



Ministry of Culture  
Government of India

# **A Flag. A Song** **A Nation.**

Every nation has a flag. But few embody a journey as profound as India's. The Tiranga was not created in a single moment. It was shaped over generations through poetry and protest, ideas and sacrifice, hope and courage.

Long before it became the flag of an independent Republic, it lived in the dreams of millions who imagined India as one nation.

That awakening found its voice in Vande Mataram. Written 150 years ago, the song transformed love for the motherland into a powerful national movement, inspiring generations of Indians to unite, struggle and sacrifice for freedom.

This exhibition traces the remarkable journey from Vande Mataram to the Tiranga, from the birth of national consciousness to the adoption of a flag that today belongs to every Indian.

# **An Ancient Civilisation**

## **A Modern Nation**

Long before the idea of modern nation-states emerged, India was bound together by a shared civilizational consciousness.

Pilgrims travelled from the Himalayas to Rameswaram, merchants linked distant ports, scholars journeyed between centres of learning, and saints carried spiritual traditions across the subcontinent.

Epics such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, sacred rivers, festivals and philosophical traditions created a cultural landscape that transcended political boundaries.

By the nineteenth century, however, colonial rule had fragmented confidence in India's institutions and economy.

At the same time, reformers, educators and writers encouraged Indians to rediscover the strength of their own civilisation while imagining a common future.

The challenge before them was profound: how could a civilisation of immense diversity become a modern nation united by shared purpose? The answer would emerge not first from politics, but from literature.



# **Rishi Bankim Chandra Chatterjee gave a nation its voice long before it found its flag....**

A distinguished novelist, scholar and one of the first graduates of the University of Calcutta, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee combined intellectual brilliance with a profound love for India.

During a period when Indians were searching for confidence in their own civilisation, he wrote stories that celebrated courage, duty and national pride.

His greatest contribution came through ANANDAMATH, a novel that imagined the motherland not simply as territory but as a living presence deserving devotion and sacrifice.

Within its pages appeared a hymn that would transcend literature and become one of the defining expressions of India's freedom movement. It consisted of just two words that would echo across generations.

## **Vande Mataram**

# A song had been written. A national awakening had begun.

Rishi Bankim Chandra wrote Vande Mataram, celebrating the beauty, abundance and spiritual strength of the motherland in the latter half of 1875.



Published in Anandamath in 1882, the song portrayed India as a nurturing mother worthy of reverence and service. Its poetic imagery consisting of flowing rivers, fertile fields, gentle breezes and enduring strength resonated deeply with readers.

More than a literary masterpiece, it transformed the abstract idea of the nation into an emotional reality. Indians from different regions, languages and traditions found in its verses a shared expression of belonging.

At a time when political nationalism was still taking shape, Vande Mataram offered something more powerful than a slogan. It gave people a common emotional vocabulary through which they could express love for their country.

**A nation had found  
its voice.**

**The next challenge  
would be to defend  
that voice.**

By the close of the nineteenth century,  
Vande Mataram had become the most  
recognizable patriotic song in India.

It echoed through Congress sessions,  
student gatherings, public processions and  
cultural events, bringing together people  
from every corner of the country.

In 1896, Rabindranath Tagore famously  
sang the song at the Indian National  
Congress session, introducing it to a  
national audience.

Soon afterwards, it became an  
indispensable part of public life. Freedom  
fighters sang it during processions and  
communities gathered around it during  
moments of collective resolve.

Its appeal lay in its universality.  
It belonged to no single region or  
community. It belonged to India.



# **The more they tried to silence it, the louder it echoed across India**

As the influence of Vande Mataram expanded, British authorities increasingly viewed it as a symbol of organized nationalism.

In several places, attempts were made to discourage or prohibit its public singing. Students faced disciplinary action, meetings were monitored and patriotic gatherings attracted official scrutiny.

Yet every effort to suppress the song only strengthened its significance. Indians continued to sing it in schools, public squares and political meetings, turning each performance into an act of quiet resistance.

The struggle over a song revealed a deeper truth: ideas could not be silenced by official orders. Vande Mataram had become more than music. It had become an affirmation of national dignity.

Soon, a political event in Bengal would transform that sentiment into India's first great mass movement.

The following frames trace the remarkable journey of Vande Mataram from the pages of Anandamath to becoming a living force of India's freedom struggle. What began as a literary invocation to the motherland soon moved beyond the written word, finding its voice in public meetings, processions, student protests and movements across the country.

In parallel, we witness the evolution of the National Flag, from early symbols of resistance and nationalist aspirations to the Tiranga that came to represent a free and sovereign India. Like Vande Mataram, the flag gradually moved from an idea to an emotion, from a symbol carried by a few to one embraced by millions.

The two journeys were deeply intertwined. Vande Mataram gave voice to the spirit of nationalism, while the flag gave that spirit a visible form. Both appeared in newspapers, badges, banners, processions, political gatherings and public demonstrations, becoming powerful markers of collective identity and resistance.

Together, they transformed the language of the freedom struggle. One was sung, the other was raised; one gave words to the love of the motherland, the other gave it colour and form. Both came to embody courage, unity, sacrifice and the dream of a free India.

These frames therefore tell a parallel story, not simply of a song and a flag, but of how ideas become symbols, how symbols become movements, and how movements become part of a nation's living memory. From the pages of Anandamath to the streets of the freedom struggle, and from early nationalist flags to the Tiranga of independent India, this is the journey of two enduring expressions of India's national spirit.



# India was no longer merely awakening, it had begun to move together...

The Partition of Bengal in 1905 marked a turning point in India's freedom movement. Seen as an attempt to divide society, it sparked widespread protests and gave rise to the Swadeshi Movement.



People boycotted foreign goods, promoted indigenous industries and came together across communities. Students, women, workers, traders and intellectuals joined the movement.

At its heart was Vande Mataram sung in processions, meetings and protests. More than a song, it became the emotional voice of the movement, inspiring unity, courage and sacrifice for the motherland.

# **The students and residents of Calcutta protested against the 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.



## **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

**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.

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



## **'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



# Rajahmundry Students: Vande Mataram as a Voice of Youthful Defiance



Inspired by a visit from nationalist leader Bipin Chandra Pal, students at Rajahmundry Training College embraced the ideals of swaraj and swadeshi.

In open defiance of official restrictions, they began wearing Vande Mataram badges and raising nationalist slogans on campus. This resistance led to expulsions and disciplinary action by the college authorities.

The episode became an early and significant example of student participation in India's freedom struggle, showing youthful courage against colonial control.

Their defiance transformed the college campus into a space of nationalist awakening, inspiring others to question colonial authority. It also demonstrated how Vande Mataram had become a powerful symbol of unity, self-respect and resistance among India's youth.

**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.



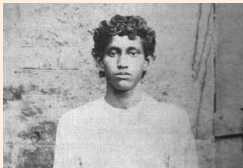
# Khudiram Bose & Prafulla Chaki: A Revolutionary Legacy

Prafulla Chaki was a close associate of Khudiram Bose, and together they attempted to assassinate British magistrate Douglas Kingsford in Muzaffarpur in April 1908.

The bomb accidentally killed two British women instead of its intended target, forcing the two revolutionaries to flee separately. Chaki was eventually cornered by police at Mokama Ghat railway station in Bihar.

Rather than be captured and interrogated, he shot himself on 2 May 1908. His martyrdom was later commemorated at nationalist gatherings where "Vande Mataram" was raised in his memory.

Khudiram Bose was soon arrested, tried, and sentenced to death. On 11 August 1908, at just 18 years old, he walked calmly to the gallows carrying the Bhagavad Gita. He shouted "Vande Mataram" moments before his execution, turning his final act into a lasting symbol of youthful devotion to the motherland.



## **Bande Mataram!** **A Revolutionary's Final Salute**



**Madan Lal Dhingra was executed in 1909 for the assassination of Sir Curzon Wyllie. Before stepping onto the gallows, he delivered a defiant final statement, framing his act as a soldier's duty rather than a crime.**

**He prayed to be reborn to the same motherland and to keep fighting the same cause until she was free.**

**He ended his last words with a resounding "Bande Mataram!!!" His courage and clarity in the face of death made him one of the early symbols of revolutionary sacrifice abroad.**

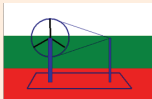
# The Home Rule Flag: A Step Towards a National Symbol

As the demand for self-government grew during the Home Rule Movement of 1916–17, another important flag entered India's national journey.

Associated with Dr Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, the Home Rule Flag reflected the movement's aspiration for greater political autonomy within the British Empire.

Its design incorporated alternating red and green stripes, the Union Jack, the Saptarishi constellation and a crescent with a star, symbols intended to represent India's diversity and constitutional aspirations

Although later flag designs would move beyond it, the Home Rule Flag marked another significant step in the evolution of India's national identity. It demonstrated that the search for a common emblem was itself evolving alongside the freedom movement.



India had not yet found its final flag. But each design brought the nation closer to one. At the Bezwada (now Vijaywada) Congress session Pingali Venkaiah presented Mahatma Gandhi with a flag featuring three stripes for community harmony and a spinning wheel symbolizing progress in 1921

# Defending the Right to Fly the Flag

Before India won the freedom to govern itself, Indians first fought for the freedom to display their own flag



During the Flag Satyagrahas of the 1920s, particularly at Nagpur and Jabalpur, thousands of volunteers peacefully challenged colonial restrictions on carrying the National Flag in public. Men and women marched with the flag despite arrests, lathi charges and imprisonment

The struggle demonstrated that the flag had become much more than a political emblem. It represented dignity, equality and the right of Indians to express their national identity.

## Neemuchana: Resistance against colonial oppression



On 14 May 1925, peasants gathered at Neemuchana in Rajasthan to protest oppressive land revenue demands and exploitative colonial policies. Colonial forces responded by opening fire on the unarmed crowd, killing hundreds and shocking the nation.

Mahatma Gandhi described the massacre as "Dyerism double distilled," drawing a direct comparison to the horrors of Jallianwala Bagh.

The tragedy is remembered today as a symbol of resistance, representing the enduring spirit of "Vande Mataram" in the peasant struggle for justice.

# Jatin Da: Sacrifice Behind Bars (1929)



Jatindra Nath Das was arrested in connection with the Lahore Conspiracy Case and began a hunger strike in the Lahore Central Jail demanding political prisoner status and improved treatment for Indian inmates.

After 63 days of fasting, he died on 13 September 1929, becoming one of freedom fighters of India's freedom struggle whilst undertaking the longest hunger-strike. His body was taken by train to Calcutta (now Kolkata), where a massive funeral procession attended by hundreds of thousands turned into a major nationalist event.

His sacrifice inspired widespread mobilisation across the country, and demonstrations held in his memory echoed with patriotic slogans, including 'Vande Mataram'.

**In 1931 a formal resolution was passed to adopt Pingali Venkaiah flag with a slight modification**



The flag , the forebearer of the present one was saffron, white and green with Mahatma Gandhi's spinning wheel at the center.

Saffron, symbolized courage white represented peace and green stood for fertility and growth



## **Vande Mataram Movement, Hyderabad and Gulbarga**



**The movement began when the Nizam's administration banned the singing of "Vande Mataram" on 16 Nov. 1938 across colleges such as Osmania University, Aurangabad Intermediate College, and Gulbarga University, prompting students to defy the order.**

**What started as a student protest soon spread across Hyderabad State, leading to arrests, expulsions, and disciplinary action. Gulbarga was earlier part of the Hyderabad-Karnataka area**

**It remains a significant episode in the region's freedom struggle, symbolizing youthful resistance and upholding of "Vande Mataram" as an expression of patriotic unity and national identity**



# **MATANGINI HAZRA AND THE VOICE OF COURAGE**



During the Quit India Movement, Gandhian activist Matangini Hazra led a large procession toward the Tamluk police station in Bengal, carrying the Indian Tricolour.

Defying prohibitory orders, she kept marching forward as colonial forces opened fire on the crowd on 29 September 1942. She was fatally shot while advancing with the flag.

Accounts record that she kept chanting "Vande Mataram" even as she fell, making her death one of the most powerful images of women's courage in the freedom struggle.

**Vakkom Abdul Khader,  
Satyen Chandra Bardhan, Anandan,  
and Fauja Singh were arrested  
and tried in the Madras Conspiracy Case.**



**Vakkom Abdul Khader, Satyen Chandra Bardhan, Anandan, and Fauja Singh  
were arrested and tried in the Madras Conspiracy Case.**

**After conviction, all four were executed by hanging on 10 September 1943  
at Madras Central Jail. Contemporary accounts describe them facing the  
gallows with defiance, singing patriotic songs and raising slogans of "Vande  
Mataram" and praise for Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.**

# KANAKLATA BARUA:

The tricolor held high in the face of fire



On 20 September 1942, during the Quit India Movement, 17-year-old Kanaklata Barua led a procession at Gohpur in Assam. She carried the Indian Tricolour, marching the group toward the local police station to hoist the National Flag.

British police opened fire on the demonstrators, and Kanaklata was shot while still holding the flag. As the procession advanced, patriotic slogans including "Vande Mataram" rang out, cementing her as one of the youngest martyrs of the movement.



# FLAG CODE OF INDIA

**Fly it at home, any day**

Any member of the public, private organisation or educational institution may hoist the Flag on all days and occasions, consistent with its dignity and honour.

**Day and night**

Since the July 2022 amendment, a Flag displayed in the open or on the house of a member of the public may be flown both day and night.

**Cotton, polyester, wool or silk**

Hand-spun, hand-woven or machine-made khadi bunting is permitted — the December 2021 amendment allowed polyester and machine-made Flags.

**Always the position of honour**

Whenever the National Flag is displayed, it must occupy the position of honour and be distinctly placed.

**Never damaged or dishevelled**

A Flag that is torn, soiled or dishevelled must never be displayed.

**One Flag per masthead**

The Flag should not be flown from a single masthead simultaneously with any other flag or flags.

**Nothing above or beside it**

No other flag or bunting may be placed higher than, above, or side by side with the National Flag.

**Always rectangular, always 3:2**

The National Flag may be made in any size, but the ratio of its length to its height must always be three to two.

**LENGTH : HEIGHT = 3 : 2**

# Tiranga- A Journey Through Stamps



First Independent stamp  
21st November 1947



25th Anniversary of  
Independence (1st issue)  
15th August 1972



25th Anniversary (2nd issue)  
15th August 1972



75th Anniversary of the First Flag  
Holsting at Port Blair, India 2018



75th Anniversary of the First Flag  
Holsting at Port Blair, India 2018



First Day Cover-40th Anniversary of  
Independence, Patna 15th August 1987



Children Day Stamp  
14th Nov. 1962

# **HAR GHAR TIRANGA**

## **Participation of People**

**The freedom struggle invited Indians to march beneath the flag. Har Ghar Tiranga invites every citizen to carry that legacy forward.**

**When families display the National Flag, when children learn its history, when communities gather beneath its colours, the Tiranga becomes more than a national symbol.**

**It becomes a shared experience. A shared celebration. A shared responsibility. Every home that raises the Tiranga becomes part of a story that began generations ago.**

**Har Ghar Tiranga 2026 dedicated to 150 years of Vande Mataram brings together two of India's everlasting symbols.**

**One hundred and fifty years ago, Vande Mataram gave voice to an awakening nation. Decades later, the Tiranga gave that nation its enduring symbol.**

**Between the two lies one of history's greatest journeys — a story of ideas becoming movements, movements becoming freedom and freedom becoming a democratic Republic.**

# THE TIRANGA IN EVERY HEART

## One Flag. One Billion Stories.



For a soldier, it represents duty.

For an athlete, it celebrates achievement.

For a scientist, it accompanies discovery.

For a farmer, it symbolises the land that sustains us.

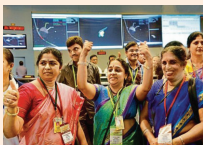
For a child, it is often the first lesson in belonging to something larger than oneself.

For every citizen, the Tiranga carries memories, emotions and aspirations that cannot be measured in words alone.

Across generations, professions, languages and traditions, one symbol continues to unite us.

That is the extraordinary power of the National Flag











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Every visitor leaves this exhibition carrying a different memory. Perhaps it is the voice of Vande Mataram. Perhaps it is the courage of a freedom fighter.

Perhaps it is the image of the Tricolour rising over an independent India. Or perhaps it is the realisation that the Tiranga belongs not to history alone, but to every citizen.

Today, the next chapter of this story belongs to you. How will you honour the values it represents?

**What does the Tiranga  
mean to you?**

Share your thoughts on social media using  
**#HarGharTiranga**