

DECODE UPSC

TOPIC - 11

Crack Prelims, Ace Mains, Impress in Interview

VANDE MATARAM – 150 YEARS (1875–2025)

Introduction

- November 7, 2025 marks **150 years** of India's National Song *Vande Mataram* ("Mother, I Bow to Thee").
- Composed by **Bankim Chandra Chatterjee**; symbolizes **unity, sacrifice, and devotion** to the Motherland.
- First published in **Bangadarshan** on **7 November 1875**.
- Later included in Bankim's novel '**Anandamath**' (1882).
- Set to music by **Rabindranath Tagore**.
- Integral to India's **civilizational, cultural, and political consciousness**.



Historical Background

- Mentioned by **Sri Aurobindo (1907)** in *Bande Mataram* daily – written *32 years earlier* (i.e., 1875).
- *Anandamath* was serialized in **Bangadarshan** (edited by Bankim).
- The song appeared in the **March–April 1881 issue** of the serial.
- **Madam Bhikaji Cama (1907)** raised the tricolour with *Vande Mataram* inscribed at **Stuttgart, Berlin**.

Anandamath and the Religion of Patriotism

- Novel depicts **Santanas (sanyasis)** fighting for the Motherland.
- They worship **Bharat Mata** as a goddess – symbol of the "*Religion of Patriotism*".
- Three forms of the Mother:
 - **Past** – glorious.
 - **Present** – enslaved.
 - **Future** – resurgent and free.
- Aurobindo's words: "*The Mother of his vision held trenchant steel in her seventy million hands.*"

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838–1894)

- Pioneer of **modern Bengali literature and nationalist thought**.
- **Key works:**
 - *Durgeshnandini* (1865)
 - *Kapalkundala* (1866)
 - *Anandamath* (1882)
 - *Devi Chaudhurani* (1884)
- Through *Vande Mataram*, he combined **spiritual idealism with nationalism**.
- Helped shape **intellectual foundations of early Indian nationalism**.



Vande Mataram – Song of Resistance

- **Bande Mataram Sampradaya** founded in **Oct 1905, Calcutta**; promoted patriotism through *Prabhat Pheris*.
- **Tagore** often joined these processions.
- **20 May 1906**: Massive *Vande Mataram* procession in **Barisal** with 10,000+ participants.
- **August 1906**: *Bande Mataram* English daily launched — **Editor: Bipin Chandra Pal; Joint Editor: Sri Aurobindo**.
- Became a **nationalist mouthpiece** spreading self-reliance and unity.

British Suppression

- British banned *Vande Mataram* in **Eastern Bengal schools and colleges**.
- **Rangpur, 1905**: 200 students fined ₹5 each for chanting it.
- Public chanting prohibited in **Barisal (1906)** and other provinces.
- **1908 (Belgaum)**: Police crackdown during Tilak's deportation protests.

Battle Cry of Nationalism

- Became anthem of **Swadeshi and Anti-Partition Movements (1905–08)**.
- Transcended religion and region — symbol of **national awakening**.
- **1896**: First sung by **Rabindranath Tagore** at Congress Session.
- **1905 Varanasi Congress**: Adopted for all-India occasions.
- Inspired mass mobilization during protests, trials, and imprisonments.

Global Impact

- **1907:** *Vande Mataram* on tricolour raised by **Madam Cama** in Germany.
- **1909:** *Bande Mataram* magazine published from **Geneva** by Indian patriots.
- **17 Aug 1909:** **Madan Lal Dhingra**'s last words before execution – "*Bande Mataram*."
- **1912:** **Gopal Krishna Gokhale** welcomed in South Africa with cries of *Vande Mataram*.

Vande Mataram in the Freedom Struggle

- **7 Aug 1905 (Calcutta):** First used as a **political slogan** during Swadeshi movement.
- Represented boycott of British goods and demand for *Swadeshi*.
- Echoed across Bengal, Bombay, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu.
- **Tuticorin (1908):** Coral Mills workers struck, chanting *Vande Mataram* in protest.

National Status (Post-Independence)

- **Constituent Assembly (24 Jan 1950):**
 - **Dr. Rajendra Prasad's statement:**
 - *Jana Gana Mana* – National Anthem.
 - *Vande Mataram* – National Song with **equal honor and status**.
- Symbolizes India's **freedom struggle, unity, and devotion**.

Key Takeaways for UPSC

- **Composed:** Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1875)
- **First Publication:** *Bangadarshan* journal, 7 Nov 1875
- **Included in:** *Anandamath* (1882)
- **Set to Music:** Rabindranath Tagore
- **First Sung:** Congress Session, Calcutta, 1896
- **First Political Use:** Swadeshi Movement, 1905
- **Flag with Slogan:** Madam Cama, Stuttgart, 1907
- **Equal Status with National Anthem:** 24 Jan 1950 (Dr. Rajendra Prasad)
- **Themes:** Motherland worship, unity, resistance, spiritual nationalism



UPSC Prelims Multiple Choice Questions

1. Consider the following statements about “Vande Mataram”:

1. It was first published in the magazine *Bangadarshan* in 1875.
2. The song was later included in the novel *Anandamath* (1882).
3. It was set to music by Rabindranath Tagore.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| (a) 1 and 2 only | (c) 1, 2 and 3 |
| (b) 2 and 3 only | (d) 1 and 3 only |

2. Consider the following statements regarding the role of “Vande Mataram” in the national movement:

1. It was first sung at the 1896 session of the Indian National Congress.
2. It became a rallying cry during the Swadeshi and anti-partition movements.
3. It was banned by the British administration in the province of Eastern Bengal.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 3
- (d) 2 and 3 only

3. With reference to “Anandamath,” consider the following statements:

- 1. It was authored by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and published in 1882.
- 2. The novel portrays sanyasis called “Santanas” fighting for the liberation of the motherland.
- 3. It introduced the concept of worshipping the motherland as a goddess.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

4. Consider the following statements about the recognition of “Vande Mataram” post-Independence:

- 1. It was given equal status with *Jana Gana Mana* by the Constituent Assembly in 1950.
- 2. Dr. Rajendra Prasad made the official announcement regarding its status.
- 3. *Vande Mataram* was declared the National Anthem of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

5. Consider the following statements about the international influence of “Vande Mataram”:

- 1. Madam Bhikaji Cama raised a tricolour flag with *Vande Mataram* written on it in Germany in 1907.
- 2. The slogan *Vande Mataram* was used by revolutionaries like Madan Lal Dhingra.
- 3. The first foreign publication of the *Bande Mataram* magazine was in Paris.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 1, 2 and 3
- (d) 2 and 3 only

6. With reference to *Madanapalle* of Andhra Pradesh, which one of the following statements is correct?

- (a) Pingali Venkayya designed the tricolour Indian National Flag here.
- (b) Pattabhi Sitaramaiah led the Quit India Movement of Andhra region from here.
- (c) Rabindranath Tagore translated the National Anthem from Bengali to English here.
- (d) Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott set up headquarters of the Theosophical Society first here.

Answers

1. (c) 1, 2 and 3

- All three statements are correct. *Vande Mataram* was composed by **Bankim Chandra Chatterjee**, first published in **Bangadarshan (1875)**, and later incorporated into **Anandamath (1882)**. **Rabindranath Tagore** later set it to music and sang it at the **1896 Congress session**.

2. (c) 1, 2 and 3

- All statements are correct. *Vande Mataram* was **first sung in 1896**, gained mass appeal during the **Swadeshi movement (1905–08)**, and was **banned by the British authorities in Eastern Bengal** due to its association with anti-colonial resistance.

3. (d) 1, 2 and 3

- All statements are correct. *Anandamath* (1882) introduced the **Santanas**, ascetics dedicated to the **worship of Bharat Mata**, symbolizing the **“Religion of Patriotism”** and India’s awakening against colonial rule.

4. (a) 1 and 2 only

- Statements 1 and 2 are correct. On **24 January 1950**, **Dr. Rajendra Prasad** announced that *Vande Mataram* would be honored equally with *Jana Gana Mana* but would be recognized as the **National Song**, not the **National Anthem**.

5. (c) 1, 2 and 3

All three statements are correct.

- **Madam Bhikaji Cama** raised the flag at **Stuttgart, Germany (1907)**.
- **Madan Lal Dhingra’s** last words before his execution were *“Bande Mataram.”*
- The *Bande Mataram* magazine was later **published by Indian patriots in Paris and Geneva** to inspire the freedom movement.

6. (c) Rabindranath Tagore translated the National Anthem from Bengali to English here.

- *Madanapalle*, located in the Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh, is historically significant as the place where **Rabindranath Tagore translated “Jana Gana Mana”**—originally composed in Bengali—into English in **1919**.
- This event took place at **Besant Theosophical College**, where Tagore stayed as a guest.
- The English version later helped in popularizing the anthem nationally and internationally.

UPSC MAINS



UPSC Mains Basic Question

1. Discuss the historical significance of 'Vande Mataram' in India's freedom movement.

✓ Answer Framework:

- **Introduction:**

Vande Mataram, composed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in 1875, became a timeless hymn of India's national awakening. Originally a poetic invocation to the Motherland, it transcended literature to become a rallying cry for India's struggle for independence.

- **Body:**

The song, first published in *Bangadarshan* and later included in *Anandamath* (1882), symbolized the fusion of spirituality and patriotism. It personified the nation as a divine mother and inspired unity across caste and region.

During the **Swadeshi and anti-partition movements (1905-08)**, the slogan "*Vande Mataram*" echoed through Bengal and beyond, mobilizing millions against British rule. Rabindranath Tagore's rendition at the **1896 Congress session** and the establishment of the *Bande Mataram* newspaper by **Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh** turned it into a cultural and political weapon.

Despite bans and repression by the colonial authorities, the song's popularity grew. It symbolized both emotional resistance and intellectual defiance. Revolutionaries like **Madan Lal Dhingra** and patriots abroad, such as **Madam Bhikaji Cama**, invoked it as a mark of national solidarity.

- **Conclusion:**

Vande Mataram became more than a song—it was a unifying spirit of India's nationalism. Its message of devotion, sacrifice, and freedom inspired generations, shaping the emotional foundation of India's freedom struggle and continuing to symbolize unity in diversity.

Advanced UPSC Mains Question

2. Critically analyze the cultural and ideological significance of 'Vande Mataram' as a symbol of Indian nationalism and its relevance in contemporary India.

✓ **Answer Framework:**

- **Introduction:**

Vande Mataram stands at the intersection of culture, politics, and spirituality in India's national identity. Its composition by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee marked a defining moment where literature evolved into political philosophy, inspiring a nation's self-consciousness.

- **Body:**

The hymn represented the **"Religion of Patriotism"**, portraying the motherland as divine and sacred. By merging devotion with duty, it redefined nationalism not as mere political resistance but as spiritual fulfillment. In *Anandamath*, Bankim visualized India as the Mother—enslaved yet destined for resurgence.

Its adoption by revolutionaries, reformers, and poets reflected its ability to transcend religious and linguistic boundaries. During the **Swadeshi movement**, it unified diverse social groups under a single emotional ideal—*love for the motherland*.

However, in post-independence discourse, debates arose over its religious imagery and inclusivity. Yet, the Constituent Assembly in **1950**, under **Dr. Rajendra Prasad**, upheld its equal status with *Jana Gana Mana*, acknowledging its historic role in India's freedom movement.

In contemporary India, *Vande Mataram* remains a call for unity and cultural continuity, linking national pride with civic responsibility and ethical governance.

- **Conclusion:**

From colonial defiance to modern symbolism, *Vande Mataram* encapsulates India's evolving idea of nationhood. Its enduring resonance lies not merely in its words but in its spirit—reminding every generation that patriotism must blend reverence with collective progress.

UPSC INTERVIEW



UPSC Interview-Based Questions

1. Why do you think “Vande Mataram” became such a powerful symbol of India’s freedom struggle?

✓ **Answer:**

It combined patriotism with spirituality, portraying the motherland as divine. Its emotional appeal transcended caste and region, uniting people under one national ideal. The song gave a cultural identity to India’s political awakening.

2. How did Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s idea of the ‘Motherland’ influence later nationalist leaders?

✓ **Answer:**

Bankim’s vision transformed love for the country into a sacred duty. Leaders like Sri Aurobindo and Tilak drew inspiration from his “religion of patriotism.” It redefined nationalism as both moral and spiritual pursuit.

3. What does the 150th anniversary of “Vande Mataram” signify in contemporary India?

✓ **Answer:**

It reminds us of India's journey from colonial subjugation to unity in diversity. The milestone emphasizes national integration and collective pride. It calls for blending patriotism with civic responsibility in modern times.

4. How did “Vande Mataram” bridge literature and politics during the nationalist movement?

✓ **Answer:**

Originating as a literary creation, it evolved into a political slogan. Through *Anandamath* and nationalist newspapers, it connected emotional devotion with political action. It demonstrated the power of culture in mass mobilization.

5. Why did the Constituent Assembly give “Vande Mataram” equal honor with “Jana Gana Mana”?

✓ **Answer:**

It was a tribute to its historic role in India's independence movement. Leaders recognized its ability to evoke unity and patriotism. The decision balanced emotional heritage with constitutional inclusivity.