

Vande Mataram @ 150

The word “Amma” (Mother) carries deep love, affection, and devotion. The same emotion, when written for our Motherland, became Vande Mataram — a poem that inspired generations with love for the nation and duty towards dharma.

This year marks 150 years since that powerful slogan united the entire nation — from Kashmir to Kanyakumari.U

On this occasion, the Government of India has decided to celebrate it nationwide. Everyone is requested to sing the “Vande Mataram” song on November 7 at 10:00 a.m.

Let us make efforts in our cities, shakhas, schools, and colleges, Gated Communities to gather people and sing Vande Mataram at 10 a.m. sharp on 07 November. After singing, we can also speak for about 10 minutes about its history and message.

The Story of Vande Mataram

The song Vande Mataram was born out of insult and pain. It was a short yet divine poem filled with the love and devotion of a son toward his motherland. Spiritual thinkers called it a rishi’s verse, and revolutionaries called it the source of strength for freedom.

It was written exactly 150 years ago and became the voice that united BHARAT.

How it was born

One day, when Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay — a Deputy Magistrate in Bengal — was traveling in a palanquin, a British officer rudely stopped him, dragged him out, and slapped him, not knowing who he was. Even after realizing his mistake, the officer only said “sorry.”

Bankim refused to forgive him easily. He said, “Apologize in the court.”

The British judge asked him to withdraw the case, but Bankim agreed only if the officer publicly apologized. The officer had to do it in front of everyone.

Though Bankim won, the humiliation stayed in his heart.

He thought, “If this can happen to a high officer like me, what about ordinary Indians?”

Soon after, he heard that the British wanted to make “God Save the King” India’s national song. That anger became inspiration — and from his pen flowed the immortal lines:

> Vande Mataram, Sujalam, Suphalam, Malayaja Sheetalam...

It is said he wrote these lines on November 7, 1875.

He was already a famous novelist and writer — the father of the modern Indian novel. But his poem didn’t immediately become popular. Scholars criticized it for being written in a mix of Sanskrit and Bengali. Bankim just replied,

> “If you like it, read it. If not, throw it away. One day the world will know its worth.”

He later included the song in his novel Anandamath, where monks fought against British rule. Though the novel became famous, the song still didn’t reach the masses.

How it reached the people

Years later, Rabindranath Tagore recognized its greatness, composed music for it, and sang it at the 1886 Calcutta Congress Session.

But it became truly famous in 1905, during the Partition of Bengal.

Tagore and other leaders led huge protests where Hindus and Muslims tied rakhi to each other as a symbol of unity, and the crowd sang Vande Mataram. It spread like wildfire across the country.

The Song that Ignited the Nation

From Bengal, Vande Mataram reached every corner of India.

Revolutionaries printed it as pamphlets in different languages. Aravind Ghosh (later Sri Aurobindo) translated it into English.

The song was banned by the British because they felt it portrayed them as demons. But the ban only made Indians more determined.

Between 1905–1911, this became known as the Vande Mataram Era.

The Telugu Connection

In 1907, the song inspired the youth of Rajahmundry.

Students marched singing Vande Mataram. Their leader, Gadicherla Harisavottama Rao, was expelled from college by the British principal, Hunter.

Instead of fear, it sparked a movement.

Soon, Vande Mataram Associations were formed in villages.

Even farmers joined — one such farmer, Chinnareddy, from Guntur district, fought bravely shouting Vande Mataram! before being executed by the British.

The Spirit of Sacrifice

Freedom fighters took strength from this song.

When Khudiram Bose, just 18 years old, was sentenced to death, he smiled and shouted Vande Mataram before going to the gallows.

A small boy in Bihar named Budhu Nonia was thrown into a boiling salt pan by a British policeman — even in that pain, his last words were Vande Mataram!

Matangi Hazra, a 60-year-old widow, led a protest in 1942. Even as bullets hit her body, she kept shouting Vande Mataram till her last breath.

In Hyderabad, students of Osmania University sang the song in 1938 against the Nizam's rule.

They were locked up, expelled, and banned — yet they didn't give up.

One of those expelled students later became India's Prime Minister — P. V. Narasimha Rao.

The Divisive Turn

Until 1920, Vande Mataram was a song of unity.

But the British spread false propaganda that it was only for Hindus, to divide the people.

During the 1937 Congress meeting, due to objections from a few leaders, the party decided to sing only the first two verses — which had no religious reference.

Even Tagore, Gandhi, and Subhas Chandra Bose were deeply moved by this song. Gandhi said:

> “This song moves me deeply. It still echoes in millions of hearts.”

On August 15, 1947, Vande Mataram was the first song broadcast on All India Radio after independence.

In 1950, the Constituent Assembly declared that Vande Mataram would enjoy equal status with the National Anthem “Jana Gana Mana.”

Interesting Facts

Though both songs have equal national status, “Jana Gana Mana” has strict rules for tune and timing (52 seconds).

Vande Mataram has no such restrictions — it can be sung in many styles, which is why there are thousands of versions.

On 15 August 1947, singer Om Prakash sang Vande Mataram in Parliament — with no music, only pure voice — to let the emotion of the words speak for itself.

Even today, Doordarshan plays it every morning as a prayer song without any background music.

In a BBC World Service poll, Vande Mataram was voted the second most popular national song in the world, after Ireland’s independence song.

The first gramophone recording of Vande Mataram was made by Rabindranath Tagore himself in 1906 — later destroyed by the British, but recovered from Paris in 1966 and brought back to Bharat.

Bharat Mata Ki Jai!...

