UPSC Mains practice – reference note

GS-I · 08-11-2026 · 15 marks · https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/upsc-mains-practice/2026-11-08-vande-mataram-songs-press

The year-long national commemoration of 150 years of "Vande Mataram" (7 November 2025 – 7 November 2026) recalled how a song became a slogan of the freedom struggle. Examine the role of patriotic songs, literature and the press in building national consciousness in colonial India, with suitable examples.

1. The commemoration

- Year-long national commemoration of 150 years of "Vande Mataram": 7 November 2025 – 7 November 2026; inaugurated by the Prime Minister at the Indira Gandhi Indoor Stadium, New Delhi, on 7 November 2025, with a commemorative stamp and coin and mass singing of the full song.
- Held in four phases: 7–14 November 2025; 19–26 January 2026; 7–15 August 2026; 1–7 November 2026.

2. Timeline of the song

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Year / date	Event
1875	Written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (dated by the Government to 7 November 1875, Akshaya Navami)
1881–1882	Included in *Anandamath* – serialised in *Bangadarshan* from 1881; book 1882 (theme: Sannyasi rebellion)
1896	Rabindranath Tagore sings it at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress
7 August 1905	First used as a political slogan – Calcutta Town Hall meeting that adopted the boycott resolution
16 October 1905	Partition of Bengal takes effect – day of mourning, rakhi, "Amar Sonar Bangla"
August 1906	*Bande Mataram* English daily – Bipin Chandra Pal; Aurobindo Ghose joins
1907	Bhikaiji Cama's flag bears the words "Vande Mataram"
27 February 1908	Coral Mills strike, Tuticorin (after speeches by VOC and Subramania Siva); arrests 12 March; Tirunelveli uprising 13 March 1908
October 1937	Congress Working Committee: only the first two stanzas at national gatherings (on Tagore's advice)
24 January 1950	Dr Rajendra Prasad in the Constituent Assembly: "Vande Mataram" to be honoured equally with "Jana Gana Mana"

3. Press, literature and press laws

- Nationalist papers: *Kesari* (Marathi) and *Mahratta* (English) – Tilak; *Amrita Bazar Patrika*; *The Hindu* (1878) and *Swadesamitran* (1882) – G. Subramania Aiyer.
- Subramania Bharati: assistant editor of *Swadesamitran* from November 1904; edited the Tamil weekly *India*.
- Literature: *Anandamath* (Bankim); *Neel Darpan* (indigo); Dadabhai Naoroji – *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*; R.C. Dutt – *The Economic History of India*.
- Press laws: Vernacular Press Act 1878 (Lytton; repealed by Ripon, 1882) – *Amrita Bazar Patrika* turned into an English paper overnight to escape it; Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act 1908; Indian Press Act 1910.

4. Value-add terms

- Cultural nationalism, Swadeshi and Boycott, vernacular press, print capitalism / imagined community (Benedict Anderson), drain of wealth, national symbols, inclusive nationalism, Tagore's critique of narrow nationalism.

Official sources

- PIB – 150 years of Vande Mataram: background note (November 2025) – https://static.pib.gov.in/WriteReadData/specificdocs/documents/2025/nov/doc2025116686201.pdf
- PMIndia – PM to inaugurate the year-long commemoration of 150 years of Vande Mataram (06.11.2025) – https://www.pmindia.gov.in/?p=16728067
- All India Radio (newsonair) – India celebrates 150 years of its National Song – https://www.newsonair.gov.in/india-celebrates-150-years-of-its-iconic-national-song-vande-mataram/

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