vasco da Gama is not the protagonist of discovery; he is merely a historical marker on the country’s immense journey. The country moves through him rather than being defined by him. This inversion is politically subtle and poetically powerful. The colonial explorer becomes a minor waypoint in the biography of a civilization that exceeds colonial chronology. The poem therefore refuses the linear

historical model according to which modern history begins with European contact. Instead, it presents history as a circular, layered and transcontinental phenomenon.

IV. THE FLAG, THE WIND, AND THE DECONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY

The poem’s treatment of the national flag is perhaps its most direct critique of conventional nationalism. The country “*Touching the national flag / of some country, / in the wind that comes flowing past, / fashions a tricolour / for herself.*” The transliteration states: “*Kaṇṇasi Deśara jātiya patākāku chuṃi / bahi āsuthibā pabanare / se tiāri kare tā pāiṃ triraṅgā.*” The IPA records: [kəṇṇɔsi de:ʃɔɔ d̪ʒa:ti.jɔ pɔta:ka:ku t̪ʰũi] / [bɔhi a:sutʰiba: pəbənɔre] / [se ʃia:ri: kɔre ta: pa:ĩ triraṅga:]. The phrase “some country” is devastating because it deprives the flag of absolute national specificity. The country does not possess a fixed flag; she touches another country’s flag and creates a tricolour for herself through the wind. National identity thus emerges through contact, circulation and transformation.

This is a profound deconstruction of the nationalist assumption that identity is self-contained. Jacques Derrida’s deconstructive logic teaches that identities are constituted through difference, relationality and traces of what they exclude. Mohanty’s “country” exemplifies precisely this principle. She can become herself only through contact with “some country.” Her tricolour is therefore not an isolated national symbol but the product of relational movement. The wind becomes the agent of national formation. This is extraordinarily significant. In conventional nationalist symbolism, the flag represents political sovereignty, territorial unity and collective identity. Mohanty converts it into a temporary formation produced by air. The flag is therefore both material and immaterial, stable and unstable, political and natural. It is a sign whose identity depends upon movement. The tricolour also introduces the question of Indian national symbolism without reducing the poem to simplistic patriotism. The word “tricolour” resonates with the Indian national flag, yet Mohanty does not present it as a fixed emblem of national purity. Rather, the tricolour emerges from an encounter with “some country” and the flowing wind. The image can consequently be read as a poetic critique of aggressive nationalism: the nation does not become itself by excluding the foreign but by passing through foreignness. The country is constituted through circulation. In this sense, the poem anticipates a cosmopolitan conception of identity in which belonging is porous rather than absolute.

V. RADIUM, BLOOD, AND THE ECOLOGY OF VIOLENCE

The poem becomes increasingly apocalyptic when it introduces “a veiled unknown stream, / of radium-coloured blood.” The transliteration—“*reḍiyam raṅgara goṭe aḷab raktakṣaraṇaru / jeuṃ bhūkhaṇḍara māṭi hue sabuja*”—and the IPA—[*reḍijəm rəŋgərə goṭe a:ḷəbəkṣərəṇəru*] / [*dʒeɪ̯ bʰu:kʰəŋḍərə mɑ:ṭi: hue səbudʒə*—create a violent conjunction of radiation, blood and vegetation. The English translation, “*From a veiled unknown stream, / of radium-coloured blood, / the earth of whichever land turns green,*” is simultaneously beautiful and terrifying. Greenness, conventionally a symbol of fertility, here emerges from blood. The poem thus creates an oxymoronic ecological economy in which life grows from violence.

The phrase “radium-coloured blood” evokes modernity’s double inheritance: scientific discovery and technological destruction. Radium signifies scientific advancement, radiation, nuclear modernity and invisible danger. Blood signifies biological life, sacrifice, violence and ancestry. Their combination suggests that modern nations fertilize themselves through historical violence. The green earth may therefore be read both ecologically and politically. The land becomes fertile through the blood spilled in wars, revolutions, famines and political struggles. Mohanty’s image thus recalls the ancient trope that nations are nourished by the blood of their martyrs, but he radically darkens it by introducing radium. The blood is no longer merely sacrificial; it is radioactive.

This is where ecocritical interpretation becomes particularly productive. The poem refuses to separate human history from environmental history. Soil, blood, radiation, war and vegetation participate in one ecological continuum. The earth remembers human violence. Environmental damage is not external to political history; it is embedded in the very materiality of the nation. The “green” earth therefore carries an ethical ambiguity. Green can signify life, but life itself may be emerging from contaminated violence. The poem thus anticipates contemporary concerns with the Anthropocene, in which human political and technological activities have become geological forces.

VI. THE COUNTRY AS A GAMBLER: HISTORY, CHANCE, AND THE POLITICS OF RISK

After the soil becomes green, the poem introduces the extraordinary metaphor of gambling: “*there, upon the dice*

board, / she keeps throwing— / bet after bet.” The transliteration compresses the image into “*seithi paśāpālire phinguthāe se / bāji pare bāji.*” The IPA records the rhythm as [*seiti pəʃa:pa:lire pʰiŋgutha:e se*] / [*ba:ḍzi pəre ba:ḍzi*]. The repetition “*bāji pare bāji*”—“bet after bet”—creates a circular rhythm of risk. History becomes a gambling table upon which countries continually stake their existence.

This metaphor profoundly complicates the idea of national destiny. Nationalist narratives often represent history as teleological: a nation moves toward independence, development, unity and greatness. Mohanty rejects this certainty. The country throws “bet after bet,” suggesting that historical existence is contingent rather than predetermined. Wars, political decisions, technological developments and ideological commitments become wagers whose consequences cannot be completely known in advance. The nation is therefore not the master of history but a participant in a dangerous game.

The gambling metaphor can also be read through Marxist criticism. Nations frequently transform human lives into political capital. Soldiers, workers, peasants and marginalized communities become the stakes upon which states gamble. The poem’s country is therefore simultaneously gambler and gambling object. She throws the bets, but she is also the body upon which the consequences are inscribed. This contradiction recalls the Marxist understanding of ideology, where collective narratives conceal material relations of power. “Country” sounds like an abstraction, but Mohanty repeatedly returns it to flesh, bone, blood and soil. Nationhood is material.

VII. WAR, MONUMENT, AND THE FROZEN MEMORY OF ANCESTORS

The poem then turns toward the aftermath of war: “*Grasping the ultimate consequence / of all wars, / she fixes upon an icy monument / the plaques of her ancestors.*” The transliteration—“*Sabu juddhara śeṣa pariṇāmaku dhari / goṭe baraphara smārakīre se lāgāe / pūrvapurusaṅka phalaka*”—becomes in IPA [*səbu ḍjuddʰərə fe:ʃə pəriṇa:məku dʰəri*] / [*goṭe bərəpʰərə sma:rəki:re se la:ga:e*] / [*pu:rbəpuruʃəŋkə pʰə[ʃkə]*]. Here the country becomes a curator of war’s final consequences.

The phrase “ultimate consequence” is philosophically open-ended. Does it mean death? Ruination? Memory? Victory that becomes indistinguishable from loss? Mohanty deliberately avoids specifying it. The “icy monument” is equally ambiguous. Ice preserves, but it also

freezes. Memory survives, yet becomes immobilized. The ancestors' plaques are attached to a monument that is both memorial and mausoleum. The image therefore captures the paradox of historical remembrance: societies commemorate the dead in order to preserve memory, but monumentalization can also freeze living history into an official narrative.

The "icy monument" may also suggest the coldness of institutional memory. A monument names, categorizes and fixes the past. Yet the poem itself refuses such fixity. Its history remains fluid, moving from famine to rivers, from colonial discovery to flags, from blood to war and from Mohenjo-daro to the moon. The poem's fluidity therefore stands against the monument's frozen permanence. The country's true memory cannot be contained by stone or ice because it continues to migrate through bodies, objects, rivers and myths.

VIII. MOHENJO-DARO AND THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY

One of the poem's most magnificent historical images occurs when "*The copper earring / found in the Great Bath of Mohenjo-daro / sometimes tells her / the mysterious tale of the Indus Civilization.*" The original says: "*Mahemjodārara snānāgāraru miḷithibā / tāmbṛā kānaphulaṭi / kebe kebe tāku śuṇāe / Sindhu sabhyatāra se rahasyagāthā.*" The IPA, [məhēdʒɔdɑ:rɔrɔ snɑ:nɑ:gɑ:rɔru miḷitʰibɑ:] / [tɑ:mbrɔ kɑ:nɔpʰuɮɪ] / [kɔbe kɔbe tɑ:ku ʃuŋɑ:e] / [sindʱu sɔbʱjɔtɑ:rɔ se rɔhɔsɟɑ:tʰ], is itself an archaeological soundscape. The object is small—a copper earring—but its narrative reach is enormous. A fragment speaks for a civilization. This image transforms archaeology into poetics. Archaeologists excavate objects; poets excavate meanings. The copper earring becomes a metonym for civilization itself. It carries no complete historical document, yet it tells a "mysterious tale." The adjective "mysterious" is crucial because Mohanty refuses the illusion that the past can ever be completely recovered. The Indus Civilization remains partly inaccessible, partly silent and partly imagined. The earring therefore speaks, but what it says is mysterious. History becomes an act of listening rather than possession. The image also offers a powerful theory of cultural memory. Collective identity is not preserved only in monuments, official chronicles and national archives. It survives in tiny objects, material fragments and archaeological remains. The earring becomes more trustworthy than nationalist rhetoric because it is mute matter transformed into memory. The country listens to an object. This is a radical poetic inversion:

instead of humans interpreting history, history itself seems to speak through things.

IX. FEMINIZATION OF THE NATION: BEYOND THE MOTHERLAND METAPHOR

The poem's consistent use of the pronoun "she" invites a feminist reading, but the poem does not simply reproduce the familiar nationalist metaphor of the feminine nation as "motherland." Mohanty's country is not an idealized mother, virgin, goddess or sacrificial woman. She is fragmented, mobile, wounded, hybrid and historically burdened. She possesses a pelvic bone, a Mongolian face, blood, a body capable of movement, and finally a mythic form. The female body therefore becomes an archive of national contradictions. The pelvic bone is especially important. Traditional nationalist iconography often desexualizes the nation, turning the feminine body into an abstract maternal symbol. Mohanty instead introduces anatomy. The "pelvic bone" brings corporeality into national discourse. The country has a body that can be wounded, starved and historically violated. Feminist criticism can therefore interpret the poem as exposing the relationship between national violence and bodily violence. Nations often imagine themselves through metaphors of feminine purity while actual histories involve conquest, sexual violence, famine and displacement. Mohanty refuses the purity of the national body. At the same time, the poem's final transformation into Bhairavī complicates the gendered image still further. Bhairavī is not merely passive femininity; she is a fierce and liminal form of divine feminine energy. The country therefore ends not as a helpless victim but as a terrifying, enigmatic and spiritually charged presence. The feminine becomes simultaneously wounded and powerful, historical and mythic, earthly and cosmic.

X. BHAIRAVĪ: THE FINAL METAMORPHOSIS OF COUNTRY

The closing movement is perhaps the most philosophically profound: "*From afar, / perhaps from the north-eastern corner of the sky, / among the moon-people descending to earth, / she is that very icon which appears like Bhairavī.*" The transliteration reads: "*Bahu dūrāru, / bodhe ākāśara aiśānya koṇaru / ohḷei āsuthibā candramāṇiṣamānāṅka bhitaru / Bhairabī pari diśuthibā mūrṭiṭi hiṃ se.*" The IPA provides: [bɔɦu du:rɑ:ru] / [bɔdʱe ɑ:kɑ:ʃɔrɔ oiʃɑ:ɳjɔ kɔɦɔru] / [ohḷei ɑ:sutʰibɑ: tʃɔndrɔmɑ:ɳiʃɔmɑ:nɔɦkɔ bʰitɔru] / [bʰairɔbi: pɔri diʃutʰibɑ: mu:rṭiṭi hɪ se]. The poem therefore concludes by moving from historical geography to cosmic mythology.

The “north-eastern corner of the sky” is deliberately uncertain. The word “perhaps” prevents the conclusion from becoming doctrinal. The country is not identified definitively; she appears as an apparition. This uncertainty is philosophically important. The poem begins with a material body and ends with an almost metaphysical image. Country has moved from bone to blood, from soil to archaeology, and finally from earth to the cosmos.

Bhairavī is a particularly powerful concluding figure because she gathers together the poem’s contradictions. She can embody destruction and regeneration, terror and sacredness, death and creative energy. The country that has suffered famine, colonial displacement, war and historical fragmentation does not disappear. It metamorphoses. Bhairavī therefore becomes the final form of historical resilience. The nation is not resurrected as a perfect political entity but transformed into an archetype of fierce feminine energy.

XI. DECONSTRUCTION: “*Deśa*” AS AN UNSTABLE SIGN

From a Derridean perspective, “*Deśa*” is a poem about the instability of signs. Every sign of national identity is displaced by another sign. Country becomes woman; woman becomes earth; earth becomes body; body becomes history; history becomes archaeology; archaeology becomes myth; myth becomes cosmic apparition. No single definition survives. The word “country” therefore functions as a floating signifier whose meaning is continually deferred.

The poem’s most important structural strategy is juxtaposition. Guava is placed beside silk; famine beside anatomy; Mongolia beside the Nile; Vasco da Gama beside an unnamed river; a national flag beside wind; radium beside blood; green soil beside gambling; war beside ice; Mohenjo-daro beside an earring; the moon beside Bhairavī. The poem does not explain these relationships. Instead, it produces meaning through their collision. This is deconstructive in the strongest poetic sense: identity emerges from difference.

The poem also undermines binaries such as *native/foreign*, *ancient/modern*, *East/West*, *human/natural*, *body/geography*, *history/myth* and *nation/world*. The country is simultaneously all of these. It cannot be reduced to one pole. The foreign is already inside the national; the ancient survives within the modern; the mythic emerges from the historical; and the geographical becomes bodily. “*Deśa*” therefore demonstrates that identity is not purity but relational complexity.

XII. POSTCOLONIAL HYBRIDITY AND THE THIRD SPACE

Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of hybridity offers another illuminating framework. The country in Mohanty’s poem inhabits a perpetual “third space.” Her identity is produced through cultural encounters. Her face is Mongolian, her river is associated with the Nile, her historical landscape is marked by Vasco da Gama, her national symbol emerges through another country’s flag, and her civilizational memory reaches Mohenjo-daro. The poem thus rejects the fiction that national identity possesses a single genealogical origin.

The linguistic form reinforces this hybridity. Words such as “pel-bik,” “skrab,” “Maṅgoliān,” “reḍiyam,” and “triraṅgā” reveal a multilingual consciousness. The English-derived vocabulary is not simply inserted into Odia as foreign matter; it is phonologically absorbed and grammatically naturalized. The IPA transcription makes this especially audible: [skrəb], [pel-bik] and [reḍijəm] coexist with distinctly Odia phonological sequences. Language itself becomes a miniature version of the country’s hybrid history. This is particularly significant for Odia poetry. Mohanty does not protect Odia from global vocabulary; instead, he makes the language encounter the world. The poem therefore participates in a broader modernist strategy in which linguistic purity is rejected in favour of linguistic productivity. The “country” of language is itself porous.

XIII. MARXIST READING: FAMINE, LABOUR, WAR, AND THE MATERIAL NATION

A Marxist reading reveals another layer beneath the surreal imagery. The poem’s country is materially constituted by famine, blood, war and land. These are not abstract historical categories but conditions of production and survival. The “pelvic bone” from famine signifies the reduction of human beings to biological remnants. The “radium-coloured blood” evokes technological modernity and its violent consequences. The gambling metaphor suggests political economies in which human lives become stakes. The monuments to ancestors suggest the ideological transformation of historical suffering into national memory. The poem’s refusal to romanticize the nation is therefore crucial. Instead of describing the country through heroic kings, victorious armies or monumental achievements, Mohanty selects famine, bones, blood, war and fragments. This constitutes a counter-nationalist archive. The nation is seen from below—from the body, the wound, the archaeological object and the remains of the dead. The poem thus challenges what Marxist criticism

might call the ideological abstraction of “nation.” “Country” sounds like a unified entity, but Mohanty reveals the unequal material histories beneath that abstraction. The country has a skeleton because people have suffered. Its soil becomes green because blood has been spilled. Its monuments exist because ancestors have died. Its history is therefore inseparable from material loss.

XIV. ECOCRITICAL READING: RIVER, SOIL, BLOOD, AND COSMOS

Ecocritically, “*Deśa*” refuses to treat nature as passive scenery. Rivers, soil, wind, blood and sky actively participate in the formation of identity. The unnamed tributary of the Nile is not simply a geographical image; it is part of the country’s identity-making process. The wind generates the tricolour. Blood transforms the soil. The sky becomes the direction from which the final apparition emerges. Nature is therefore agentive.

The poem’s geography is also deliberately transnational. The Nile and the Indus appear within the same poetic field. This destroys the nationalist tendency to imagine geography as a closed container. Rivers cross political boundaries; wind crosses borders; blood enters soil; sky ignores passports. Nature therefore becomes an implicit critique of territorial nationalism. The poem ultimately suggests a planetary conception of belonging. If the country can possess the Nile, Mongolia, Mohenjo-daro, Vasco da Gama, the moon and Bhairavī within one imaginative geography, then national identity is already planetary. The poem’s “country” is therefore less a nation-state than a miniature cosmos.

XV. “*DEŚA*” AND WALT WHITMAN’S “I HEAR AMERICA SINGING”: TWO VISIONS OF NATION

A comparison with Walt Whitman’s “I Hear America Singing” reveals a dramatic contrast in national poetics. Whitman constructs America through a chorus of workers: mechanics, carpenters, masons, boatmen and others whose individual voices collectively produce the democratic nation. His America is plural but fundamentally celebratory. Mohanty’s country is also plural, but its plurality is haunted by suffering. Where Whitman hears the nation singing, Mohanty hears it remembering.

The contrast is especially revealing because both poems personify national identity through multiple human and material forms. Whitman’s democratic imagination seeks unity through plurality; Mohanty’s postcolonial imagination seeks truth through fragmentation. Whitman’s nation is a chorus. Mohanty’s nation is an archaeological

excavation. The former celebrates the present; the latter interrogates the historical conditions that made the present possible.

XVI. “*DEŚA*” AND CLAUDE MCKAY’S “AMERICA”: LOVE WITHIN ALIENATION

Claude McKay’s “America” provides an even closer comparative framework because it combines attraction, violence and alienation. McKay describes America as simultaneously powerful and destructive, a place that feeds him even as it tests and threatens him. Mohanty’s “Country” similarly embodies contradiction. She is both wounded and fertile, historically violated and spiritually powerful, geographically displaced and mythically rooted. The crucial difference is that McKay retains a more explicit first-person perspective, whereas Mohanty depersonalizes the experience into the figure of “she.” This makes the poem’s critique more archetypal. “Country” is not simply a personal response to one nation; it becomes a universal figure of national contradiction.

XVII. “*DEŚA*” AND LANGSTON HUGHES’S “I, TOO”: THE BODY AS NATIONAL ARCHIVE

Langston Hughes’s “I, Too” imagines the excluded Black citizen as an essential component of America’s identity. Its famous assertion that the marginalized subject will eventually occupy the table becomes a poetic demand for recognition. Mohanty’s “Country” operates differently but shares the principle that national identity is constituted by bodies often erased from official narratives. The famine bone, the blood, the ancestors and the archaeological earring all function as counter-archives.

The distinction is significant. Hughes demands inclusion within the nation; Mohanty questions what the nation itself means. Hughes’s poem moves toward democratic inclusion, while Mohanty’s moves toward ontological uncertainty. Yet both poems reject the official nation’s claim to completeness.

XVIII. “*DEŚA*” AND W. B. YEATS’S “EASTER 1916”: HISTORY AS IRREVERSIBLE TRANSFORMATION

Yeats’s “Easter 1916” similarly transforms national history into a meditation on identity, sacrifice and historical change. The repeated phrase “A terrible beauty is born” captures the paradox whereby violence generates a new national consciousness. Mohanty’s green earth emerging from “radium-coloured blood” is structurally comparable. Both poets recognize that political transformation is inseparable from violence.

Yet Mohanty's historical field is far wider. Yeats focuses on a specific revolutionary moment; Mohanty moves across millennia. His "country" includes famine, colonialism, ancient civilization, war and cosmic mythology. The result is a more planetary historical consciousness.

XIX. "DEŚA" AND FAIZ AHMED FAIZ'S "SUBH-E-AZADI": THE BETRAYAL OF NATIONAL DREAM

Faiz's "Subh-e-Azadi" is one of the most powerful South Asian critiques of national independence. The dawn of freedom appears incomplete and blood-stained. Mohanty's poem shares this suspicion of triumphant nationalism. The tricolour is not simply celebrated; it is produced through wind and contact, while the earth becomes green through a mysterious bloodletting. National symbols therefore carry the memory of violence.

The South Asian historical context makes this comparison particularly fruitful. Both poets understand that independence does not automatically erase famine, bloodshed, displacement or historical trauma. The flag can become a symbol of hope, but it can also conceal wounds. Mohanty's surrealism allows him to express this contradiction without turning the poem into political rhetoric.

XX. "DEŚA" AND TAGORE'S "WHERE THE MIND IS WITHOUT FEAR": FROM NATION TO HUMANITY

Rabindranath Tagore's "Where the Mind Is Without Fear" offers perhaps the most philosophically revealing contrast. Tagore imagines a country liberated from narrow domestic walls, dead habits, fear and fragmented knowledge. His ideal nation transcends narrow nationalism and moves toward universal humanity. Mohanty similarly refuses the closed nation-state, but he does so through a darker poetic method.

Tagore's vision is aspirational and utopian; Mohanty's is archaeological and tragic. Tagore asks what a liberated country might become. Mohanty asks what historical suffering has already made the country. Yet both poets ultimately move beyond territorial nationalism toward a larger ethical horizon.

XXI. THE POEM AND ALLEN GINSBERG'S "AMERICA": NATIONAL SELF-CRITIQUE

Allen Ginsberg's "America" uses direct apostrophe and irony to confront the contradictions of American political

culture. Mohanty is less direct but equally subversive. Instead of addressing a country explicitly, he personifies "Country" and allows its body to reveal the contradictions of nationalism. Both poets refuse patriotic idealization. Both turn the nation into an object of interrogation.

The crucial difference lies in poetic register. Ginsberg's mode is prophetic, conversational and confrontational; Mohanty's is surreal, mythological and archaeological. Yet their underlying ethical purpose is comparable: love of country does not require silence about its violence.

XXII. PSYCHOANALYTIC READING: THE COUNTRY AS COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS

From a psychoanalytic perspective, the poem can be interpreted as a representation of collective unconscious memory. The country's conscious identity—its flag, territory and political existence—is repeatedly interrupted by repressed historical material: famine, bones, blood, war and archaeological ruins. The past returns through objects and bodily fragments. The copper earring becomes a return of the buried.

The final appearance of Bhairavī may then be interpreted as the eruption of an archetypal feminine force from beneath the conscious national self. The country has travelled through historical trauma and arrives at an image that exceeds rational political identity. Jungian criticism would recognize in Bhairavī a powerful archetypal figure combining destruction, transformation and feminine potency.

The poem thus suggests that every country has a shadow. Official national narratives often celebrate triumph, unity and continuity; the unconscious national archive contains famine, death, displacement and violence. Mohanty gives that shadow poetic form.

XXIII. THE PHILOSOPHY OF IDENTITY: COUNTRY AS BECOMING

At its deepest philosophical level, "*Deśa*" is a poem about becoming rather than being. The country never simply "is." It wears, scrubs, drifts, reaches, touches, fashions, bleeds, throws, grasps, fixes, listens and appears. These verbs are essential because they transform the noun "country" into a process. Identity is something continuously performed and reconstructed.

This aligns the poem with philosophical conceptions of becoming found in Heraclitus, Nietzsche, Bergson and Deleuze, though Mohanty's poetic method is distinct. The country is Heraclitean because it is always moving;

Bergsonian because memory penetrates the present; Nietzschean because identity emerges through struggle and transformation; and Deleuzian because it continually enters new assemblages. Yet none of these philosophies completely contains the poem. Mohanty's country remains irreducibly poetic.

The deepest paradox is that the country becomes itself by ceasing to be singular. Its identity is constituted by plurality. It is Mongolian and African, colonial and precolonial, ancient and modern, earthly and celestial, feminine and divine. The country becomes authentic not through purification but through recognition of its hybridity.

XXIV. THE PHONETICS OF DISPLACEMENT: READING THE IPA AS POETIC EVIDENCE

The inclusion of the IPA transcription allows a particularly interesting linguistic dimension to the poem's interpretation. The phonetic sequence *[pa:tʃila: pidʒuli ku pa:tʃa:ɾi pəri piŋdʰe se]* preserves the flowing cadence of the opening image, while *[bʰa:sibʰa:si bʰa:skɔdaga:ma:rɔ a:biʃka:rɔ pa:kʰɔre]* produces a remarkable acoustic movement around the historical name Vasco da Gama. The repeated aspirated and fricative articulations create an audible sense of motion. Similarly, *[ba:dʒi pɔre ba:dʒi]* is compact and repetitive, reflecting the poem's gambling rhythm.

The IPA, therefore, demonstrates that the poem's meaning is not entirely separable from sound. The transliteration provides accessibility to readers unfamiliar with Odia script, while IPA provides linguistic precision. Together they reveal the poem as both literary text and phonological event. The movement from *[ni:ɔnɔdi:rɔ]* to *[bʰairɔbi:]* symbolically traces the poem's journey from river to divinity.

The poem's multilingual vocabulary is especially audible in forms such as *[skrɔb]*, *[pel-bik]* and *[redijɔm]*. These forms demonstrate how modern Odia poetic diction can absorb foreign lexical material without surrendering its phonological identity. The language itself becomes a model of cultural hybridity.

XXV. MODERNIST AND SURREALIST POETICS: THE LOGIC OF THE IMPOSSIBLE

"Deśa" also belongs to a modernist and surrealist poetic tradition in which images are connected not by conventional logic but by associative and symbolic logic. A guava becomes a sari; a pelvic bone becomes historical

memory; the Nile becomes a washing place; a flag becomes a tricolour through wind; blood becomes green soil; war becomes an icy monument; an earring becomes a historian; moon-people become the setting for Bhairavī.

This logic is not irrational. It is a deeper poetic logic that allows heterogeneous historical realities to coexist. The poem's surrealism therefore functions as an epistemological instrument. Conventional realism cannot easily represent the complexity of national history because national history itself is contradictory. Surrealism becomes necessary because reality has already become surreal.

The poem consequently demonstrates that metaphor is not ornamental. It is cognitive. The impossible image reveals an impossible historical truth: countries are made from contradictions.

XXVI. MEMORY, TRAUMA, AND THE ETHICS OF REMEMBERING

Memory is perhaps the poem's deepest ethical concern. The country is repeatedly forced to remember what official history might prefer to forget. The famine remains in the bone. War remains in the monument. Mohenjo-daro remains in the earring. Colonialism remains in the figure of Vasco da Gama. Blood remains in the soil. The country therefore becomes a remembering organism.

The ethical force of the poem comes from its refusal to allow historical violence to disappear behind national symbolism. A flag alone cannot represent a country. A monument alone cannot contain its ancestors. A map alone cannot represent its suffering. Country is a memory system.

The poem therefore participates in what may be called an ethics of historical remembrance. It asks readers to understand nationhood not merely as pride in inherited civilization but as responsibility toward inherited suffering. To belong to a country is to inherit both its glory and its wounds.

XXVII. THE PARADOX OF PATRIOTISM WITHOUT NATIONALISM

One of the most sophisticated dimensions of "Deśa" is that it does not simply reject the country. The poem's very act of personifying and mythologizing "country" demonstrates profound investment in the idea of collective belonging. What it rejects is not belonging itself but simplistic nationalism. It replaces patriotic possession with ethical memory.

The country is not praised because it is pure, superior or victorious. It is made worthy of attention because it has survived contradictions. This distinction is crucial. Nationalism often says, "My country is great because it is mine." Mohanty's poem asks instead, "What does my country contain, and what does it remember?" The second question is ethically deeper.

The poem, therefore, creates a form of critical patriotism. Love of country becomes the willingness to confront its historical wounds. The flag must coexist with famine; civilization with war; green soil with blood; archaeology with mystery; and national identity with planetary belonging.

XXVIII. THE TITLE "DEŚA": FROM TERRITORY TO METAPHYSICS

The title "*Deśa*" is deceptively simple. In Indian linguistic and philosophical traditions, "*Deśa*" can denote country, region, place or locality, but Mohanty expands the semantic field until the word becomes almost metaphysical. The poem asks what constitutes a "place" when bodies migrate, rivers cross boundaries, civilizations disappear, languages borrow from one another, and historical memory survives in fragments.

The English title "Country" introduces another semantic layer because "country" can mean nation, homeland, rural land or territory. Mohanty's poem exploits precisely this ambiguity. Country is simultaneously political territory and organic earth. It is land and memory, nation and landscape.

The title therefore functions as an open question rather than a closed definition. What is a country? The poem's answer is paradoxical: a country is whatever remains when geography, history, body, memory, violence, language and myth become inseparable.

XXIX. TOWARD A PLANETARY HUMANISM

The final philosophical movement of the poem is toward planetary humanism. Its geography refuses borders. The Nile, Mongolia, Vasco da Gama, Mohenjo-daro, the sky and the moon all coexist. The country is therefore a world in miniature. It is not merely "ours"; it is made from innumerable encounters.

This planetary imagination has particular contemporary significance. In an era of migration, climate change, nuclear anxiety, globalization and transnational cultural exchange, the fantasy of the sealed nation becomes

increasingly untenable. Mohanty's poem anticipates this condition through surreal imagery. Wind crosses borders. Rivers connect continents. Blood enters soil. Archaeological memory outlives political regimes. The sky has no passport.

The country therefore becomes a planetary body. Its wounds are local but also universal. Its famine is historical but also human. Its war is national but also civilizational. Its memory is archaeological but also existential. Its final Bhairavī form transcends geography altogether.

XXX. CONCLUSION: FROM COUNTRY AS MAP TO COUNTRY AS MEMORY

Krushna Kumar Mohanty's "*Deśa*" is ultimately a poem that refuses every easy definition of nation. It begins with the intimate body and expands toward continents, colonial history, national symbolism, radiation, blood, soil, war, archaeology, civilization, mythology and the cosmos. Its central figure is a woman, but she is more than woman; she is earth, history, nation, civilization and collective memory. She carries "*a pelvic bone / left over from the Famine of the Ninth Annum*," washes her "*Mongolian face*" in an unnamed tributary of the Nile, reaches the vicinity of "*Vasco da Gama's discovery*," touches "*the national flag / of some country*," fashions a "*tricolour / for herself*," emerges from "*radium-coloured blood*," turns soil green, gambles upon the historical dice board, preserves ancestors upon an "*icy monument*," listens to the "*mysterious tale of the Indus Civilization*" through a copper earring, and finally appears "*like Bhairavī*." The sequence is not merely a collection of surreal images; it is a philosophy of historical existence.

The poem's greatness lies in its refusal to choose between local and global, ancient and modern, body and geography, history and myth. It understands that the country is precisely the space where these contradictions meet. Its use of transliterated Odia—"Pācilā pijulikū pātaśādhi pari pim̐dhe se," "goṭe pel-bik haḍare," "Maṅgoliān muhaṁ," "reḍiyam raṅgara," "bāji pare bāji," and "Bhairabī pari diśuthibā mūrṭiṭi hiṁ se"—shows that the linguistic body of the poem itself reproduces the hybridity it describes. The IPA, from [pa:ʈʃila: piḍzuli ku pa:ʈʃa:ʈʃi pəri piṇdʰe se] to [bʰairəbi: pəri diʃutʰiba: mu:rṭiṭi hī se], further demonstrates that the poem's philosophical movement is inseparable from its acoustic movement. Language travels just as the country travels.

Compared with Whitman's democratic America, McKay's conflicted America, Hughes's excluded America, Yeats's revolutionary Ireland, Faiz's wounded postcolonial

homeland, Tagore's universalist nation and Ginsberg's satirical America, Mohanty's "Country" occupies a distinctive position. It neither celebrates the nation nor simply condemns it. It anatomizes it. It excavates it. It listens to it. It turns the nation into a body whose bones preserve famine, whose blood remembers violence, whose skin carries foreign histories, whose soil absorbs sacrifice and whose archaeological fragments whisper forgotten civilizations. In this sense, Mohanty's poem is not merely a poem about a country; it is a poem about the impossibility of reducing a country to a country.

The final emergence of Bhairavī completes this philosophical trajectory. The country that began as a body ends as an icon. Yet the transformation is not an escape from history. Bhairavī emerges after famine, colonialism, war, blood and archaeological memory. Divinity is therefore not transcendence of suffering but metamorphosis through suffering. The country survives by transforming its wounds into consciousness. The poem consequently moves from geography to ontology, from history to memory, and from nationalism to planetary humanism.

The deepest proposition of "Deśa" may, therefore, be stated paradoxically: **a country becomes most fully itself when it recognizes that it has never belonged exclusively to itself.** Its rivers exceed borders, its language absorbs foreign words, its history contains multiple civilizations, its soil remembers the dead, its symbols arise through contact, and its mythology opens toward the cosmos. Mohanty's "Country" is consequently neither map nor monument. It is a moving palimpsest, a wounded organism, an archaeological archive and finally a cosmic feminine presence. Its true border is memory, and its ultimate geography is the human imagination.

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