



Vande Mataram At 150: The Voice Of A Nation

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Some songs belong to a moment; others help shape a nation. Vande Mataram - "I bow to thee, Mother" - belongs to the latter tradition. As India commemorates 150 years of this timeless composition, we honour not merely a song from the past, but a living expression of unity, courage and service that continues to resonate with Indians at home and across the world.

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay composed Vande Mataram in 1875, at a time when colonial rule sought not only to control India, but also to weaken its confidence in its own history and capabilities. Later included in his novel Anandamath in 1882, the song presented the motherland as nurturing and abundant, yet also strong and unyielding. In doing so, it gave poetic form to a powerful idea: India was not merely a territory under foreign rule, but a shared civilizational home worthy of love, sacrifice and defence.

That idea found an immediate and enduring public life. Rabindranath Tagore sang Vande Mataram at the 1896 session of the Indian National Congress. It became a clarion call during the movement against the partition of Bengal in 1905 and, in the years that followed, accompanied countless Indians in their struggle for freedom. Its influence travelled beyond India's shores: in 1907, Madam Bhikaji Cama unfurled in Europe an early version of an Indian national flag bearing the words Vande Mataram. The song had become at once a greeting, a pledge and a call to action.

Its importance was formally acknowledged on 24 January 1950, when the President of the Constituent Assembly, Dr Rajendra Prasad, stated that Vande Mataram, having played a historic part in India's freedom struggle, would be honoured equally with Jana Gana Mana. The recent passage by Parliament of the Prevention of Insults to National Honour (Amendment) Bill, 2026, which seeks to extend to the National Song the same statutory protection accorded

to the National Anthem, further underscores its abiding place in India's national life.

Yet the real strength of Vande Mataram has never rested on official recognition alone. It lies in the emotions it awakens and the responsibilities it recalls. It reminds us that patriotism is not confined to ceremonial occasions or moments of national struggle. It is expressed in everyday conduct: in performing one's duty with integrity, respecting the dignity of others, strengthening social harmony and contributing to the common good.

This message carries particular relevance as India works towards the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047. The dream of a developed India is not measured by economic growth alone. It also rests on the strength of our democratic institutions, the energy of our youth, scientific and technological achievement, the empowerment of women, social inclusion, environmental responsibility and confidence in our cultural inheritance. Nation-building in the twenty-first century calls for the same unity of purpose that animated the freedom movement, now directed towards prosperity, innovation and inclusive progress.

As Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi observed while initiating a special discussion in Parliament, the 150th year of Vande Mataram is an opportunity to recover the greatness of an important chapter in our history and to draw fresh energy from it. The generation that won India's freedom was inspired by the dream of an independent nation. Our generation must bring the same determination to the task of building a self-reliant, compassionate and developed India.

For the Indian community in Kenya, Vande Mataram has an added resonance. For generations, the diaspora has maintained a deep emotional and cultural bond with India while making Kenya its home and contributing meaningfully to its progress. Through

enterprise, healthcare, education, technology, the professions, culture and philanthropy, the community has helped strengthen the social and economic fabric of Kenya. Its experience demonstrates that pride in one's heritage and wholehearted commitment to one's country of residence are not competing loyalties; they can reinforce one another.

India and Kenya are themselves connected by shared histories of anti-colonial struggle, democratic values and enduring people-to-people ties. Our partnership today spans trade and investment, healthcare, education, capacity-building, technology and culture. The Indian diaspora remains one of its strongest bridges. In this context, the spirit of Vande Mataram - service before self, confidence in our collective capabilities and respect for human dignity - speaks not only to India's national journey, but also to the values that sustain close friendship between nations.

The Government of India is marking this milestone through a year-long commemoration from 7 November 2025 to 7 November 2026, with programmes across India and through Indian Embassies & High Commissions abroad. Cultural performances, exhibitions, discussions and public participation are intended not simply to revisit history, but to help younger generations understand why Vande Mataram inspired millions - and what its ideals ask of us today.

One hundred and fifty years after it was composed, Vande Mataram remains relevant because it speaks simultaneously to memory and possibility. It honours the sacrifices that secured India's freedom while reminding us that every generation must contribute to the nation's renewal. Its enduring message is simple and profound: love for the motherland must find expression in service, unity and responsibility.



Ministry of Culture
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VANDE MATARAM

Commemoration of 150 Years of National Song

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"If patriotism and love for Mother India are feelings beyond words, then Vande Mataram is the song that gives a concrete expression to those feelings."
- Narendra Modi
Prime Minister



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