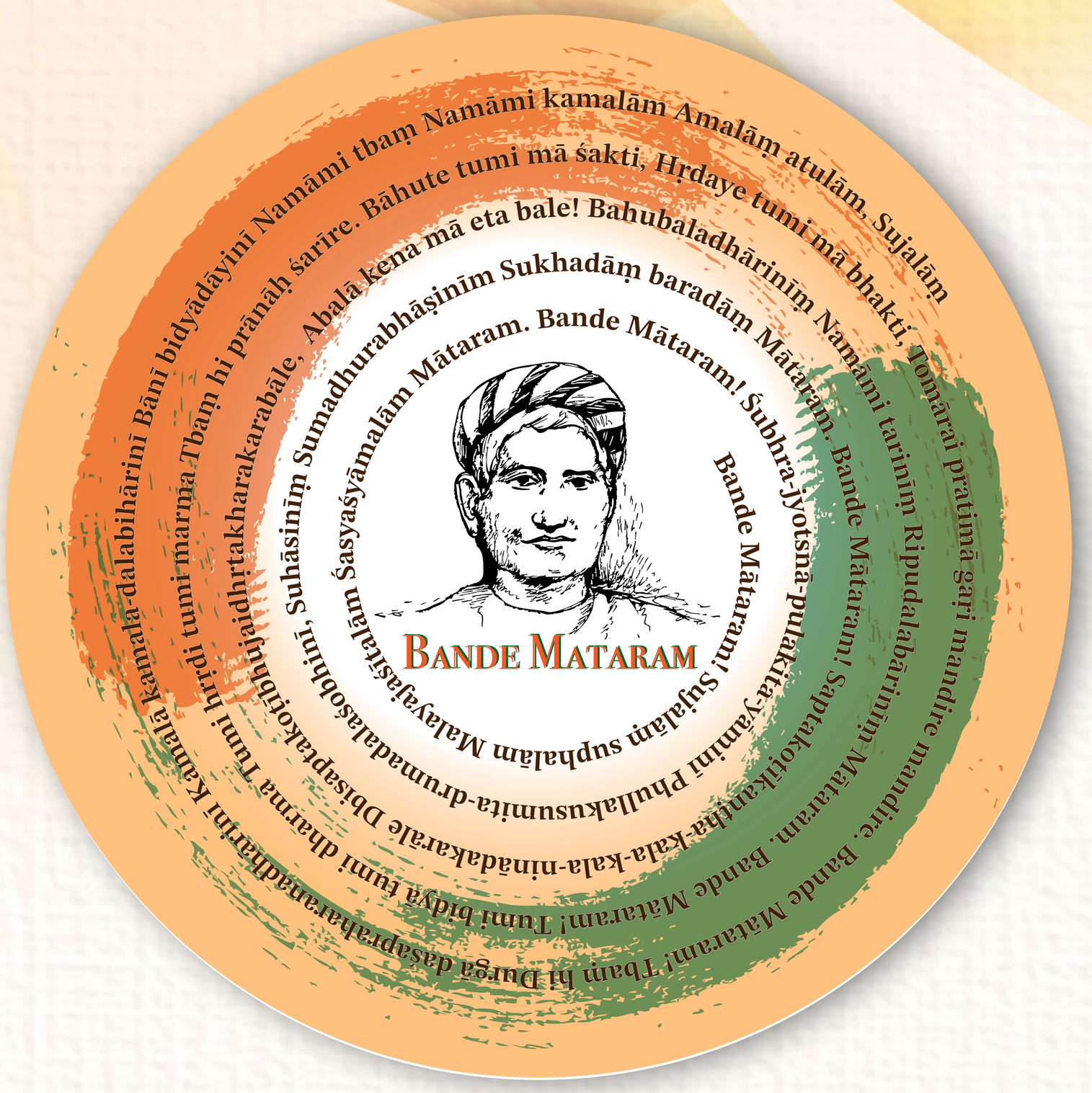
संस्कृति मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
CULTURE
सत्यमेव जयते



VANDE MATARAM

Clarion Call for India's Freedom Struggle

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A song that changed the fate of an entire nation was born on Akshaya Navami in 1875

The term ‘Akshaya’ means ‘that which never diminishes’, symbolizing eternal prosperity and growth

Akshaya Navami is celebrated on the ninth day (Navami) of the bright fortnight (Shukla Paksha) in the month of Kartik, usually falling in October or November according to the Gregorian calendar.

In West Bengal the day is linked to Jagaddhatri Puja honoring Goddess Jagaddhatri, as the world’s divine mother, nurturer and defender. Goddess Jagaddhatri is worshipped as another form of Maa Durga.

Literary sources indicate that Vande Mataram was written 150 years ago on Akshaya Navami which in the year 1875 was on 7th November.



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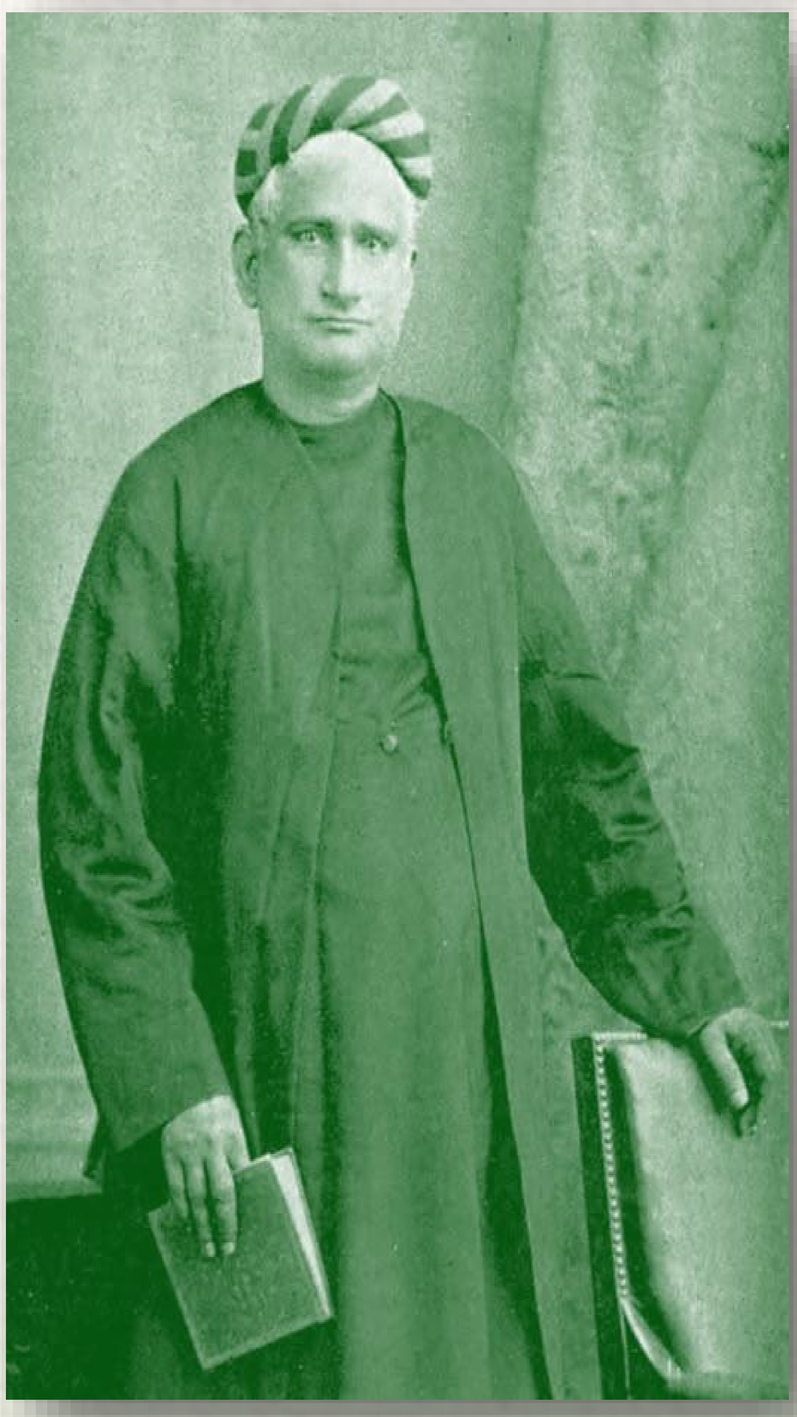
It is believed to have been written when Bankim Chandra was in Lalgola in Murshidabad West Bengal

Once Bankim Chandra was travelling in a palanquin through Barrack Square in Berhampore. It was a December evening in 1873 and some British soldiers were playing a cricket match on that field.



A British officer, Lt. Col. Duffin, stopped Bankim Chandra's palanquin, demanded that the route be changed so as not to cross the ground.

When he refused, there was a confrontation, the officer pulled him down and punched him. At that time Bankim Chandra was serving as the Deputy Collector in the Murshidabad district.



Bankim Babu filed a lawsuit against the officer. Witnesses included the local zamindar of Lalgola, Raja Jogindra Narayan Rai and others.

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In 1874, during the court hearing, the British officer made a public apology in open court to Bankim Chandra

Colonel Duffin was the commanding officer at the Berhampore Cantonment. The public apology became a talking point everywhere.

There were murmurs of possible threats to Bankim Chandra's life. Fearing trouble, Raja Jogindra Narayan Rai invited Bankim Chandra to come to Lalgola for a break. Bankim Chandra took leave of absence and accepted this invitation.



The humiliation and resultant conflict had a strong impact on Bankim Chandra's views of colonial injustice and the idea of the Motherland in distress. Some scholars believe this incident became a catalyst for his writing of Vande Mataram.

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Around the royal palace at Lalgola there were various temples invoking various shades of piety and devotion



For Bankim Chandra, the image of the ‘shackled mother’ in the Kali temple evoked a parallel in his mind with the British colonization of India. Later he incorporated this metaphor into his work by linking it to the idea of the Motherland in bondage, yearning for freedom.



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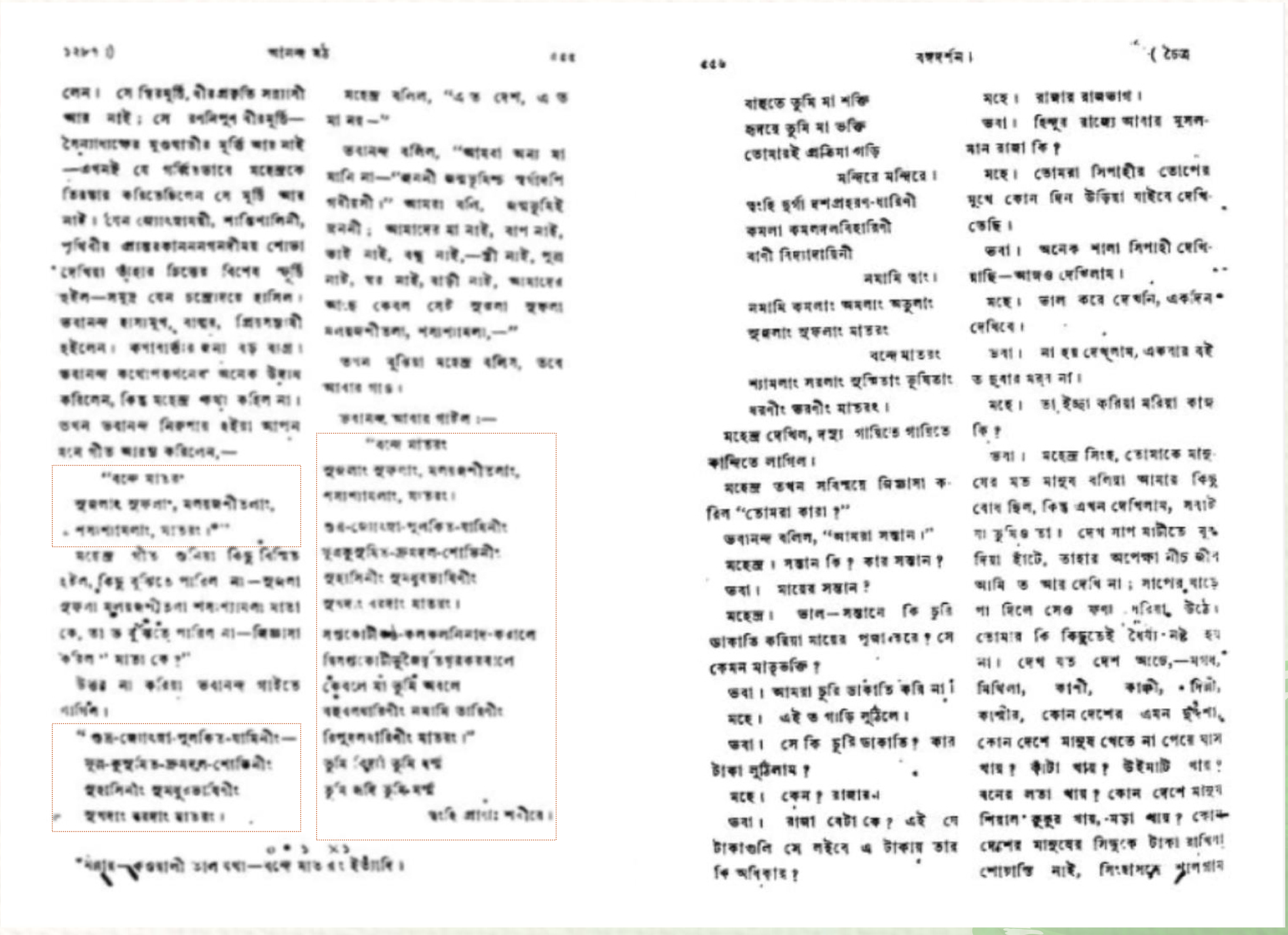
Vande Mataram first appeared in Bangadarshan as part of the serialized novel 'Anandamath'

Vande Mataram was written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay in originally in Sanskritised Bengali.

The song was part of 'Ananda Math' his novel which was published in serialized form first in Bangadarshan. Bangadarshan was a Bangla literary magazine edited by Bankim Chandra.

The novel was based on the Sanyasi Rebellion that took place in the 1770s. Ananda Math was later published as a book in 1882.



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MARCH 1876:
This table at the ancestral house of Bankim Chandra at Naihati bears witness to a prophecy by the writer…



…that the real worth of the song Vande Mataram would be revealed with time.

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Between 1876 and 1884, he was Sub-Divisional Officer of Hooghly, where he bought a relatively modest riverfront house. Now known as Vande Matram Bhawan, he composed his most well known literary works here, including Rajani, Rajsimha, Anandamath, Devi Chaudhurani.

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12th session of Indian National Congress, was held at Beadon Square, Calcutta, in December 1896

Presided over by Rahimtulla Mahomed Sayani of Bombay, the session drew nearly 1,500 delegates and about 3,000 visitors from every province of British India.

Among the prominent attendees were Surendranath Banerjea, Anandamohan Bose, Dinshaw Wacha, Pherozeshah Mehta, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and M.G. Ranade, who together represented the moderate wing of the Congress.



Surendranath Banerjea



Anandamohan Bose



Dinshaw Wacha



Pherozeshah Mehta



Gopal Krishna Gokhale



M.G. Ranade

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Rising figures like Lala Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malaviya, and G. Subramania Iyer were also present, marking the generational shift that was beginning within the movement



Lala Lajpat Rai



Madan Mohan Malaviya



G. Subramania Iyer



Rabindranath Tagore



Sarala Devi



Dwijendralal Roy

Cultural luminaries including Rabindranath Tagore, Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, and Dwijendralal Roy added an artistic and emotional dimension to the proceedings.

Visitors from Madras, Bombay, Punjab, the Central Provinces, Assam, and the United Provinces gave the gathering a distinctly national character.

संस्कृति मंत्रालय
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1896: Rabindranath Tagore, then a budding poet and writer sang Vande Mataram at the Calcutta session of the Congress and made it part of the national consciousness

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, author of Vande Mataram, had passed away just in 1894. In the mid-1890s, *Vande Mataram* had begun to be celebrated in Bengal literary and nationalist circles as his enduring legacy.

Tagore, who admired Bankim Chandra as a literary pioneer and a symbol of Bengal's awakening, chose to honour Bankim's memory and offer the song to the national stage.

The national movement was seeking cultural symbols. The 1890s saw growing nationalist sentiment after the famine and economic "drain" debates.

Tagore, as Bengal's leading cultural voice, wanted to contribute artistically to national awakening. By setting *Vande Mataram* to music and performing it, he provided the movement with an emotive, aesthetic expression of patriotism.



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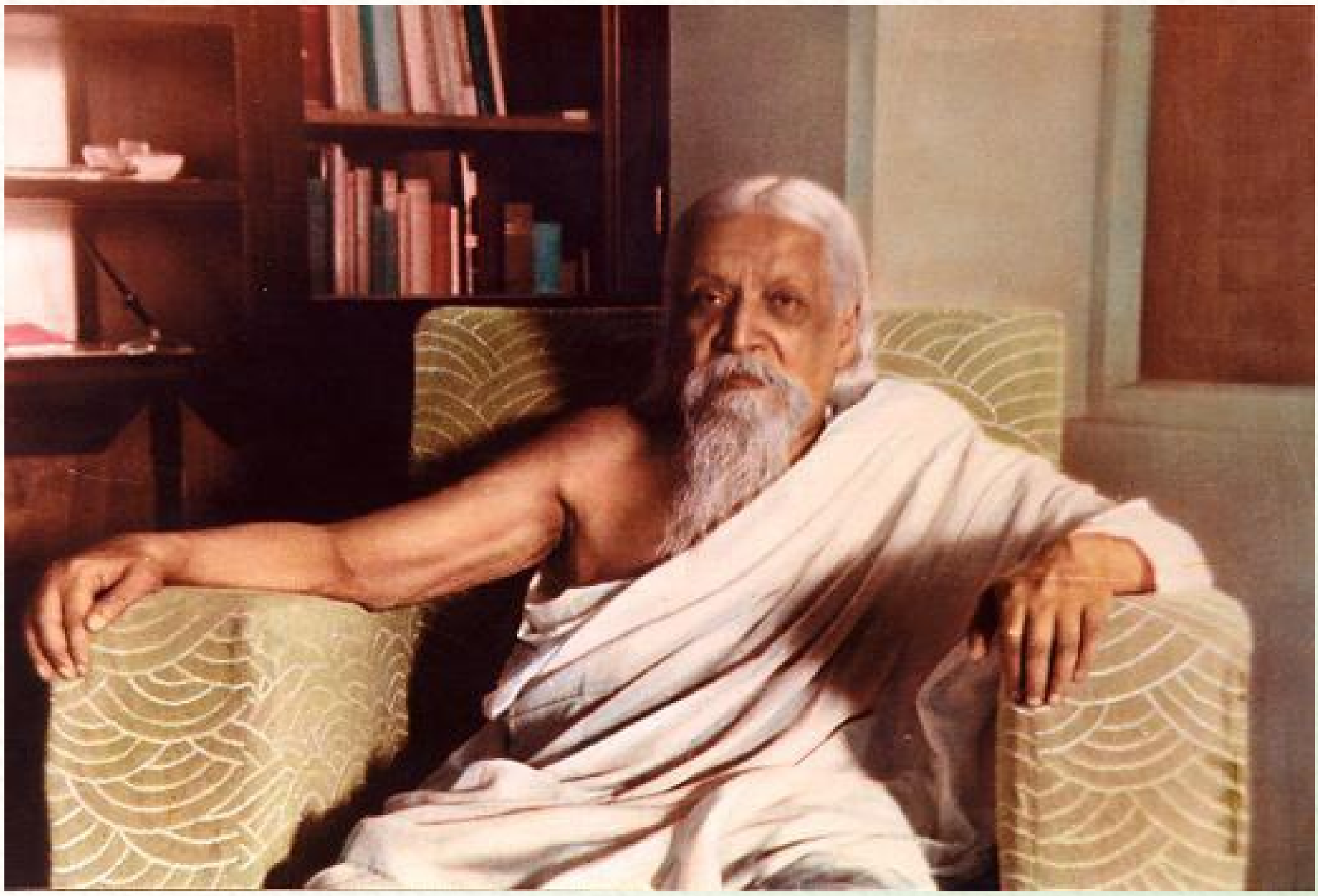
The phrase 'Vande Mataram' was used by freedom fighters as a unifying metaphor combining devotion to the land with political assertion against colonial rule

In his journal Bandemataram dated 16th April 1907,
Sri Aurobindo mentions:

"It was thirty-two years ago that Bankim wrote his great song, and few listened; but in a sudden moment of awakening from long delusions, the people of Bengal looked round for the truth and in a fated moment somebody sang Vande Mataram. The mantra had been given and in a single day a whole people had been converted to the religion of patriotism. The Mother had revealed herself."



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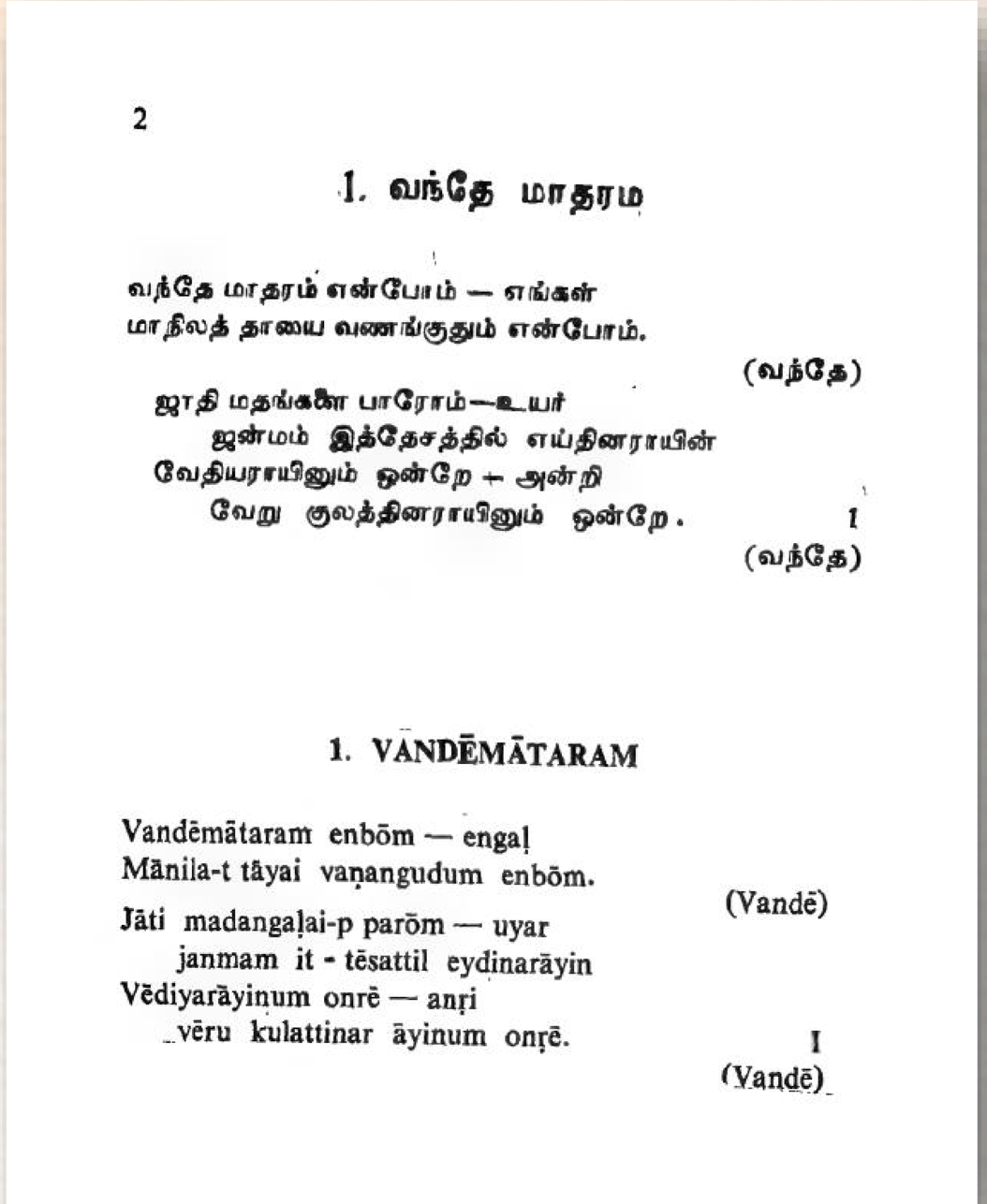
C. Subramania Bharati, the nationalist poet from Tamil Nadu translated Vande Mataram first in 1905, and again in 1908



2

1. வந்தே மாதரம

வந்தே மாதரம் என்போம் — எங்கள்
மாநிலத் தாயை வணங்குதும் என்போம்.

(வந்தே)

ஜாதி மதங்களை பாரோம்—உயர்
ஜன்மம் இத்தேசத்தில் எய்தினராயின்
வேதியராயினும் ஒன்றே — அன்றி
வேறு குலத்தினராயினும் ஒன்றே. 1

(வந்தே)

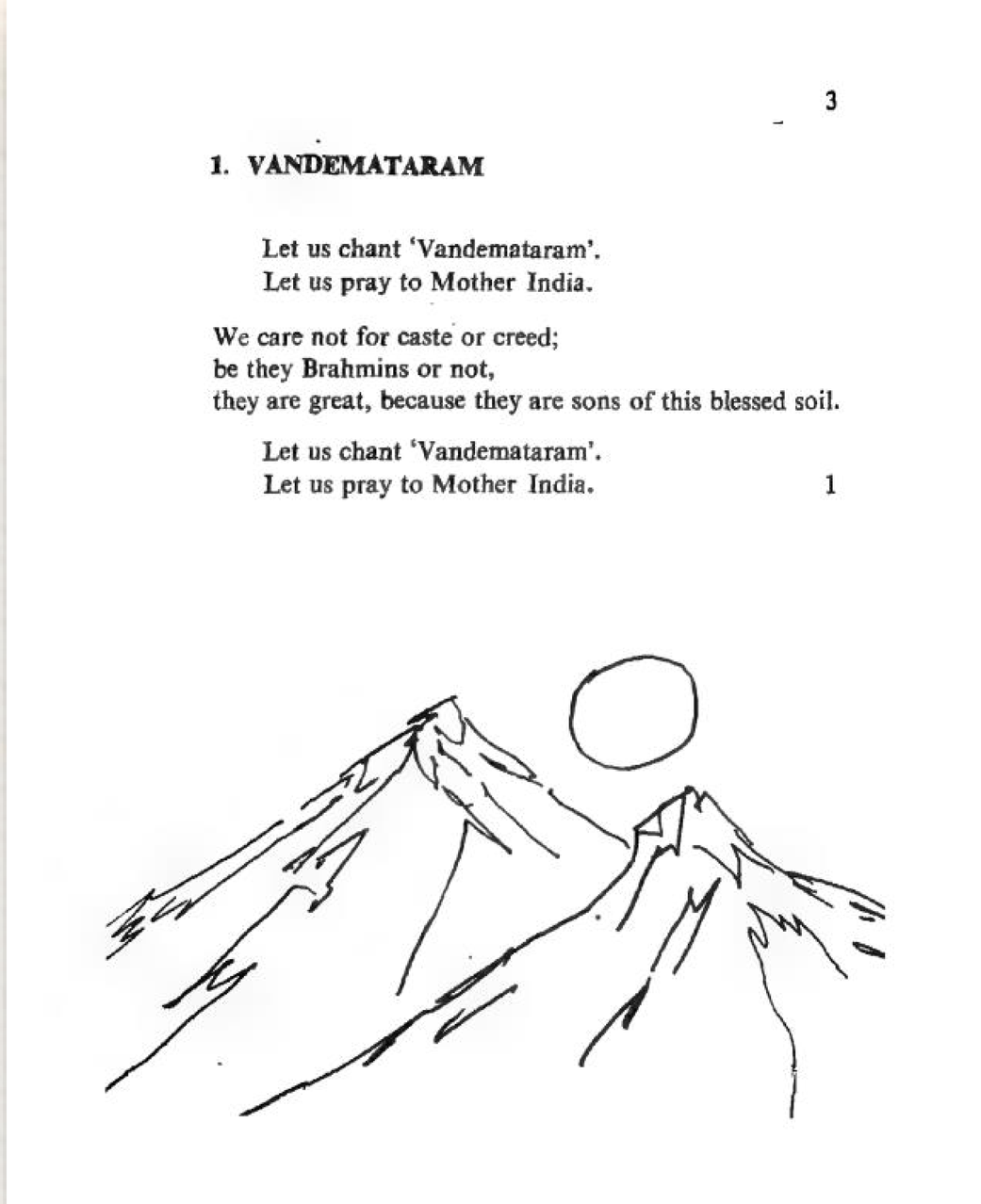
1. VANDĒMĀTARAM

Vandēmātaram enbōm — engaḷ
Mānila-t tāyai vaṇangudum enbōm.

(Vandē)

Jāti madangaḷai-p parōm — uyar
janmam it - tēsattil eydinarāyin
Vēdiyarāyinum onrē — anṛi
vēru kulattinar āyinum onṛē. 1

(Vandē)



3

1. VANDEMATARAM

Let us chant 'Vandemataram'.
Let us pray to Mother India.

We care not for caste or creed;
be they Brahmins or not,
they are great, because they are sons of this blessed soil.

Let us chant 'Vandemataram'.
Let us pray to Mother India. 1

Bharati's first translation was a fairly faithful, literal rendering of Bankim's original Sanskrit–Bengali text. It appeared soon after the 1905 partition of Bengal, when 'Vande Mataram' became a rallying cry. Bharati's aim then was to make Tamil readers understand the meaning and sacred tone of the song to convey the Mother as Bharata Mata, divine yet motherly.

Later, Bharati retranslated 'Vande Mataram' in a more dynamic, nationalist idiom which was not literal, but interpretive. It emphasized freedom, awakening, and motherland rather than just divine motherhood. It reflects Bharati's shift from spiritual nationalism to political and social nationalism inspired by the Swadeshi movement, Tilak, and the early Congress struggles.

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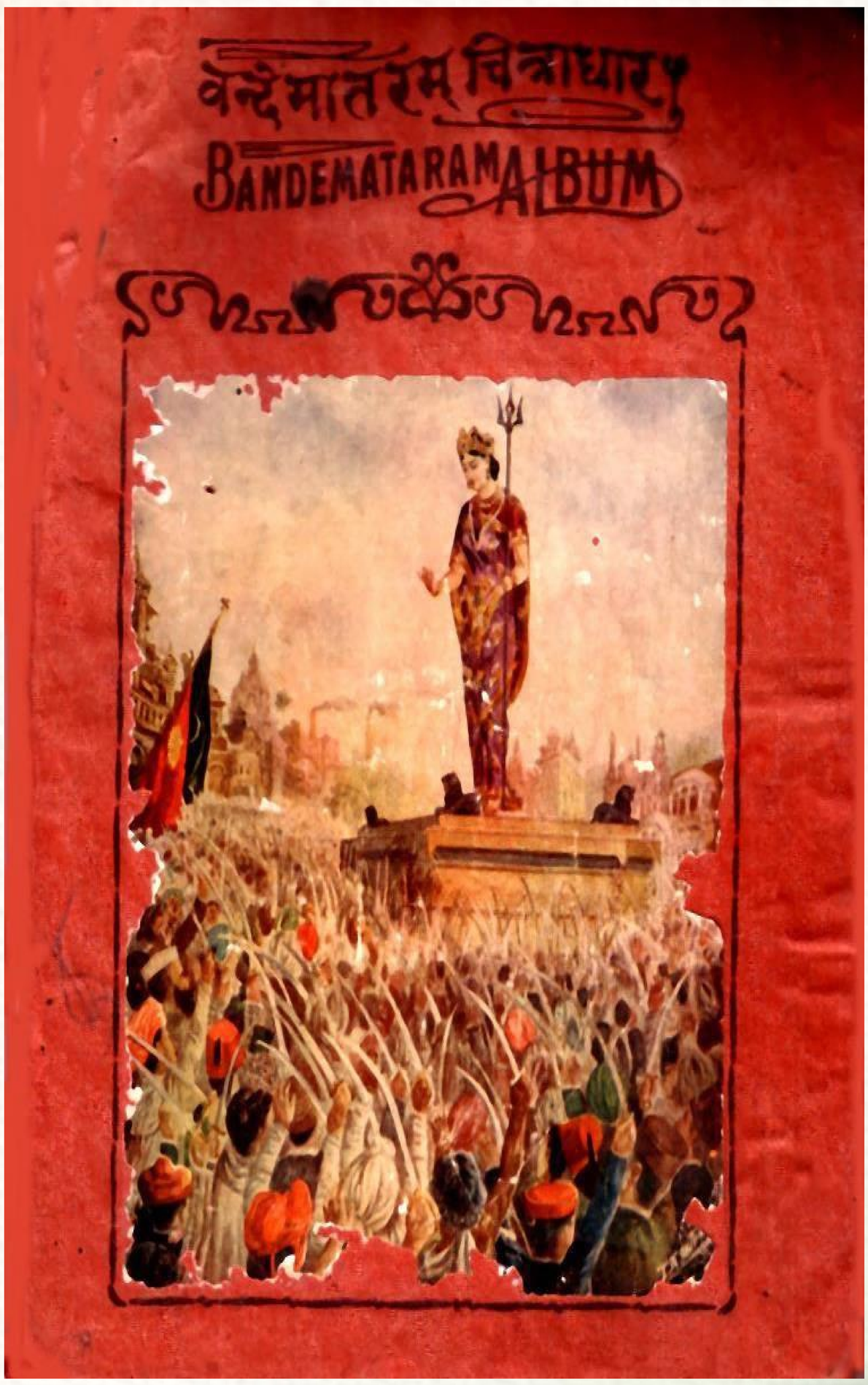
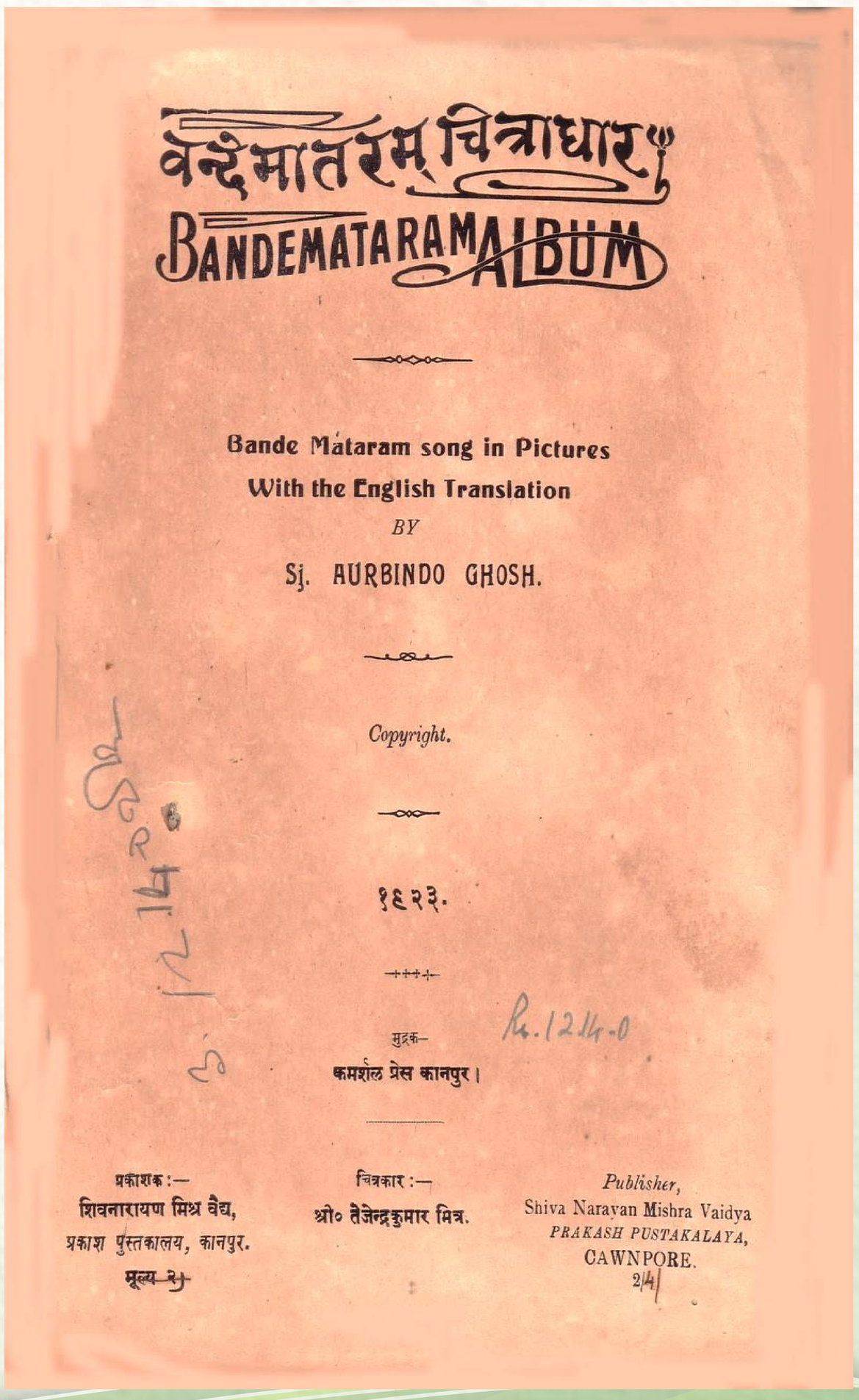
Sri Aurobindo also translated the song Vande Mataram, not once but twice

Sri Aurobindo translated ‘Vande Mataram’ to make it accessible to a wider audience and to explain its profound spiritual and patriotic meaning, especially as a powerful mantra for the Indian independence movement.

His translation, titled "Mother, I Bow to Thee," aimed to reveal the song as a sacred mantra for a nation fighting for freedom, not just a political anthem





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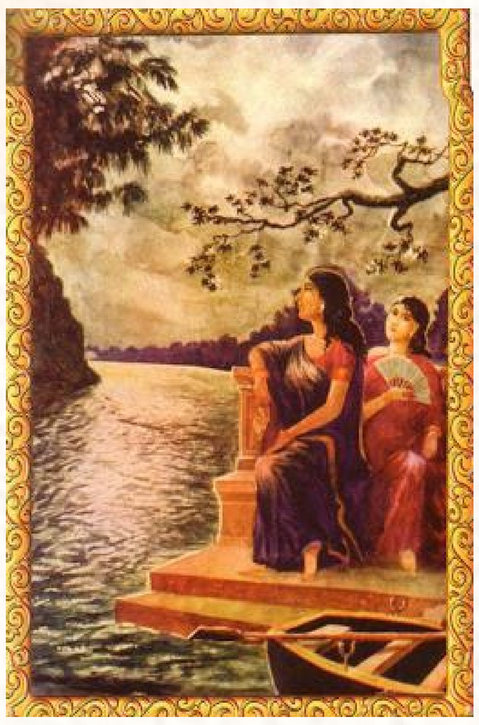
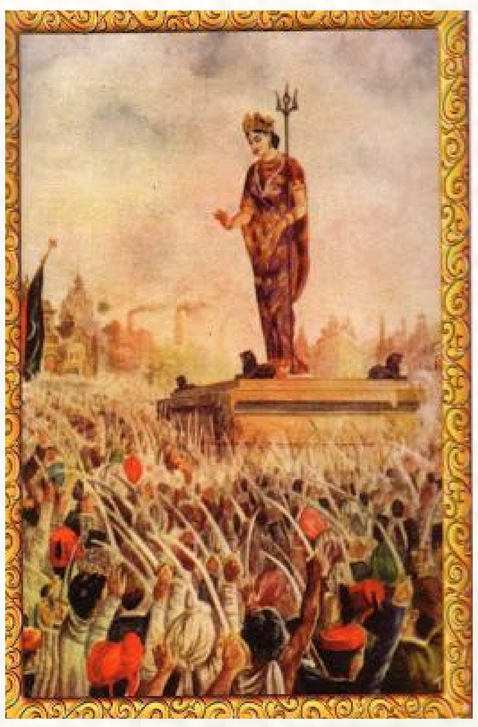
Paintings of Vande Mataram done in 1923















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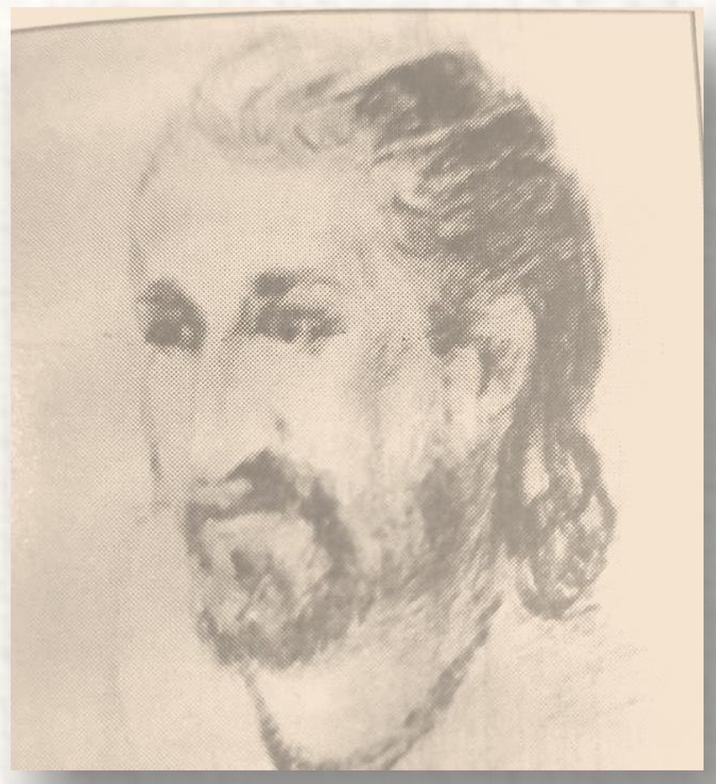
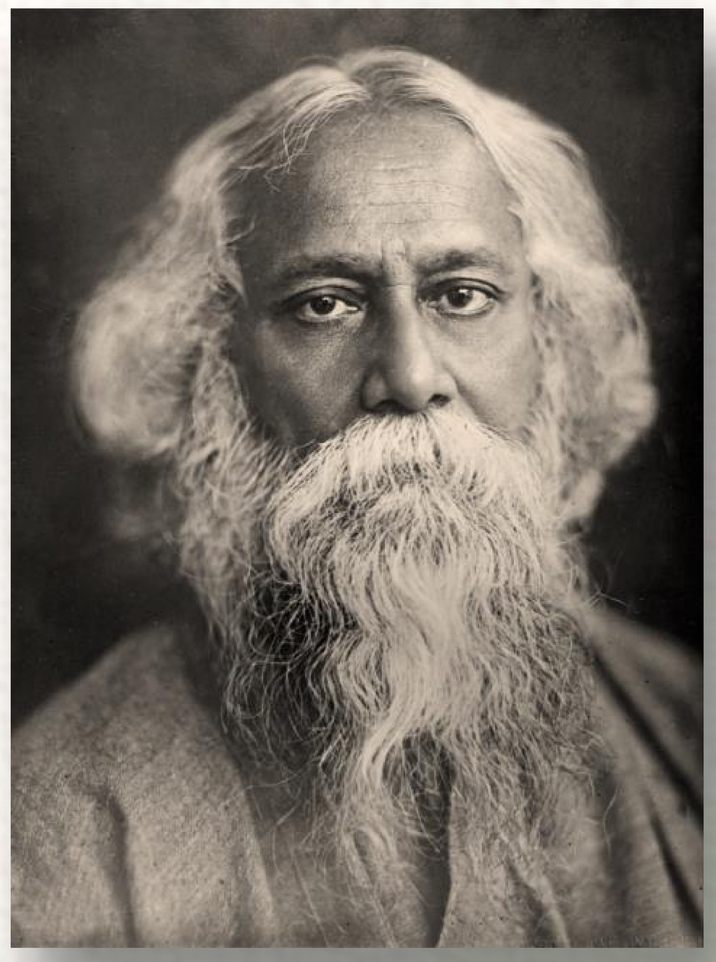
A myriad range of tunes and compositions of Vande Mataram form an integral part of our rich and diverse musical legacy

Sources suggest one of the earliest tunes of Vande Mataram was set by famous Dhrupad maestro Jadunath Bhattacharya of Vishnupur Gharana to Raga Kafi on Trital.



During the mid 1880s, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore composed the score of music in Raga Desh on Kawali Beat. This score received Bankim's nod and was published in the appendix of third edition of Anandamath in 1886.



From then on, Vande Mataram became a powerful marching and protest song, especially in the early 1900s.

In a letter to Pt. Nehru dated 26th October 1937, Gurudev mentions about his privilege of setting the first stanza to tune when Bakim Chandra was still alive and singing it before the Calcutta Congress.

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Around the same time, Hemendra Mohan Bose, who ran a private record label known as H. Bose's Records, produced and distributed nationalist songs and speeches during the Swadeshi movement





Among these records was one of the earliest commercial recordings of Vande Mataram. Most of H. Bose's workshop stock and machines were seized or destroyed in colonial sedition raids during the agitation period, so most originals were lost.

However, a very short surviving snippet of Tagore singing Vande Mataram is documented to survive The earliest surviving fragment(s) of Tagore's voice are frequently described as a short Vande Mataram extract.

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First ever recording of Vande Mataram National Record No. 463 (10 inches record-1905, England)



The first-ever recording of Vande Mataram, sung by Shri Narayan Chandra Mukherjee in Calcutta and recorded by Mr. Steven Carl Porter for the Nicole label.

Pressed in London on discs made by the Edison Bell Company, it was issued under the “National Record” label as a Bengali Song titled “Bande Mataram Sujalam Sufalam.”

Notably, the label features the Union Jack and Royal Standard flags—a poignant detail on the earliest recording of India’s song of freedom.

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Titles on gramophone records indicate that before independence it was Vande Mataram that was considered as the Indian National Anthem







Centre for Gramophone Studies

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Over time, Vande Mataram gained widespread recognition and evolved into one of the most powerful symbols of India's freedom struggle.

As the song spread through public gatherings, student movements, and political meetings, it stirred emotions of devotion, courage, and unity among people from all walks of life.

Its influence was so profound that freedom fighters began to incorporate the slogan into their visual and symbolic expressions of patriotism.

Vande Mataram appeared prominently on several early versions of the national flag, each design reflecting the aspirations and imagination of a people yearning for independence.

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1905 Sister Nivedita designed the Vajra flag with Bande Mataram written in Bangla.



In 1904, while travelling to Bodh Gaya with Rabindranath Tagore, Jagadish Chandra Bose, then editor of The Statesman Arthur Moore, and historian Jadunath Sarkar, Sister Nivedita came across the Vajra symbol.

She soon found its reference in Hindu mythology as a weapon of gods, specifically the one wielded by Indra and Durga.

In 1905, Sister Nivedita designed a flag on a red surface showing a *Vajra* with *Bande Mataram* written in Bengali. It was used in many meetings and rallies during the Partition and also shown in the Calcutta Congress in 1906.

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In 1906 on the first anniversary of ‘partition of Bengal’ a tricolor flag was raised by Sir Surendranath Bannerjee



The first flag of India that got pan-Indian was hoisted at a place called Parsi Bagan, on August 7, 1906. The flag had three bands in three colours, green on top, yellow in the middle and red at bottom.

At the centre, on the strip of yellow, was written Vande Mataram in Devanagari script, while the red strip had a sun and a star with the crescent on two extremes on the red strip.

On the topmost green band, there were eight floral motifs depicting lotus petals. It was designed by Sachindranath Bose and Sukumar Mitra with support from volunteers of the secret Anushilan society.

The flag became so popular that in the 1906 Calcutta Congress it was used to decorate the stage replacing the Union Jack.

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The Calcutta Flag, also known as the Bande Mataram Flag, witnessed multiple contemporary reiterations, with Vande Mataram written on them







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'Bande Mataram': English newspaper edited by Bipin Pal and later by Sri Aurobindo had a strong impact on the Indian psyche

Bipin Pal, who had been long expounding a policy of self-help and non-cooperation in his weekly journal, started a daily with the name of Bande Mataram in 1906.



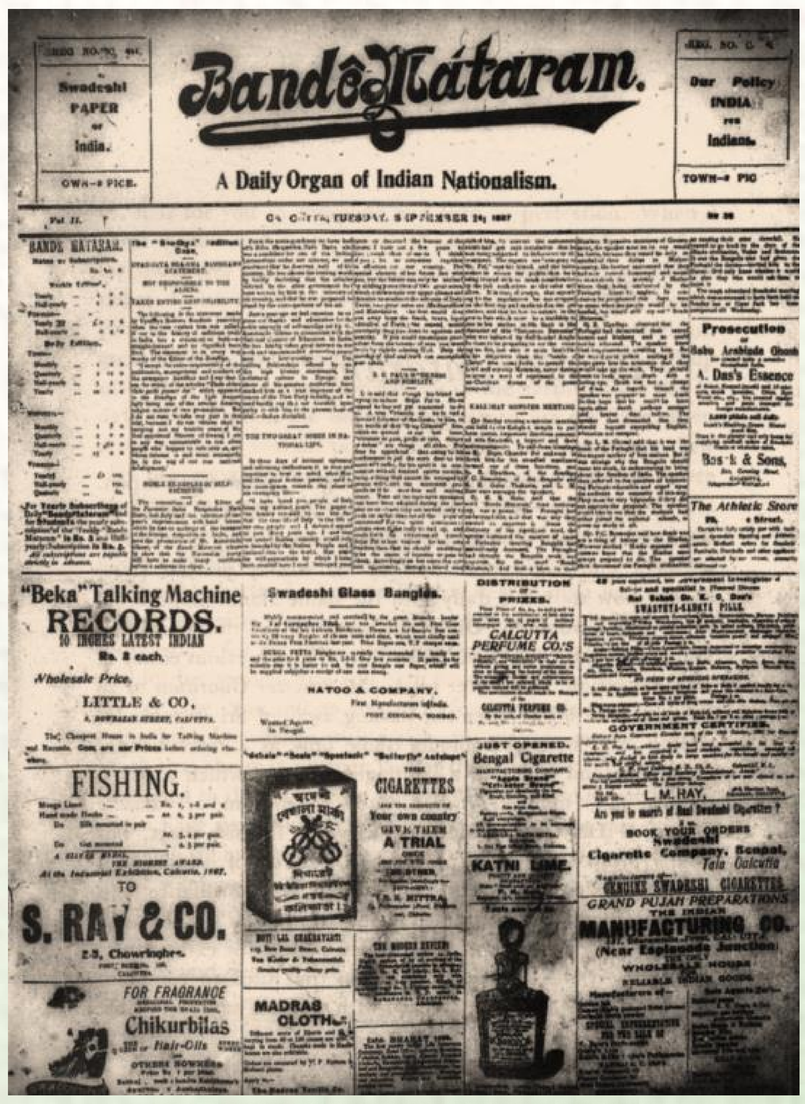
He asked Sri Aurobindo to join him in this venture. Sri Aurobindo agreed as he saw an opportunity for starting the public propaganda necessary for his revolutionary purpose.



Bande Mataram was almost unique in journalistic history in the influence it exercised in converting the mind of the people.

Intellectual Feast

"... I spare no opportunity of recommending your excellent paper to my friends as well as those whom I meet. For me it is generally an intellectual feast and it is my earnest desire that nothing will happen to mar its usefulness. It is doing a splendid service. May it live long is the earnest prayer..." **Lajpat Rai wrote (on 4 May 1907, just five days before his deportation**



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Madam Bhikaji Cama unfurled the first Indian flag on foreign soil in Stuttgart, Germany, on August 22, 1907



This historic act brought the Indian independence movement to international attention. The flag she hoisted was a tricolor with ‘Vande Mataram’ inscribed on it. It was designed by Madame Cama and Shyamji Krishna.

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Bande Mataram Sampraday, was started in October, 1905 in North Calcutta

The Sampraday soon drew to itself youthful votaries in large numbers for the purpose of propagating Bande Mataram sentiment among our countrymen.

On every Sunday, the members of the Society went about in procession in the streets, singing Bande Mataram and accepting voluntary contributions from the people, although the collection of a fund was not their direct and conscious aim.

It is said that on one occasion Rabindranath Tagore also joined the procession.

संस्कृति मंत्रालय
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The students and residents of Calcutta protested against the 1905 Partition of Bengal in large numbers

In order to suppress the movement forcefully, the then Chief Secretary of Bengal, R W Carlyle, issued a circular in October 1905, which came to be known as the Carlyle Circular.

The repressive circular imposed a ban on the participation and collection of people, especially students, in large numbers.

Any kind of gatherings, including meetings and demonstrations, were prohibited. Even the chanting of the slogan, Vande Mataram, which had become the rallying cry at the time, was banned.

To protest against the Carlyle Circular, in November 1905, Sachindra Prasad Bose, a student leader of the then Ripon College (present-day Surendra Nath College), founded the Anti-Circular Society.



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Both the slogan and the song were slowly making its way into the expressions of dissent across languages and regions of India.

The song and the words Bande Mataram were considered seditious by the British Government and were sought to be suppressed by violence and intimidation.

At the Bengal Provincial Conference held in Barisal in April 1906, under the presidentship of Shri A. Rasul, a brutal lathi charge was made by the police on the delegates and volunteers and the 'Bande Mataram' badges worn by them were violently torn off.

Some delegates were beaten so severely as they cried 'Bande Mataram' that they fell down senseless.

संस्कृति मंत्रालय
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1906: First Hindi translation of Vande Mataram

वन्दे मातरम् का पहला हिन्दी अनुवाद

वन्दे मातरम्।

पानी की कुछ कमी नहीं है, हरियाली लहराती है।

फल औ फूल बहुत होते हैं, रम्य रात छवि छाती है।

मलयानिल मृदु मृदु बहती है, शीलतला अधिकाती है।

सुखदायिनि वरदायिनि तेरी, मूर्ति मुझे अति भाती है।

वन्दे मातरम्।

तीस कोटि लोगों की कल कल सुनी जहां पर जाती है।

उसकी दुगुन खड्ग-धारा की द्युति विकाश जहँ पाती है।

तिस पर भी "तू अबला है" यह बात व्यथा उपजाती है।

हे तारिनि! हे बहुबल-धारिनि! रिपु तू काट गिराती है।

वन्दे मातरम्।

तूही धर्म्म, कर्म्म भी तूही, तूही विद्यावानी है।

तूही हृदय, प्राण भी तूही, तूही गुण-गण खानी है।।

बाहु-शक्ति तूही मम, तेरी भक्ति महा मन मानी है।

प्रति घट, प्रति मन्दिर के भीतर तूही सदा समानी है।।

वन्दे मातरम्।

हे दुर्गे! दस भुजा तुम्हारी दुर्गति-नाश निशानी है।

हे कमले! हे अमले! अचले! तू सब सुख की खानी है।।

नहीं एक भी भरतखंड में ऐसा पापी प्रानी है।

कहै न जो नित, "यही हमारी महा-महिम महरानी है"

वन्दे मातरम्।

- श्री महावीर प्रसाद द्विवेदी

सरस्वती पत्रिका, जनवरी, १९०६ अंक

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At Rajahmundry Training College, students influenced by Bipin Chandra Pal began wearing Vande Mataram badges and greeting each other with Vande Mataram



In 1907, Bipin Chandra Pal's visit to Andhra, inspired strong nationalist sentiment through speeches on Swaraj, Swadeshi, and the boycott of foreign goods.

At Rajahmundry Training College, students influenced by Pal began wearing Vande Mataram badges and greeting each other with the slogan Vande Mataram. The principal, Marks Hunter, banned these activities and accused Pal of spreading anti-government ideas.

Led by Gadicharla Harisarvottama Rao, students defied the ban on 24 April 1907, went on strike, and shouted Vande Mataram despite ongoing examinations.

In retaliation, Hunter expelled 139 students, fined others, and permanently blacklisted Gadicharla—marking one of the earliest instances of student resistance in India's freedom movement.

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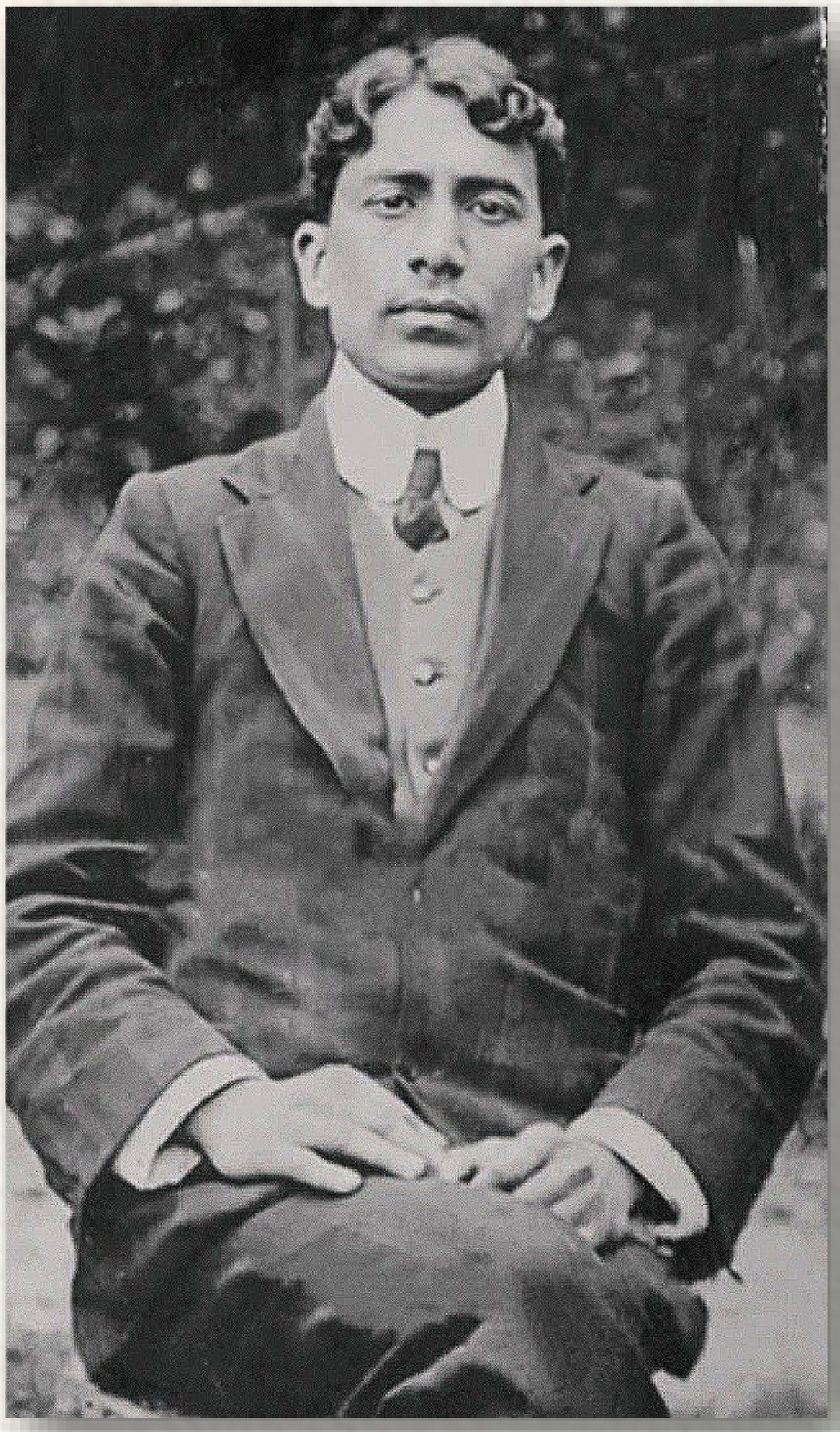
BANDE MATARAM
Cry of the Bravehearts

My only prayer to God is may I be reborn of the same Mother and may I re-die in the same sacred cause till the cause is successful, and she stands free for the good of humanity and to the glory of God.
BANDE MATARAM!!!



Madan Lal Dhingra, before he stepped on the gallows (1909)

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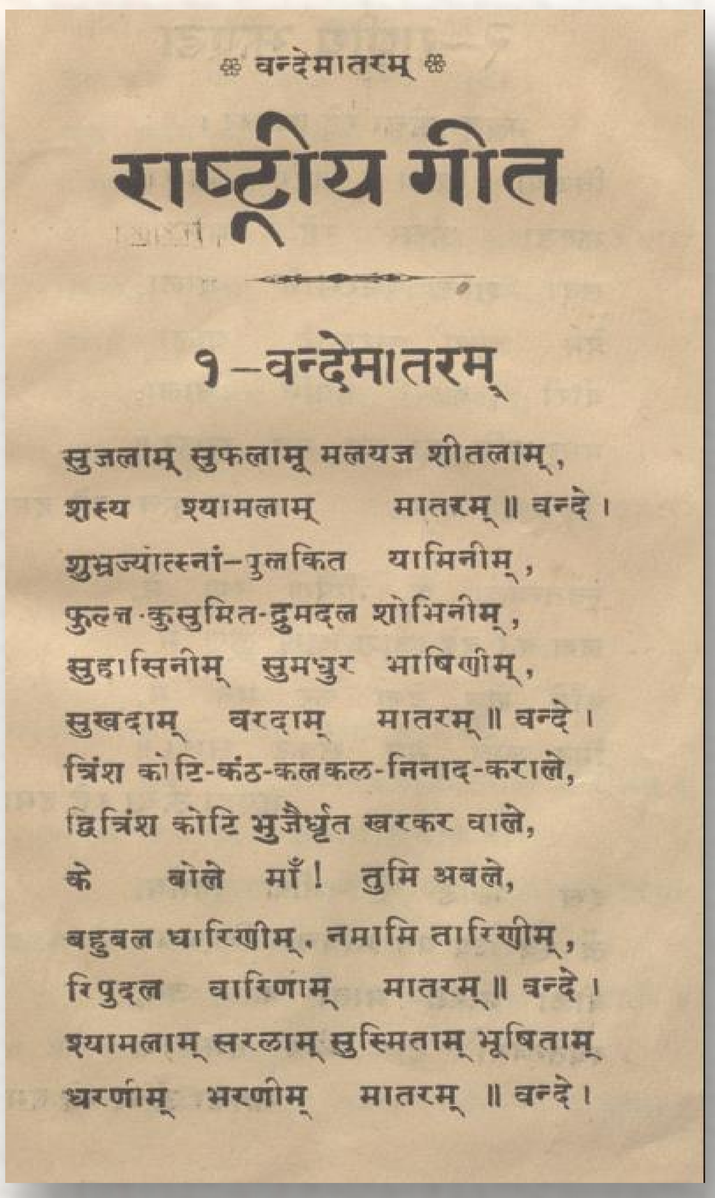
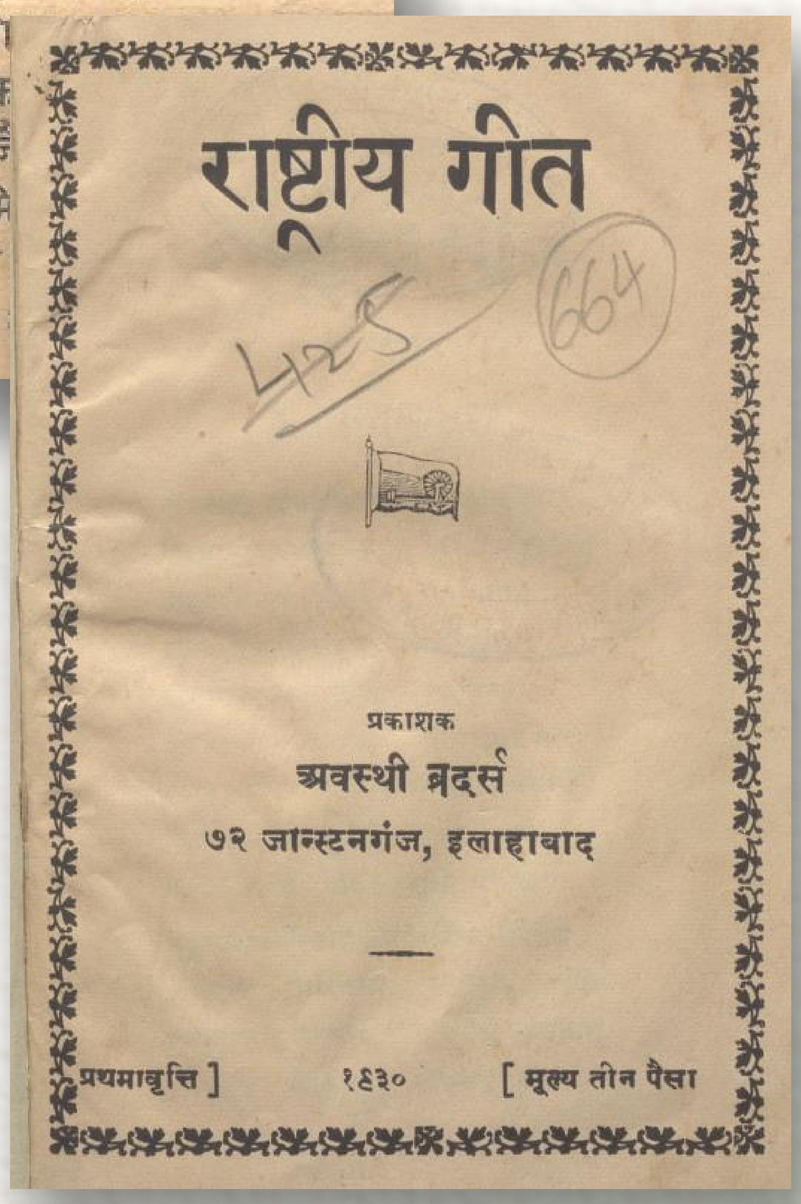
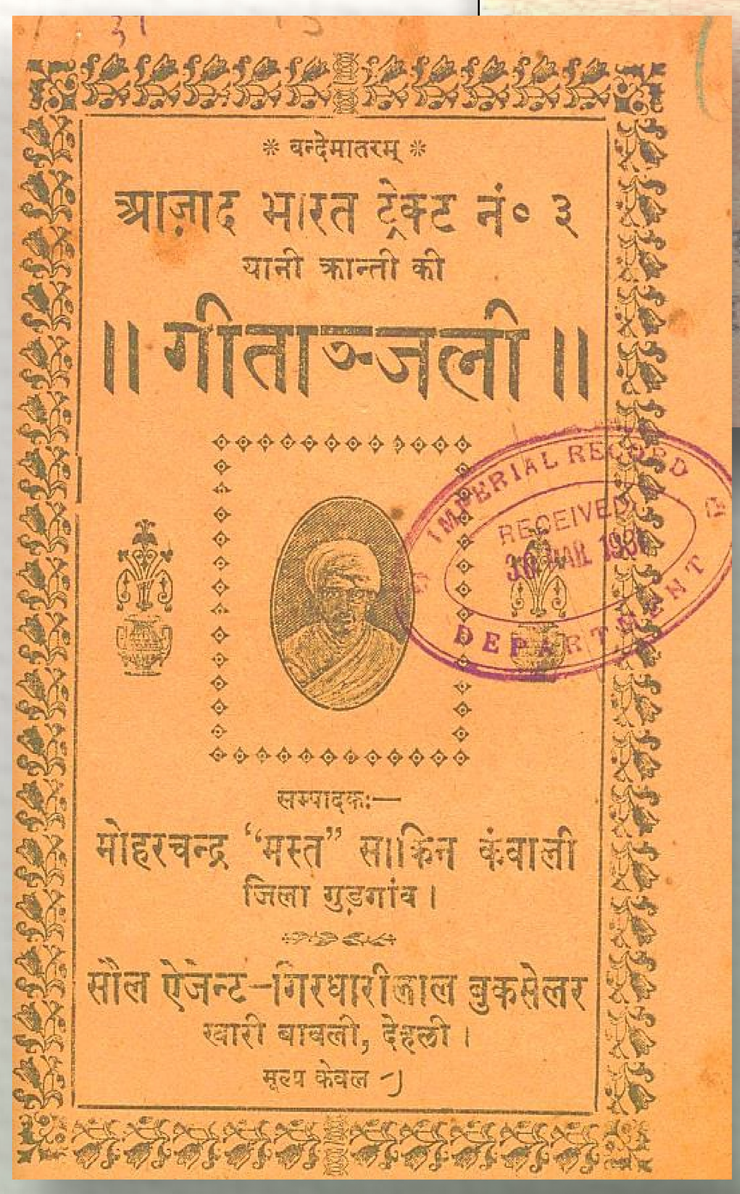
Literature from pre independence era that mentioned Vande Mataram and had accompanying image of Bharata Mata often found itself in the 'PROSCRIBED' category











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Initially Vande Mataram was included in Lord Baden Powell's official handbook for Scouting in India under the chapter, 'Patriotism'

I send copy to Craik
& read also mine to L.D.
Bradbourne - like P.S. please
put up for his perusal
P.M. 9/5

10

HOME DEPARTMENT
File No. .....
10 MAY 1937
Diary No. 2980/37 P.M.

THE BOY SCOUTS ASSOCIATION,
25, BUCKINGHAM PALACE ROAD,
LONDON, S. W. 1.

18th April 1937.

I think papers are in
PM-Secrs. room
10/5

JB

My dear Sir Henry,

I am most grateful to you for so kindly taking the trouble to write and tell me of the bloomer which has been made in "Scouting for Boys" in India. I had no idea that the song "Vande Mataram" contained such sentiments, and it was inserted in the book when this was edited by the Indian Headquarters.
I shall now be able to chaff them on their knowledge of India and at the same time to arrange that the offending item shall be taken out of the next edition.

Meantime let me say again how grateful I am to you for pointing out this error.

I need not say how closely we are watching political developments in India and how heartily we wish you a happy issue out of all your afflictions.

Yours sincerely,

Baden Powell

However, increasing popularity of Vande Mataram led to a letter from Lord Baden Powell to Henry Craik, suggesting putting an objection on Vande Mataram by the British Government, dated 18th April 1937.

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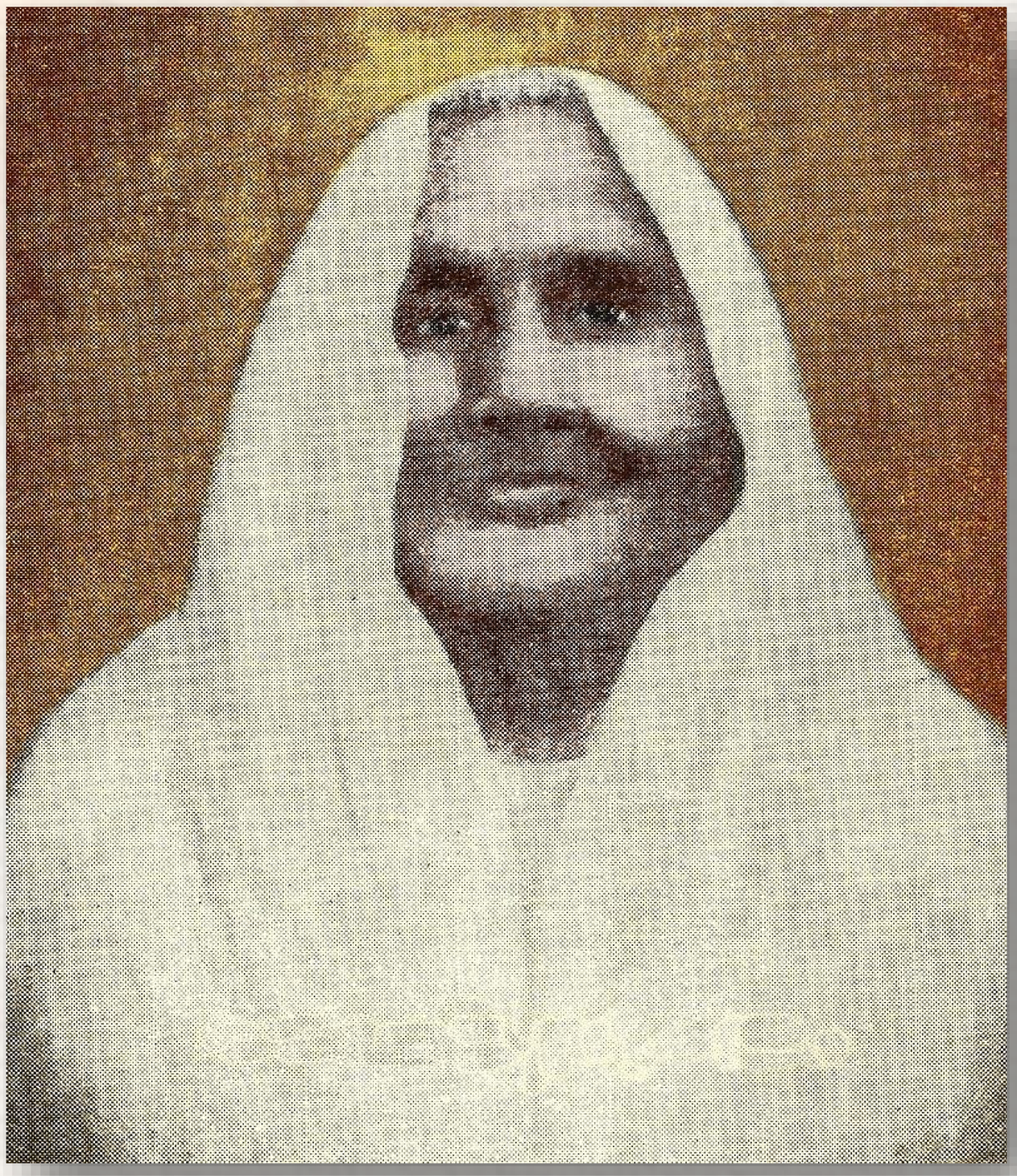
During the Quit India movement Matangini Hazara led a parade of more than 6000 supporters to the Tamluk police station on September 29, 1942



The cops opened fire on her as she rushed forward. The gunshot, however, did not deter her from continuing on her way.

The firing continued, but she did not stop. She raised her voice and shouted 'Vande Matram.' As she bullets rained, she raised the flag and eventually succumbed to her injuries and died holding the Tiranga.

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Post independence, in the Constituent Assembly Seth Govind Das made the following statement regarding Vande Mataram on 5th November 1948



As far as the question of National Anthem is concerned, I would say that 'Vande Mataram' can be our National Anthem. The history of our struggle for independence is associated with Vande Mataram. If it be said that is tune is not fit for orchestrisation I would submit that this is a difficulty which can be overcome by experts in orchestral music. Lyrical songs of Mahakavi Soordas and Meerabai can be sung not only in one but in many tunes. It is therefore wrong to think that 'Vande Mataram' is not suited for orchestrisation. There is no person who has no respect in his heart for Rabindranath Tagore - the King among poets. The verse "Jana Mana Gana" was composed on the occasion of the visit of the late Emperor George the V to India in 1911. The poem offers greetings, not to Mother India, but to the late King Emperor. Every sentiment in it is in relation to the" Bharat Bhagia Vidhata" and who is meant is clear from the expression "victory to the Emperor" (Jai Rajeshwar). It is evident that in a Republic we cannot in our National Anthem offer any greetings to any 'Rajeshwar'. 'Vande Mataram' alone, therefore can be our National Anthem.

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Prof. Shibban Lal Saksena presented an interesting amendment on November 15, 1948 in the Assembly on the General Principles of the Constitution of India wherein he proposed Vande Mataram as the national anthem.



General Principles

6. The name of the Union shall be BHARAT.

7. Bharat shall be a sovereign, independent socialist Republic.

8. All powers of government, legislative, e judicial, shall be derived from the people, a exercisable only by or on the authority of t the government established by this Constitution.

9. The National Flag of Bharat shall be the tricolour of saffron, white and green of pure hand-spun and hand-woven Khadi cloth, with the Dharmachakra of Asoka inscribed in blue in the centre in the middle stripe, the ratio between the width and breath being 2:1.

10. Hindi written in the Devanagri script shall be the National language of Bharat: Provided that each State in the Union shall have the right to choose its own regional language as its State language in addition to Hindi for use inside that particular State.

11. English shall be the second official language of Bharat during the transition period of the first five years of the inauguration of this Constitution.

12. The National Anthem of Bharat shall be the" Vande Mataram" which is reproduced in the Second Scheduled.

13. The Arms of Bharat consist of the Three Lions above the pedestal and the Dharmachakra, as are depicted on the top of the Asoka pillar at Sarnath.

14. The capital of Bharat is the City of Delhi'."

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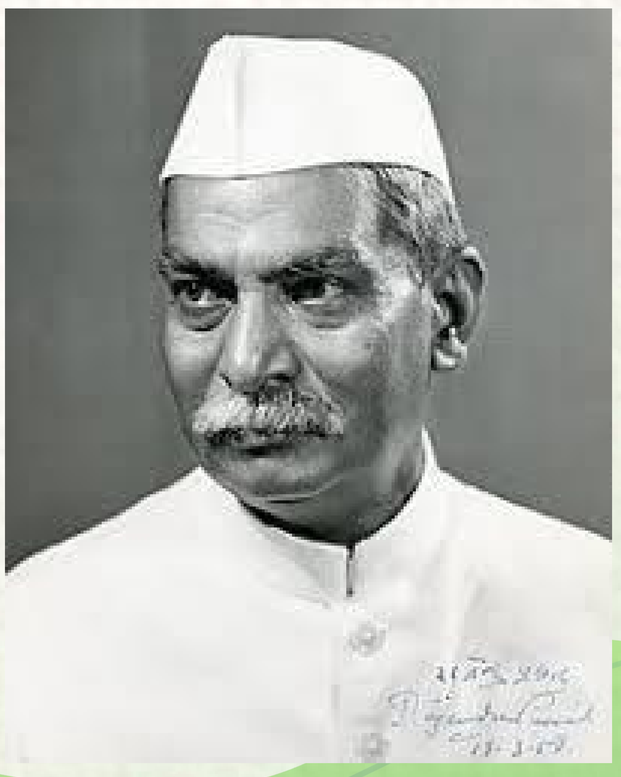
24 January 1950, Dr Rajendra Prasad as the President of the Constituent Assembly made a statement

There is one matter which has been pending for discussion, namely the question of the National Anthem. At one time it was thought that the matter might be brought up before the House and a decision taken by the House by way of a resolution. But it has been felt that, instead of taking a formal decision by means of a resolution, it is better if I make a statement with regard to the National Anthem. Accordingly I make this statement....

The composition consisting of the words and music known as Jana Gana Mana is the National Anthem of India, subject to such alterations in the words as the Government may authorise as occasion arises; **and the song Vande Mataram, which has played a historic part in the struggle for Indian freedom, shall be honoured equally with Jana Gana Mana and shall have equal status with it.** (Applause). I hope this will satisfy the Members.



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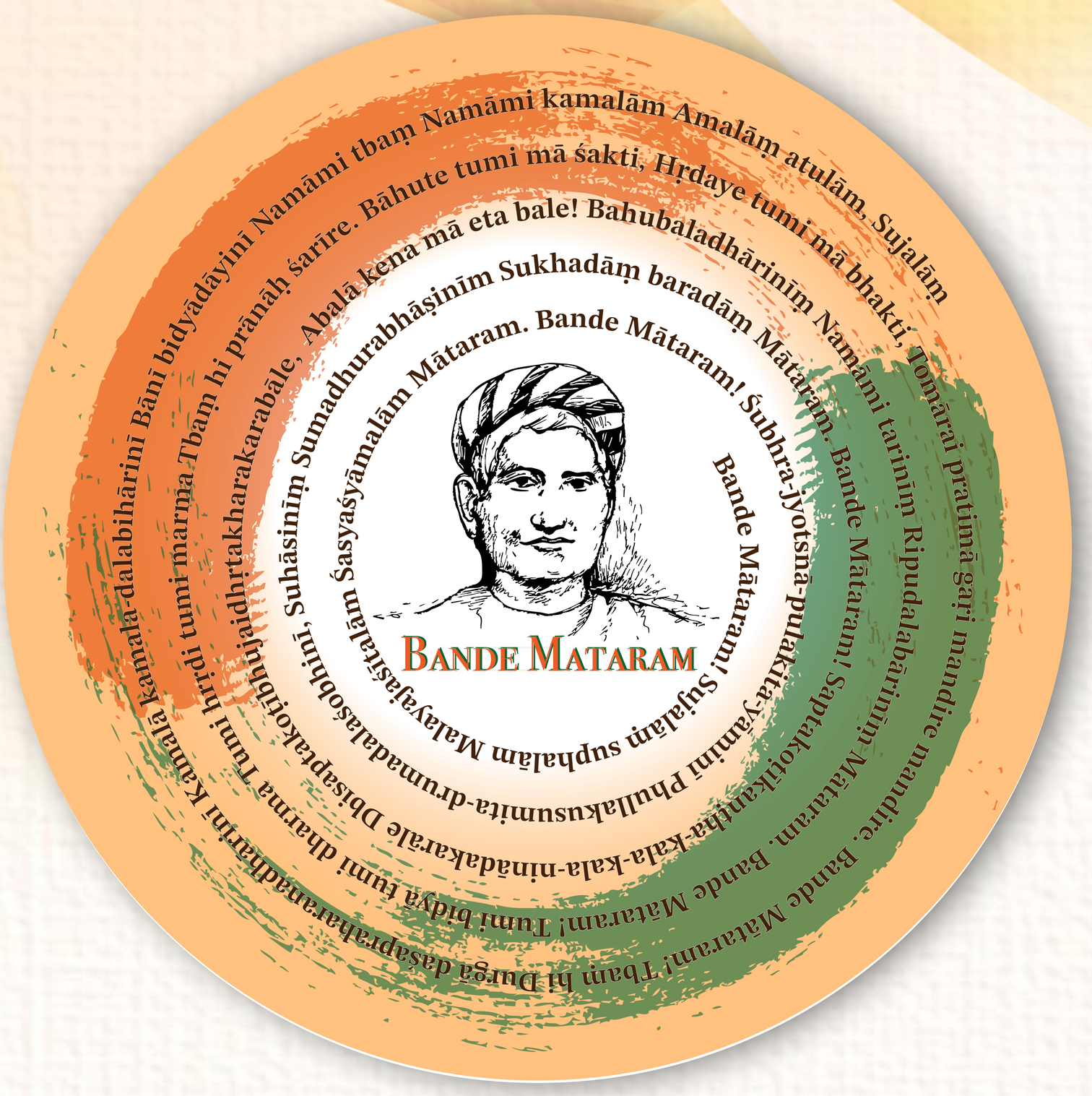

VANDE MATARAM

Clarion Call for India's Freedom Struggle