

The *Mantra*

Vande Mataram

Second Edition

A Compilation from the Works of
Sri Aurobindo and the Mother

Compiled by Jamshed M Mavalwalla

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Sri Aurobindo Society
AUROPUBLICATIONS
POWERFUL THOUGHTS, INSPIRING VISION

The *Mantra Vande Mataram*

Second Edition

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Earlier e-books released on India are:

1. *India and Her Mission*
2. *The Task of Building India Is Spiritual*
3. *The Splendour of Bharat's Past Be Reborn*
4. *Spirit of Kshatriya with a Large Liberal Ideal*
5. *Become Indian and Do Not Imitate the West*
6. *Qualities of the Indian Mind*
7. *Develop Original Thinking*

About the Cover

The Bharat Mata depicted on the cover is Abanindranath Tagore's painting. Abanindranath Tagore painted Bharat Mata in 1905 during the Swadeshi movement. This iconic image of Bharat Mata as a saffron-clad sadhvi or deity with four arms is deeply evocative of Indian iconography. This painting draws upon traditional Indian artistic and spiritual symbolism.

One of the earliest artistic representations of *Mother India*, the painting portrays her holding four symbolic objects: a book, a rosary, sheaves of paddy, and a piece of cloth. These represent *shiksha* (education), *diksha* (spiritual or religious initiation), *anna* (food), and *vastra* (cloth), respectively. Together, these symbols reflect the ideals of self-reliance, as well as the economic and cultural freedom that the Swadeshi movement sought to promote.

The painting received high praise from Sister Nivedita, who recognised its profound appeal to the Indian heart and its potential to inspire a sense of national identity. She wrote:

> "From beginning to end, the picture is an appeal, in the Indian language, to the Indian heart. It is the first great masterpiece in a new style. I would reprint it, if I could, by tens of thousands, and scatter it broadcast over the land, till there was not a peasant's cottage, or a craftsman's hut, between Kedar Nath and Cape Comorin, that had not this presentment of Bharat-Mata somewhere on its walls. (The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita, Vol. 3. p. 61)

Sri Aurobindo, too, recognised the importance of Abanindranath Tagore's contribution to the revival of Indian art. He highlighted the significance of the emerging artistic movement, its rediscovery of India's artistic heritage, and its vision for the future, emphasising the need to make this creative awakening a shared national legacy. He wrote:

> "Finally, the artistic awakening has been commenced by that young, living and energetic school which has gathered round the Master and originator, Sj. Abanindranath Tagore. The impulse which this school is giving, its inspired artistic recovery of the past, its intuitive anticipations of the future, have to be popularised and made a national possession." (CWSA 8: 246)

Through its evocative imagery and rich symbolism, *Bharat Mata* embodies the spirit of India's cultural renaissance and the Swadeshi movement. Abanindranath Tagore's painting thus stands as both an artistic milestone and an enduring expression of India's aspiration for cultural self-awareness and national freedom.

Vijaybhai's Note on Comprehensive Compilation

All over the world, there is a growing interest in spirituality and Yoga. There is a search for the true meaning and purpose of life, for deeper solutions to the problems that confront us all, and for ways in which we can contribute to evolutionary change and progress.

In this search, more and more people are turning to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother for guidance and enlightenment. But in their voluminous writings, they do not know where to find the answers they are looking for.

In this regard the Mother has said,

> "*It is not by books that Sri Aurobindo ought to be studied but by subjects—what he has said on the Divine, on Unity, on religion, on evolution, on education, on self-perfection, on supermind, etc., etc.*"
>
> (CWM 12: 206)

On another occasion She said:

> "*If you want to know what Sri Aurobindo has said on a given subject, you must at least read all he has written on that subject. You will then see that he seems to have said the most contradictory things. But when one has read everything and understood a little, one sees that all the contradictions complement one another and are organised and unified in an integral synthesis.*"
>
> (CWM 16: 309–310)

While several compilations are now available, many sincere spiritual seekers have felt the need for Comprehensive Compilations from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on specific subjects, in which the contents are further organised into sub-topics, so that one can find everything one is looking for in one place.

This compilation is an effort to fulfil this need and thus help spiritual seekers in their journey and sadhana. We hope that this compilation will help us gain greater mental clarity about a subject so that we can channel our efforts in the right direction. For Sri Aurobindo has written:

> "*It is always better to make an effort in the right direction; even if one fails the effort bears some result and is never lost.*"
>
> (CWSA 29: 87)

We will be glad to receive suggestions and feedback from the readers.

Vijay

Preface

Our entire country is celebrating the auspicious occasion of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo and the 75th Anniversary of India's Independence on 15 August 2022. This year, we at Sri Aurobindo Ashram and Sri Aurobindo Society present a series of compilations on "India" from the works of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

We present the eight e-book in the series on India—*The Mantra Vande Mataram*. Once all the e-books are released, we hope that readers will recognize that the underlying theme of this series is "How India Can Achieve Its Mission". The aim of this series of compilations is to be as comprehensive as possible. All that Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have said about India, as well as all that is directly or indirectly related to India, is included in these compilations.

The quotations in this compilation are from *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* (CWSA); *Collected Works of the Mother*, Second Edition; Shri K. D. Sethna's book *India and the World Scene*; *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo*, recorded by Shri A. B. Purani, First Edition; *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* by Shri Nirodbaran; and from Sri Aurobindo's Archives and Research Magazines. A few quotations are also from *Conversations of the Mother with a Sadhak*.

Shri K. D. Sethna (Amal Kiran), Shri A. B. Purani, and Shri Nirodbaran were senior sadhaks who were close to Sri Aurobindo.

In the introduction to the book *India and the World Scene*, Shri K. D. Sethna writes, "Not only were my

editorials written under his [Sri Aurobindo's] inner inspiration: they were also sent to him for approval. Only when his 'Yes' was wired to us did we plunge into publication." Thus, these quotations can be taken as representing Sri Aurobindo's opinion.

In the books by Shri Purani and Shri Nirodbaran, Sri Aurobindo, while talking to sadhaks, gave his opinion on many subjects.

After each quotation, the following abbreviations are used to represent the book or source from which it is taken.

CWSA: *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*
CWM: *Collected Works of the Mother*, Second Edition
IWSKDS: *India and the World Scene* by Shri K. D. Sethna, First Edition
ISWFKDS: *The Indian Spirit and the World's Future* by Shri K. D. Sethna
CTMS: *Conversations of the Mother with a Sadhak*
ETABP: *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo,* recorded by A. B. Purani, First Edition
TWSAN: *Talks with Sri Aurobindo* by Nirodbaran

While the passages from Sri Aurobindo are in the original English, most of the passages from the Mother (selections from her talks and writings) are translations from the original French. We must also bear in mind that the excerpts have been taken out of their original context and that a compilation, by its very nature, is likely to have a personal and subjective approach. A sincere attempt, however, has been made to remain faithful to the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Those who would like to go

through the fuller text are advised to refer to the original books.

The section headings and sub-headings have been provided by the compiler to bring clarity to the selected topic.

The idea of taking up this comprehensive compilation on India was suggested to me by Vijaybhai [Shri Vijay Poddar] sometime in 2003. The hard copy of this compilation remained with him for many years. It was in May 2022 that he wrote to me: "I was looking again at your compilation on India. It is extremely comprehensive and very well done. I feel we should go ahead immediately to publish it as an e-book on our website." The quotations compiled in 2003 were drawn from the *Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library* SABCL editions. With the devoted assistance of a few proofreaders, we have carefully revised and brought each of these quotations into conformity with *The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo* CWSA editions, thus enabling us to bring forth this series of e-books.

I aspire, like the flame of a lamp or a candle, to the Divine, praying that the process of India's achievement of her mission may be hastened.

Jamshed M. Mavalwalla

Why a Compilation on "India" from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother?

Why should we learn about India from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother? Sri Aurobindo was born in India, and the Mother was born in France. Their lives, however, were not confined by the boundaries of nationality. For both of them, India represented something far greater than a geographical territory or a political entity. India had a deeper significance—a spiritual destiny, a mission, and a role to play in the evolution of humanity.

It is with this understanding that this compilation of quotations on "India" from Sri Aurobindo and the Mother has been prepared.

Sri Aurobindo writes:

> "I am impelled to this labour by the necessity of turning the mind of young India to our true riches, our real source of power, purification and hope for the future and of safeguarding it in the course of its search both from false lights and from the raucous challenges and confident discouragements cast at us by the frail modern spirit of denial. I write, not for the orthodox, nor for those who have discovered a new orthodoxy, Samaj or Panth, nor for the unbeliever; I write for those who acknowledge reason but do not identify reason with Western materialism; who are sceptics but not unbelievers; who, admitting the claims of modern thought, still believe in India, her mission and her gospel, her

immortal life and her eternal rebirth." (CWSA 12: 62–63)

These words point towards the purpose of this compilation. It is an attempt to bring together Sri Aurobindo's and the Mother's writings on India so that the younger generation may encounter their vision of India—her true riches, her mission, her spiritual heritage, and her future.

But a question may arise: Why should we learn about India from Sri Aurobindo? Part of the answer lies in a letter Sri Aurobindo wrote to his wife, Mrinalini Devi:

> "I know I have the strength to deliver this fallen race. It is not physical strength,—I am not going to fight with sword or gun,—but the strength of knowledge. The power of the Kshatriya is not the only one; there is also the power of the Brahmin, the power that is founded on knowledge. This feeling is not new in me, it is not of today. I was born with it, it is in my very marrow. God sent me to earth to accomplish this great mission. The seed began to sprout when I was fourteen; by the time I was eighteen the roots of the resolution had grown firm and unshakable." August 30, 1905. (Letter written by Sri Aurobindo to his wife Mrinalini)

These words reveal that his concern for India was not merely political or intellectual. It was deeply rooted in his consciousness and in what he regarded as a great mission entrusted to him.

But Sri Aurobindo was not alone in this vision. The Mother, his collaborator in the spiritual work, gives another dimension to the same question:

> "What must be done to pull the country out of its difficulty? Sri Aurobindo has foreseen all the troubles and he has given the solution. Just now we are approaching his Centenary; [1972] … this would be a wonderful occasion to spread his teaching all over the country: ... his teaching about India, how to organise India, the mission of India. ...
>
> About all that has happened and all that is happening now, he has said clearly that to go back to it is useless. We must give the country its true position, that is, the position of relying on the Divine. Naturally, this is at the other end of what people try to believe now. But Sri Aurobindo explains it in such a way that even those who are against it can agree. You understand? He has found a way of saying it which can be understood by everybody. That's the only solution, as far as I can see; it is the only solution. All the rest will mean complication, contradiction and fighting.
>
> ... And this is above politics, you see. ... It is to organise the country beyond politics. And it is the only way. In politics it is always fight and ugly fight—ugly. And it has become so bad. He was telling me always that things would become worse and worse, because it is the *end* of this age. We are entering into an age where things must be organized differently. It is a difficult time because of that.

Because we know what will come, we can help to make it come sooner and with less turmoil. There is no hope in going backwards; it would make things last endlessly. We must go forward, absolutely, and go beyond, beyond party. And nobody can explain that better than Sri Aurobindo, because he was so much, *so* much beyond party; he saw the advantages and disadvantages of all parties and he stated them exactly.

If you read carefully what he has written—so much—you will find the answer to all these questions. And at the same time you will know that you will have the full support of the Divine Power. The Power that was behind him is behind this transformation. It is time for transformation. We can't cling to the past.

The best way to go beyond politics is to spread the message of Sri Aurobindo. Because he is no more a political element wanting to take power; there are only his ideas and ideals. And, of course, if people could understand and realise his programme, the country could be very strong, very strong." (CWM 15: 405–406)

This compilation also contains quotations from the Mother's *Collected Works of the Mother*. Although the Mother was born in France, she always felt that India was her true country, the country of her soul and spirit. She declared herself Indian by choice and predilection.

"I want to mark this day by the expression of a long cherished wish; that of becoming an Indian citizen. From the first time I came to India—in 1914—I felt that India is my true country, the country of my soul and spirit. I had decided to realise this wish as soon as India would be free. But I had to wait still longer because of my heavy responsibilities for the Ashram here in Pondicherry. Now the time has come when I can declare myself.

But, in accordance with Sri Aurobindo's ideal, my purpose is to show that truth lies in union rather than in division. To reject one nationality in order to obtain another is not an ideal solution. So I hope I shall be allowed to adopt a double nationality, that is to say, to remain French while I become an Indian.

I am French by birth and early education, I am Indian by choice and predilection. In my consciousness there is no antagonism between the two, on the contrary, they combine very well and complete one another. I know also that I can be of service to both equally, for my only aim in life is to give a concrete form to Sri Aurobindo's great teaching and in his teaching he reveals that all the nations are essentially one and meant to express the Divine Unity upon earth through an organised and harmonious diversity." *15 August 1954* (CWM 13: 43)

The reason for the Mother's deep connection with India becomes clearer in another of her statements:

> "It is true that this body was born in Paris and that its soul has declared that it is Indian, but I belong to no nation in particular." (CWM 13: 44)

She further explains why she chose France as the country of her birth:

> "It is France that can connect Europe with India. There are great spiritual possibilities for France. She will play a big part in spite of her present bad condition. It is through France that the spiritual message will reach Europe. That is why I chose France for my birth, although I am not French." (CWM 13: 379–380)

These words suggest that, for the Mother, nationality was never an end in itself. India and France could each have their own role, while both could participate in a larger movement towards human unity.

Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, therefore, cannot be understood merely in the narrow sense of being Indian. Their work extended far beyond the boundaries of one country. Their aim was the upliftment of humanity and the movement of the earth towards a higher stage of evolution. Their love for India was intense because they saw in her a special role in the future of humanity.

The Mother says,

> "Sri Aurobindo always loved deeply his Motherland. But he wished her to be great, noble, pure and worthy of her big mission in the world. He refused to

let her sink to the sordid and vulgar level of blind self-interests and ignorant prejudices. This is why, in full conformity to his will, we lift high the standard of truth, progress and transformation of mankind, without caring for those who, through ignorance, stupidity, envy or bad will, seek to soil it and drag it down into the mud. We carry it very high so that all who have a soul may see it and gather round it." (CWM 13: 123)

The quotations of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother are several decades old. A natural question therefore arises: How can words spoken so long ago remain relevant to India today?

When a Yogi or a realised person speaks, even on worldly matters, there will be Truth [Capital Truth] in what he says. This Truth will help one much more than what one would arrive at through one's own thinking. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother had the highest spiritual realisations. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother spoke from a vast spiritual vision. Their writings on India were not confined to the problems of a particular decade or generation. Their concern was with the deeper destiny of India and with her place in the evolution of humanity. This is why their words invite us to look beyond the immediate difficulties of the present moment.

Their vision and guidance can only lift India out of the present challenges she faces and help her achieve her mission. If one reads about the mission that India has to achieve and considers the present-day condition of our country, then one will realise that Sri Aurobindo's and the

Mother's quotations are as valid today as they were at that time. On reading these compilations, one will feel that they are relevant to today's conditions.

On reading these compilations, one may discover that the words of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother do not belong only to the past. They can become a living subject of reflection for the present and the future.

There is, however, one caution that needs to be kept in mind while reading the quotations of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother: one need not become dogmatic about them. One really needs to live in the spirit behind these quotations.

It is not enough to know what Sri Aurobindo and the Mother said about India. The greater question is whether we can discover the spirit behind their words and allow that spirit to awaken something within us.

India, in their vision, is not merely a country with a glorious past. She is a country with a future to fulfil. And if that future is indeed a part of humanity's larger evolution, then these words are not merely words about India. They are an invitation—to remember, to understand, to aspire, and to participate.

Jamshed M. Mavalwalla

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Section One: The Reviving Mantra *Bande Mataram* Which Created a New India Was Given by Rishi Bankim Chandra

[Vande Mataram in Begali language is pronounced as Bande Mataram]

I—God Chose Bankim Chandra to Reveal a Great, Life-Giving Message—the Mantra, Which, When Uttered, Can Stir Men's Inmost Natures and Impel Men to Do Things That Would Have Been Impossible for Them in Their Ordinary Moments

1.

Rishi Bankim Chandra

"There are many who, lamenting the by-gone glories of this great and ancient nation, speak as if the Rishis of old, the inspired creators of thought and civilisation, were a miracle of our heroic age, not to be repeated among degenerate men and in our distressful present. This is an error and thrice an error. Ours is the eternal land, the eternal people, the eternal religion, whose strength, greatness, holiness may be over clouded but never, even for a moment, utterly cease. The hero, the Rishi, the saint, are the natural fruits of our Indian soil; and there has been no age in which they have not been born. Among the Rishis of the later age we have at last realised that we must include the name of the man who gave us the reviving mantra which is creating a new India, the mantra *Bande Mataram*. [Vande Mataram in Begali language is pronounced as Bande Mataram]

The Rishi is different from the saint. His life may not have been distinguished by superior holiness nor his character by an ideal beauty. He is not great by what he

was himself but by what he has expressed. A great and vivifying message had to be given to a nation or to humanity; and God has chosen this mouth on which to shape the words of the message. A momentous vision had to be revealed; and it is his eyes which the Almighty first unseals. The message which he has received, the vision which has been vouchsafed to him, he declares to the world with all the strength that is in him, and in one supreme moment of inspiration expresses it in words which have merely to be uttered to stir men's inmost natures, clarify their minds, seize their hearts and impel them to things which would have been impossible to them in their ordinary moments. Those words are the mantra which he was born to reveal and of that mantra he is the seer." (CWSA 1: 637) (CWSA 6: 315)

II—The Mantra Bande Mataram Was Once Before Given to the World by the Sannyasins of the Vindhya Hills and Was Lost Because the Nation Was Not Then Ripe for Resurgence

1.

"The *mantra* of 'Bande Mataram' is a *mantra* once before given to the world by the Sannyasins of the Vindhya hills. It was lost by the treachery of our own countrymen because the nation was not then ripe for resurgence and a premature awakening would have brought about a speedy

downfall. But when in the great earthquake of 1897 there was a voice heard by the Sannyasins, and they were conscious of the decree of God that India should rise again, the *mantra* was again revealed to the world. It was echoed in the hearts of the people, and when the cry had ripened in silence in a few great hearts, the whole nation became conscious of the revelation. Who imagined when the people of Bengal rose in 1905 against the Partition that that was the beginning of a great upheaval? It is a passing tempest, said the wise men of England, let it go over our heads and we will wait. But the tempest did not pass, nor the thunders cease. So there was a reconsideration of policy and the wise men said,—The people of Bengal are easily cowed down, and we will try whether force cannot do what patience has failed to do. When Sir Bampfylde Fuller met Lord Curzon at Agra, this was the policy agreed on between them—to hammer the Bengalis into quietude. But Sir Bampfylde Fuller has gone and the movement remains. Hare too will go, and many will go, but the movement will remain." (CWSA 7: 877)

2.

"When Bankim discovered the *mantra* Bande Mataram and the song wrote itself out through his pen, he felt that he had been divinely inspired, but the people heard his song and felt nothing. 'Wait' said the prophet, 'wait for thirty years and all India will know the value of the song I have

written.' The thirty years have passed and Bengal has heard; her ears have suddenly been opened to a voice to which she had been deaf and her heart filled with a light to which she had been blind. The Mother of the hymn is no new goddess, but the same whom we have always worshipped; only she has put off the world-form in which she was familiar to us, she has assumed a human shape of less terrible aspect, less fierce and devastating power to attract her children back to her bosom." (CWSA 7: 1114–1115)

III—The Bare Intellectual Idea of the Motherland Is Not in Itself a Great Driving Force

"The ... supreme service of Bankim to his nation was that he gave us the vision of our Mother. The bare intellectual idea of the Motherland is not in itself a great driving force; the mere recognition of the desirability of freedom is not an inspiring motive. There are few Indians at present, whether loyalist, moderate or nationalist in their political views, who do not recognise that the country has claims on them or that freedom in the abstract is a desirable thing. But most of us, when it is a question between the claims of the country and other claims, do not in practice prefer the service of the country; and while many may have the wish to see freedom accomplished, few have the will to accomplish it. There are other things which we hold dearer

and which we fear to see imperilled either in the struggle for freedom or by its accomplishment. (CWSA 1: 640)

IV—The Patriotism That Works Miracles Is Born Only When the Motherland Takes Shape as a Great Divine and Maternal Power That Can Dominate the Mind and Seize the Heart

"It is not till the Motherland reveals herself to the eye of the mind as something more than a stretch of earth or a mass of individuals, it is not till she takes shape as a great Divine and Maternal Power in a form of beauty that can dominate the mind and seize the heart that these petty fears and hopes vanish in the all-absorbing passion for the Mother and her service, and the patriotism that works miracles and saves a doomed nation is born. To some men it is given to have that vision and reveal it to others. 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 *Bande 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. Once that vision has come to a people, there can be no rest, no peace, no farther slumber till the temple has been made ready, the image installed and the sacrifice offered. A great

nation which has had that vision can never again bend its neck in subjection to the yoke of a conqueror." (CWSA 1: 640–641)

V—The Song Bande Mataram with Its Perfect Lyrical Expression, Became the National Anthem of a United India in 1907

"... he had a positive vision of what was needed for the salvation of the country. He saw that the force from above must be met by a mightier reacting force from below,—the strength of repression by an insurgent national strength. He bade us leave the canine method of agitation for the leonine. The Mother of his vision held trenchant steel in her twice seventy million hands and not the bowl of the mendicant. It was the gospel of fearless strength and force which he preached under a veil and in images in Ananda Math and Devi Chaudhurani. ... he perceived that the third element of moral strength must be the infusion of religious feeling into patriotic work. The religion of patriotism,—this is the master idea of Bankim's writings. ... In Ananda Math this idea is the keynote of the whole book and receives its perfect lyrical expression in the great song which has become the national anthem of United India. This is the second great service of Bankim to his country that he pointed out to it the way of salvation and gave it the religion of patriotism. Of the new spirit which is leading the

nation to resurgence and independence, he is the inspirer and political guru." (CWSA 1: 639–640)

Rishi Bankim Chandra. First published in the *Bande Mataram* on 16 April 1907 (CWSA 1: 778)

Section Two: Not in the Cold Dissecting of the Rational Mind, But in the Heart with Its Profundities One Intuits the Divine Mother

I—Mother India Is a Power, a Godhead

"Mother India is not a piece of earth; she is a Power, a Godhead, for all nations have such a Devi supporting their separate existence and keeping it in being. Such Beings are as real and more permanently real than the men they influence, but they belong to a higher plane, are part of the cosmic consciousness and being and act here on earth by shaping the human consciousness on which they exercise their influence. (CWSA 28: 482)

II—Our Too Intellectual Turn Leads Us to Dismiss This Awareness of the Divine Mother and the Idea That There Is No Actual Entity Inhabiting India, but This Is a Patent Self-Deception

"But a nation can never be an aggregate of individuals any more than a country is just a large piece of land. When we speak of India we are alive to the presence and power of a single being whose outermost shell is the territorial expanse indicated on our maps and whose more subtle and plastic body is the collection of human beings living in that expanse and sharing and expressing certain cultural characteristics. But our too intellectual turn leads us to dismiss this awareness as a figurative mode of feeling: we declare that we are only practising patriotic personification and that there is no actual entity beyond the individuals

inhabiting the land. But this is a patent self-deception. No patriot has ever fought and died for anything except a vast, moving and mighty supra-individual personality—a hidden Goddess, a gigantic Beloved, a great Mother. Especially as a great Mother this personality inspires him, for a country is felt as either fatherland or motherland and the latter aspect is the more intimately alive and commanding. Not in the cold dissecting rational mind but in the heart with its mysteries and profundities, its intuitions of the beyond, its inexplicable visions of the superhuman and the divine, that the essence of patriotism, as of every other individual-transcending passion, lies. A patriot who does not stir to the call of the great Mother that is his country and that is the unifying force of the millions inhabiting it is an impotent imposter. Or else if one feels the tremendous Presence and yet intellectually denies it, one is effective for various ends but the schism within him will always impair his effectivity and his very triumphs will be unrounded and carry a proclivity to defeat." (IWSKDS: 19-20)

III—Essential India Is the Long Procession of Seers and Saints from Vedic Antiquity up to Our Own Day; Hence, the National Soul, the Mother of Indians, Must Herself Be a Face and Form of the Divine

"Sri Aurobindo brought to his work the full reality of the Being hailed by Bankim Chandra in *Vande Mataram*. The

national soul felt by historical India is not merely the presiding genius of the human collectivity in the land bounded by the Himalayas and by rivers and seas. The distinguishing mark of the Indian consciousness is the realisation, from age to age, of the Eternal, the Infinite, the Absolute. Essential India is the long procession of seers and saints from Vedic antiquity up to our own day. Hence the national soul, the Mother of these myriad knowers and lovers of God, must be herself a face and form of the Divine and wrapped in the atmosphere of the Supreme Being must she be envisaged and invoked. That was the message of Bankim Chandra's song and of Sri Aurobindo the politician, that was the core of the Aurobindonian Nationalism which made this song the throbbing life-blood of Bengal and, through Bengal, the entire sub-continent." (IWSKDS: 321)

IV—The Worshipping Cry of Vande Mataram Is an Open Acknowledgement of the National Soul

"When a country's collectivity is disposed to occult insight the national soul is most clearly grasped by the patriot heart: thus in Ireland and in India we find the intensest response to the superhuman presence constituting the nation. Especially in India with her endless history of rishi and yogi and bhakta and avatar, patriotism is at its roots a religious fervour, and the most creative of its many forms

has been the one with which it started on its career of revolt against British rule—the one which found its most puissant expression in the upsurge of Bengal during the partition of this province by Lord Curzon and which went to its fiery work with that open acknowledgement of the national soul, the worshipping cry of *Vande Mataram*, 'I bow to you, O Mother.' (IWSKDS: 316)

Section Three: The Revelatory Vision and the Mantric Vibration of the Vande Mataram Song Have Been the Motive Force of the Struggle for India's Freedom

I—Until the Vande Mataram Song Burned and Quivered in the Hearts of Indian Patriots and Rose Like a Prayer and Incantation on Their Lips, the Country Was Striving With an Obscure Sense of Its Own Greatness

1.

"The revelatory vision and the mantric vibration distinguishing *Vande Mataram* throw *Jana Gana Mana* entirely into the shade. And it is no wonder that not Tagore's but Bankim's song has been the motive-force of the whole struggle for India's freedom. Until it burned and quivered in the hearts of our patriots and rose like a prayer and incantation on their lips, the country was striving with an obscure sense of its own greatness: there was a vagueness, a lukewarmness, a fear: we were overawed by the material prowess and pomp of our foreign rulers and our efforts to find our true selves were spoiled by either an unthinking imitation of the West or else a defensive anti-Western conservatism. We had not struck upon the master-key to the problem of national existence. Then, from a book that had been neglected when it first appeared, the music of *Vande Mataram* rang out into the ambiguously agitated air of the nation's reawakening consciousness." (IWSKDS: 29)

II—Throughout the Long Struggle for Swaraj, Vande Mataram Stimulated and Supported the People of India, Instilling Hope and a Strength Beyond the Human

1.

"Sri Aurobindo was at that time the political guru of Bengal. He realised at once the creative energy packed into this poem [*Vande Mataram*]. With a gesture as of an ultimate world-secret found at last, he scattered the words of Bankim Chandra all over idealistic Bengal from whose 'seventy million voices' that are rightly celebrated in the poem they spread to Gujarat and Maharashtra and beyond. In his own life he incarnated the presence of the mighty Mother with her aura of mystical consciousness. Under the spell of this presence a giant determination and zest took birth in the entire land, beginning a movement whose goal was bound to be independence. No sacrifice was too exacting, no suffering too poignant to be endured, not death itself could terrify. Laughing and singing, the patriots fought and served and died. Through all the long years during which the struggle for swaraj went on, *Vande Mataram* stimulated and supported the peoples of India, instilling into them a hope and a strength beyond the human. It is the one cry that has made modern Indian history; not political speeches, but this magical strain

breaking through Bankim Chandra from the inmost recesses of resurgent India's heart and interfused by Sri Aurobindo with India's mind and life as the true national anthem, brought us, two years ago, on the fifteenth of August which was also the seventy-fifth birthday of Sri Aurobindo, our political liberation. To put such a saviour-song on any other footing than that of the national anthem is to be disloyal to the Power that has given us a new birth. To overlook the fact that it has been a saviour-song because it is ideally the national anthem of India is to set ourselves out of tune with the glorious future calling to our glorious past." (IWSKDS: 29–30)

III—Shouting Vande Mataram Awakened Courage and Fearlessness among Indians

1.

"Sri Aurobindo: There was the case of Shyamakanta, the tiger-tamer. Once in a railway compartment he was travelling there were a Bengali couple and some Tommies [British soldiers]. The soldiers began to pester the Bengali's wife and he was so afraid that he didn't know what to do. Shyamakanta got up, caught hold of the soldiers and began to knock their heads against each other so hard that they were glad to get out at the next station. They did not expect a Bengali to be so strong. Once at Howrah station

a Bengali was being bullied by an Englishman. Suddenly he shouted 'Bande Mataram' and everyone in the train began to shout and the Englishman took alarm. That was the sudden transformation during the Swadeshi days. Before that our people used to tremble before an Englishman. The position was even reversed." (ETABP: 639)

IV–A New Spirit Was Created With the Cry of Bande Mataram, and People Felt Glorious to Be Alive With Hope and Dared to Act Together

"But the greatest thing done in those years was the creation of a new spirit in the country. In the enthusiasm that swept surging everywhere with the cry of Bande Mataram ringing on all sides men felt it glorious to be alive and dare and act together and hope; the old apathy and timidity were broken and a force created which nothing could destroy and which rose again and again in wave after wave till it carried India to the beginning of a complete victory." (CWSA 36: 59)

V—The Mantra of Bande Mataram Changed the People

Beginnings of the Revolutionary Movement

"It was anything but intrepid at the time; it was the mantra of Bande Mataram and the leap into revolutionary action that changed the people of the province. (CWSA 36: 69)

VI—Other Quotations Showing the Role That Bande Mataram Played in the Freedom Movement

1.

"The words Bande Mataram must be written—printed, would be better,—on every door in Barisal. Public meetings must be held as before & if they are dispersed by the police, the people must assemble in every compound where there is room for even fifty people to stand and record an oath never to submit or crouch down before the oppressor." (CWSA 6: 102) Written after an incident that took place in Barisal, east Bengal, on 7 November 1905

2.

"When some mighty sentiments dominate the human breast, they give rise to language which runs the risk of being scouted as mere platitude, they give rise to activities and demonstrations which are in danger of being traced to illegitimate sources. The students of Rajamundry wore 'Bande Mataram' badges, shouted 'Bande Mataram' in the streets, gave a grand reception to a Nationalist speaker, formed themselves into a Balabharat Samiti and the *Daily News* thinks all these to be the outcome of a patriotism

hardly legitimate. What is then legitimate patriotism, pray? Our contemporary has given us no light on the point. We suppose it means a blind loyalty to the alien government, a helpless acquiescence in its most despotic measures, bowing our knee to every AngloIndian, especially to the dicta of the Editor of the *Indian Daily News* and the *Englishman*. If we do not accept the ethics of the British and Anglo-Indian press which calls the present patriotic movement immoral and ascribes it to the want of moral training in our schools and colleges, we may be guilty according to Anglo-Indian jurisprudence but the higher tribunal to whom alone all oppressed peoples look up, knows their hearts and shapes their destinies accordingly." (CWSA 7: 545–546) June 27th, 1907

3.

"It is often represented by our opponents that the cry for Swaraj is a mere senseless cry for freedom without any recognition of the responsibilities of freedom. This is not so. Those who have followed the exposition of the Nationalist ideal in *Bande Mataram* know well that we advocate the struggle for Swaraj, first, because Liberty is in itself a necessity of national life and therefore worth striving for for its own sake; secondly, because Liberty is the first indispensable condition of national development intellectual, moral, industrial, political (we do not say it is

the only condition) and therefore worth striving for for India's sake; thirdly, because in the next great stage of human progress it is not a material but a spiritual, moral and psychical advance that has to be made and for this a free Asia and in Asia a free India must take the lead, and Liberty is therefore worth striving for for the world's sake. India must have Swaraj in order to live; she must have Swaraj in order to live well and happily; she must have Swaraj in order to live for the world, not as a slave for the material and political benefit of a single purse-proud and selfish nation, but as a free people for the spiritual and intellectual benefit of the human race." (CWSA 7: 572) July 3rd 1907

4.

Boycott and After

"The twentieth century dawned on a rising flood of renascent humanity surging over Asia's easternmost borders. The first report of it reached the astonished world in the victorious thunder of Japan. And it spread onward, this resurgent wave of human spirit, swiftly, irresistibly, overflooding in a sweeping embrace China, India, Persia and the farther West. India received the ablution of the holy waters singing her sacred hymn *Bande Mataram* that filled the spaces of heaven with joyous echoes heard of the Gods as of old, and the nations of the earth listened to the

song of unfree India and knew what it was—a voice in the chorus of Asiatic liberty. The unpremeditated and spontaneous declaration of the Boycott was the declaration of the country's recovery to life from its death-swoon of centuries, of her determination to live her own life—not for a master, but for herself and for the world. All was changed. Patriotism, the half-understood catchword of platform oratory, passed out of its confinement into the heart of the people—the priest and the prince and the peasant alike—giving to each that power of sacrifice which has now translated itself according to the confessions of the Times into the concrete fact of 42 million yards less of English cotton goods. And the demonstration of the sixteenth of October joined in by the Hindu and the Mahomedan, the Buddhist, the Jain and the Sikh, the police and the people, through the mystic compulsion of an instinctive fraternity, was the enchanting prevision of the India to be." (CWSA 7: 594) July 15th, 1907

5.

"When I went to jail, the whole country was alive with the cry of Bande Mataram, alive with the hope of a nation, the hope of millions of men who had newly risen out of degradation. When I came out of jail I listened for that cry, but there was instead a silence. A hush had fallen on the country and men seemed bewildered; for instead of God's

bright heaven full of the vision of the future that had been before us, there seemed to be overhead a leaden sky from which human thunders and lightnings rained. No man seemed to know which way to move, and from all sides came the question, 'What shall we do next? What is there that we can do?' I too did not know which way to move, I too did not know what was next to be done. But one thing I knew, that as it was the Almighty Power of God which had raised that cry, that hope, so it was the same power which had sent down that silence. He who was in the shouting and the movement was also in the pause and the hush. He has sent it upon us, so that the nation might draw back for a moment and look into itself and know His will. I have not been disheartened by that silence, because I had been made familiar with silence in my prison and because I knew it was in the pause and the hush that I had myself learned this lesson through the long year of my detention." Uttarpara Speech (CWSA 8: 3–4) 30 May 1909

6.

"He [Sri Aurobindo] had found that with the ideal of Swaraj to uphold and the *mantra* of 'Bande Mataram' in the heart, there was nothing so very terrible in jail or deportation. That was the first thing he would like to impress on them as the result of his experience. Imprisonment in a righteous cause was not so terrible as it seemed, suffering was not

so difficult to bear as our anticipations made it out. The prize to which they aspired was the greatest to which a nation could aspire and if a price was asked of them, they ought not to shrink from paying it." (CWSA 8: 103–104) Kumartuli Speech 11 July 1909

7.

"The 7th of August was very near. It was the birthday of the boycott, the birthday of the new spirit in India.

It was not much they had to do. Only once more to utter the sacred *mantra* of 'Bande Mataram', once more to declare that India was not lifeless, that Bengal was faithful to the vow she had made." (CWSA 8: 105) Kumartuli Speech 11 July 1909

8.

"The prohibition of public meetings can have no reference to any but Swadeshi meetings, the reference to objectionable cries is obviously aimed at the national cry of Bande Mataram and the power of harassing under the pretext of regulating public processions and meetings can have no objective but the revived meetings and processions which have shown that the national movement was not dead but only suspended." (CWSA 8: 162) 7th August 1909

9.

College Square Speech – 2

"Mr. Aurobindo Ghose next rose amid loud cheers and cries of 'Bande Mataram'. He said that the meeting was the last they could hold before the Partition Day, which was approaching, and so he could speak a few words about that illustrious day which should be observed with great national enthusiasm. The 16th October had become a memorable day, not only in the history of India, but in that of the world. The 7th of August was the day of the awakening of the nation and the 16th October was the day when that awakened nation publicly declared its individuality and indestructible vitality. A time might come when the future generation would have an occasion to celebrate that day as one of national rejoicing. The speaker then dwelt upon the several aspects of Partition Day, when Bengal was split up, and said he did not recognise the separation and would not do so. It was on that day that they declared through the leaders of the nation, and by a national proclamation, that the unity of Bengal remained intact and that there was no power strong enough to break it. ...

Mr. Ghose proceeded to say that the national movement was beset with manifold difficulties. Holding up before the audience a piece of Manchester cloth, stamped with the words 'Bande Mataram', he exclaimed that the

great cause was suffering on account of certain unprincipled men who were trying to assail the Swadeshi movement from all sides. The speaker had learned with great sorrow that foreign cloths were still pouring into the market and having a large sale. The more the difficulties in the way, he declared, the stronger would the movement be. He concluded his address by asking his countrymen to observe the 16th of October with due mourning." [Delivered at College Square, Calcutta, on 10 October 1909. Text published in the Times of India (Bombay) on 11 October] (CWSA 8: 274–275)

Section Four: English Translation of the Song Bande Mataram

1.

Hymn to the Mother

Bande Mataram

Mother, I bow to thee!
Rich with thy hurrying streams,
Bright with thy orchard gleams,
Cool with thy winds of delight,
Dark fields waving, Mother of might,
Mother free.
Glory of moonlight dreams
Over thy branches and lordly streams,—
Clad in thy blossoming trees,
Mother, giver of ease,
Laughing low and sweet!
Mother, I kiss thy feet,
Speaker sweet and low!
Mother, to thee I bow.

Who hath said thou art weak in thy lands,
When the swords flash out in twice seventy million hands

And seventy million voices roar
Thy dreadful name from shore to shore?
With many strengths who art mighty and stored,
To thee I call, Mother and Lord!
Thou who savest, arise and save!

To her I cry who ever her foemen drave
Back from plain and sea
And shook herself free.

Thou art wisdom, thou art law,
Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,
Thou the love divine, the awe
In our hearts that conquers death.
Thine the strength that nerves the arm,
Thine the beauty, thine the charm.
Every image made divine
In our temples is but thine.

Thou art Durga, Lady and Queen,
With her hands that strike and her swords of sheen,
Thou art Lakshmi lotus-throned,
And the Muse a hundred-toned.
Pure and perfect without peer,
Mother, lend thine ear.
Rich with thy hurrying streams,
Bright with thy orchard gleams,
Dark of hue, O candid-fair
In thy soul, with jewelled hair
And thy glorious smile divine,
Loveliest of all earthly lands,
Showering wealth from well-stored hands!
Mother, mother mine!

Mother sweet, I bow to thee,
Mother great and free!
(CWSA 5: 465–466)

2.

Bande Mataram

(Translation in Prose)

I bow to thee, Mother,
richly-watered, richly-fruited,
cool with the winds of the south,
dark with the crops of the harvests,
the Mother!
Her nights rejoicing in the glory of the moonlight,
her lands clothed beautifully with her trees in flowering bloom,
sweet of laughter, sweet of speech,
the Mother, giver of boons, giver of bliss!

Terrible with the clamorous shout of seventy million throats,
and the sharpness of swords raised in twice seventy million hands,
who sayeth to thee, Mother, that thou art weak?
Holder of multitudinous strength,
I bow to her who saves,
to her who drives from her the armies of her foemen,

the Mother!

Thou art knowledge, thou art conduct,
thou our heart, thou our soul,
for thou art the life in our body.
In the arm thou art might, O Mother,
in the heart, O Mother, thou art love and faith,
it is thy image we raise in every temple.

For thou art Durga holding her ten weapons of war,
Kamala at play in the lotuses
and Speech, the goddess, giver of all lore,
to thee I bow!
I bow to thee, goddess of wealth,
pure and peerless,
richly-watered, richly-fruited,
the Mother!
I bow to thee, Mother,
dark-hued, candid,
sweetly smiling, jewelled and adorned,
the holder of wealth, the lady of plenty,
the Mother!
(SABCL 5: 467–468)

Section Five: Durga in the *Vande Mataram* Song Is India as the Mother

I—Vande Mataram Is Not a Religious Song; It Is a National Song, and the Durga Spoken of Is India as the Mother

1.

"Disciple: Some people who object to Vande Mataram as a national song. And some Congress men support the removal of some parts of the song.

Sri Aurobindo: In that case the Hindus should give up their culture?

Disciple: The objection is that it speaks of Hindu goddess Durga and that is offensive to the Muslims.

Sri Aurobindo: But it is not a religious song. It is a national song and the Durga spoken of is India as the Mother. Why shouldn't the Muslims accept it? It is an image used in poetry. If in the conception of Indian nationality the Hindu viewpoint cannot find a place then the Hindus may as well be asked to give up their culture; it comes to this that we all become Mohammedans. They don't say it now but they will say it later on, because they have begun to object to the worship of Hindu Gods in national institutions. Why shouldn't the Hindu worship his Gods? Otherwise, the Hindus must either become Mohammedans or adopt

European culture, or become atheists. The Hindus don't object to their 'Allah ho Akbar'.

Disciple: They will object if that is made a national song.

Disciple: If they call India Allah I don't think the Hindus will object.

Sri Aurobindo: It is not in their nature to object to such things." (ETABP: 737- 738)

2.

"PURANI: Sir Akbar asks if you could change 'seven crores' into 'thirty crores" in your translation of *Bande Mataram*.

SRI AUROBINDO: That has been done.

PURANI: And if 'Durga' could also be changed?

SRI AUROBINDO: That I can't change.

NIRODBARAN: Muslims take 'Durga' as a Hindu Goddess and say that in this poem there are plenty of Sanskrit words.

SRI AUROBINDO: But here the country is spoken of as 'Durga', so a Hindu Goddess has nothing to do with it. The

Christians may also object to Greek Gods and Goddesses being represented in literature. As for the other point, the Muslims have plenty of Persian words in their writings. Let these be removed also." (TWSAN: 244)

Section Six: *Vande Mataram* Not Being Considered Secular Shows a Symptom of National Decadence

I—Still Sadder Is the Lukewarm Apologia That the Goddess Invoked Can Be Taken as a Harmless Poetic Metaphor for the Motherland

"That *Vande Mataram* should ever have been challenged on the ground that it was too Hindu and not secular enough for a country where there were millions of Muslims is a sad symptom of national decadence. Perhaps a still sadder one is the lukewarm apologia put up for it at times—namely, that the Goddess invoked should not worry anybody since nobody now believes in the reality of such a being and she can be taken as a harmless poetic metaphor for the motherland. Heaven save us from this kind of secularism! Secularism should mean nothing more than that every citizen of India is free to follow his beliefs, religious or non-religious, and has equal civic rights and that no discrimination will be made against him in any sphere because of his particular creed. It must never signify that India will not be regarded any longer as basically the land of Hinduism and that Hinduism in its essentials will not be allowed to mould increasingly the life of the three hundred million people who have inherited it from the most glorious spiritual past any country can claim." (IWSKDS: 41)

Section Seven: Objection to Mother India in *Vande Mataram* Robs India of All Its Genuine Cultural Value and Suppresses Our National Genius, Which Is the Most Wonderful in Existence

I—The Godhead Hailed in Vande Mataram Must Bring the Light, Colour, and Configuration of What the Descendants of the Rishis Have Felt and Seen

"But the basic soul and shape of cultural Indianness can take into itself the uniqueness, the subtle nuance, of every religion. This remarkable quality of it has been evident to the students, in the West no less than in the East, of its prolific scripture and literature. Hence Indian spiritual culture cannot be objected to as being sectarian. But, on the other hand, we should be de-nationalising it if we refused to admit whatever ideas or terms in it distinguished it from the Islamic, Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian, Sikh, Jain or even Buddhist culture. It has, for all its catholicity, characteristics of its own, and these characteristics it must retain in one manner or another if it is to be in any valid sense Indian. Take away these characteristics and it ceases being what the world knows it to be. Expunge them from … [*Vande Mataram*] which claims to be Indian and you have a general nondescript religious terminology, lacking in all national savour and drained of all distinguishable and dynamic vitality. The Godhead hailed must bring the light and colour and configuration of what the descendants of the Rishis have felt and seen. The feeling and seeing are, because of their essential catholicity of motive, really

acceptable by even a person who though in India does not think and pray with a consciousness in direct tune with the typical Indian spirituality; but if anyone takes objection to them because of their non-Islamic, non-Christian, non-Jewish, non-Zoroastrian, non-Sikh, non-Jain and even non-Buddhist suggestion, then he fails to understand what ultimate India is and he is trying to rob her of all genuine cultural value and to suppress a national genius that is, from the mystical and metaphysical viewpoint, the most wonderful in existence and, from the worldly and pragmatic viewpoint, no less wonderful by its wealth of varied creativeness and its capacity of almost unlimited organic assimilation." (IWSKDS: 23)

Section Eight: Over-touchiness towards the Minorities Must Never Diminish the Marvellous Potentialities of Cultural Indianness

Section Eight: Over-touchiness towards the Minorities Must Never Diminish the Marvellous Potentialities of Cultural Indianness

1.

"The concept of secularity prominent today in our Constitution must never encourage us to water down this genius [The Godhead hailed in *Vande Mataram*]: its function is discharged as soon as it ensures freedom of religious belief and ceremony, absence of bigotry, non-discrimination on communal grounds. Over-touchiness with regard to the minorities is a blunder no less serious than riding roughshod over them. As settled dwellers in this subcontinent they are to be granted equal civic and individual rights with the majority that is called Hindu; but for their sake the majority must never diminish the marvellous potentialities of cultural Indianness." (IWSKDS: 23–24)

Section Nine: The Deeper Meaning of the Song *Vande Mataram*

I—The Country, the Land, Is Only the Outward Body of the Nation, Its Annamaya Kosh, or Gross Physical Body

II—The Mass of People Who Occupy and Vivify the Body of the Nation Is the Pranamaya Kosh, the Life-Body of the Nation

III—These Two Are the Gross Body, the Physical Manifestation of the Mother

IV—Within the Gross Body Is a Subtler Body: The Thoughts, the Literature, the Philosophy, the Mental and Emotional Activities, the Sum of Hopes, Pleasures, Aspirations, Fulfilments, and the Civilisation and Culture Which Make Up the Sukshma Sharir of the Nation

V—This Subtle Life of the Nation Springs from a Deeper Existence in the Causal Body of the Nation: the Peculiar Temperament Which It Has Developed Out of Its Ages of Experience and Which Makes It Distinct from Others

VI—These Three Are the Bodies of the Mother, but Within Them All Is the Source of Her Life, Immortal and Unchanging

VII—In All These We Discover a Manifestation of God in National Life Which Is Living, Sacred, and Adorable, and It Is This Which We Speak of as the Mother

1.

"The Mother of the hymn [*Vande Mataram*] is no new goddess, but the same whom we have always worshipped; only she has put off the world-form in which she was familiar to us, she has assumed a human shape of less terrible aspect, less fierce and devastating power to attract her children back to her bosom.

What is a nation? We have studied in the schools of the West and learned to ape the thoughts and language of the West forgetting our own deeper ideas and truer speech, and to the West the nation is the country, so much land containing so many millions of men who speak one speech and live one political life owing allegiance to a single governing power of its own choosing. When the European wishes to feel a living emotion for his country, he personifies the land he lives in, tries to feel that a heart beats in the brute earth and worships a vague abstraction of his own intellect. The Indian idea of nationality ought to be truer and deeper. The philosophy of our forefathers looked through the gross body of things and discovered a subtle body within, looked through that and found yet another more deeply hidden, and within the third body

discovered the Source of life and form, seated for ever, unchanging and imperishable. What is true of the individual object, is true also of the general and universal. What is true of the man, is true also of the nation. The country, the land is only the outward body of the nation, its *annamaya kosh*, or gross physical body; the mass of people, the life of millions who occupy and vivify the body of the nation with their presence, is the *pranamaya kosh*, the life-body of the nation. These two are the gross body, the physical manifestation of the Mother. Within the gross body is a subtler body, the thoughts, the literature, the philosophy, the mental and emotional activities, the sum of hopes, pleasures, aspirations, fulfilments, the civilisation and culture, which make up the *sukshma sharir* of the nation. This is as much a part of the Mother's life as the outward existence which is visible to the physical eyes. This subtle life of the nation again springs from a deeper existence in the causal body of the nation, the peculiar temperament which it has developed out of its ages of experience and which makes it distinct from others. These three are the bodies of the Mother, but within them all is the Source of her life, immortal and unchanging, of which every nation is merely one manifestation, the universal Narayan, One in the Many of whom we are all the children.

When, therefore, we speak of a nation, we mean the separate life of the millions who people the country, but we mean also a separate culture and civilisation, a peculiar

national temperament which has become too deeply rooted to be altered and in all these we discover a manifestation of God in national life which is living, sacred and adorable. It is this which we speak of as the Mother. The millions are born and die; we who are here today, will not be here tomorrow, but the Mother has been living for thousands of years and will live for yet more thousands when we have passed away." (CWSA 7: 1115–1116)

2.

"Sj. Aurobindo said that he was exceedingly pleased to know that the song ['Bande Mataram'] had become so popular in all parts of India, and that it was being so repeatedly sung. He said that he would make this national anthem the subject of his speech. The song, he said, was not only a national anthem as the European nations look upon their own, but one replete [stuffed] with mighty power, being a sacred mantra, revealed to us by the author of *Anandamath*, who might be called an inspired rishi. He described the manner in which the mantra had been revealed to Bankim Chandra, probably by a sannyasi under whose teaching he was. He said that the mantra was not an invention, but a revivification of the old mantra which became extinct so to speak by the treachery of one Navakisan." (CWSA 7: 845)

Section Ten: A Greater Mantra Than *Bande Mataram* Has to Come

I—When the Ultimate Mantra Is Practised, Then the Closed Hand of God Will Begin to Open

1.

"We used the Mantra *Bande Mataram* with all our heart and soul, and so long as we used and lived it, relied upon its strength to overbear all difficulties, we prospered But suddenly the faith and the courage failed us, the cry of the Mantra began to sink and as it rang feebly, the strength began to fade out of country. A greater Mantra than *Bande Mataram* has to come. Bankim was not the ultimate seer of Indian awakening. He gave only the term of the initial and public worship, not the formula and the ritual of the inner secret *upasana.* For the greatest Mantras are those which are uttered within, and which the seer whispers or gives in dream or vision to his disciples. When the ultimate Mantra is practised even by two or three, then the closed hand of God will begin to open; when the *upasana* is numerously followed the closed Hand will open absolutely. ... Action done as a Sadhana, as a sacrifice to God, done first without attachment to the results and then without attachment to the action itself, is the indispensable condition. And it must be action done with Shraddha, with faith, whatever action it may be; it is not only for God but from God. There will be errors, there will be stumblings, but this is the *vīramārga*, the way of the heroes, and in it one must be afraid of nothing, still less afraid of errors and

stumblings. Only if we rely upon our own strength in the action, we shall go on stumbling to the end of the chapter. There must be the Shraddha that God leads, that He has taken the burden of our Sadhana upon Himself, and that every error and stumbling is from Him and intended to prepare an unfaltering and instructed strength. This is the Vakalam, of which Ramakrishna always spoke. The nation, too, has gone on stumbling, but progressing, exhausting its errors, its sins, and the possibility of calamity and defeat, taking swiftly and intensely the remnants of its evil Karma, ever since it began its Sadhana of action. And because it took the Name on its lips when it started, the Eternal Mother will not abandon it. For the name, even when taken in vain, inadvertently, or by accident, saves alive. Much more when it is taken with heart and soul and made the foundation of the Sadhana." (SABCL 2: 431–432)

2.

"When a great people rises from the dust, what *mantra* is the *sanjivani mantra* or what power is the resurrecting force of its resurgence? In India there are two great *mantras*, the *mantra* of 'Bande Mataram' which is the public and universal cry of awakened love of Motherland, and there is another more secret and mystic which is not yet revealed." (CWSA 7: 877)

Section Eleven: The *Mantra* Comes from a Very High Plane of Intuition and Conveys Infinitely More than the Word Seems to Indicate

I—The Mantra Is Born Out of the Infinite, and Its Significance Lies in Some Fundamental and Original Consciousness

"The *mantra* as I have tried to describe it in *The Future Poetry* is a word of power and light that comes from the Overmind inspiration or from some very high plane of Intuition. Its characteristics are a language that conveys infinitely more than the mere surface sense of the Words seems to indicate, a rhythm that means even more than the language and is born out of the Infinite and disappears into it, and the power to convey not merely the mental, vital or physical contents or indications or values of the thing uttered, but its significance and figure in some fundamental and original consciousness which is behind all these and greater. … You must remember that the Overmind is a superhuman consciousness and to be able to write always or purely from an overmind inspiration would mean the elevation of at least a part of the nature beyond the human level." (CWSA 27: 26–27)

II—Mantras Are Revealed Verses of Power from a Divine Source of Inspiration

"In ancient times the Veda was revered as a sacred book of wisdom, a great mass of inspired poetry, the work of

Rishis, seers and sages, who received in their illumined minds rather than mentally constructed a great universal, eternal and impersonal Truth which they embodied in Mantras, revealed verses of power, not of an ordinary but of a divine inspiration and source. The name given to these sages was Kavi, which afterwards came to mean any poet, but at the time had the sense of a seer of truth,—the Veda itself describes them as kavayaḥ satya'śrutaḥ, 'seers who are hearers of the Truth' and the Veda itself was called śruti, a Word which came to mean 'revealed Scripture'. The seers of the Upanishad had the same idea about the Veda and frequently appealed to its authority for the truths they themselves announced and these too afterwards came to be regarded as Sruti, revealed Scripture, and were included in the sacred Canon." (CWSA 16: 3)

III—In Vedic Conception, the Mantra Is the Effective Agent of Creation

"The name of God, the mantra, is still the keystone of all Indian yoga. We shall not realise the full bearing & rationale of this great Vedic conception unless we first impress on our minds the Vedic idea of existence & creation, for Vak, the Word, is in that idea the effective agent of creation." (CWSA 16: 721)

IV—What Can the Mantra Do?

Can create new subjective states in ourselves
Can alter our psychical being
Can reveal knowledge and faculties we did not previously possess
Can produce similar results in other minds
Can produce vibrations in the mental and vital atmosphere which can have results on the physical plane

"The Mantra can not only create new subjective states in ourselves, alter our psychical being, reveal knowledge and faculties we did not before possess, can not only produce similar results in other minds than that of the user, but can produce vibrations in the mental and vital atmosphere which result in effects, in actions and even in the production of material forms on the physical plane." (CWSA 18: 31)

V—Effectiveness of the Mantra

"The name of the Divine is usually called in for protection, for adoration, for increase of bhakti, for the opening up of the inner consciousness, for the realisation of the Divine in that aspect. As far as it is necessary to work in the

subconscious for that, the Name must be effective there." (CWSA 29: 327)

VI—A Mantra Given by the Mother When India Was in Crisis

(*The message below was distributed at the Ashram with the introduction: 'A mantra given by the Mother for all people in the country for the present crisis.'*)

Supreme Lord, Eternal Truth
Let us obey Thee alone
and live according to
Truth."
June 1971 (CWM 13: 371)

VII—Invocation to Mother India on the Day India Attained Freedom

Invocation

15 August 1947

"O our Mother, O Soul of India, Mother who hast never forsaken thy children even in the days of darkest depression, even when they turned away from thy voice,

served other masters and denied thee, now when they have arisen and the light is on thy face in this dawn of thy liberation, in this great hour we salute thee. Guide us so that the horizon of freedom opening before us may be also a horizon of true greatness and of thy true life in the community of the nations. Guide us so that we may be always on the side of great ideals and show to men thy true visage, as a leader in the ways of the spirit and a friend and helper of all the peoples." (CWM 13: 352)

Section Twelve: The Discussion on the Choice of Two Songs for the National Anthem

1.

"OUT of all the fatuities with which modern India is infested, the most egregious is the long drawn-out discussion on the choice of a national anthem. The two songs that have been pitted against each other are really like two worlds apart and it is supreme lack of insight to set them up as equal candidates for election posing us a most perplexing problem. Once we understand, first, the prerequisites of the ideal national anthem and, secondly, the living associations and potencies of Bankim Chandra's *Vande Mataram* on the one hand and Tagore's *Jana Gana Mana* on the other, there cannot remain the slightest doubt that nothing except *Vande Mataram* can be the creative cry and the sustaining call on the lips of resurgent India." (IWSKDS: 18).

I—The Merits and Defects of "*Jana Gana Mana*"

1.

"There is no denying its noble sentiment, poetic merit and musical charm. After all it was the incomparable Rabindranath who composed it, and it has a fine accent of country-wide friendliness as much as of gentle devotion to God. We must dismiss at once the ludicrous charge that it is an eulogy of George V on the occasion of his visit to India or even the cunning accusation that it lends itself easily to the apotheosis of any particular Indian deemed worthy of

praise, say, Gandhiji. The phrase running like a refrain through the whole poem "Thou dispenser of India's destiny" -- cannot be interpreted in its context as signifying anything except God, for this dispenser is addressed also as "Eternal Charioteer." Nor must we allow ourselves to be misguided by the contention that, because *Jana Gana Mana* refers only to certain provinces and not to all, it is insufficiently national: the song is intended to be a hymn to the one God who is pictured as looking after and uniting the diverse races of India, and the geographical names thrown in are poetically suggestive of some of the physical and ethnological features of the country, no aim is there to make an exhaustive inventory of places and races: the aim is to give a notion of India in her broad and general entirety moving in rhythm to the will of the Lord. Yes, Tagore's piece has a fineness deserving respect. But has it the qualities that are wanted in the ideal national anthem for India?

Unfortunately it fails on every count. There is not the intense consciousness of India as a mighty supra-individual Being: the mention of the country or of the nation is on the purely ideative or nobly sentimental level; the deep heart has not felt the huge presence and the words are vacant of its intimate force. India the puissant and beloved Mother does not flame out of the poem. There is not even an apostrophe to her as the Mother. The one sentence which brings in the term runs in Tagore's own translation: "Thy

mother-arms were round her and thine eyes gazed upon her troubled face in sleepless love …" Here it is not India but God who is the Mother. This clinches the point that the poem is not directly an invocation of the national Being, much less does it visualise this Being in all its powerful particularity. As a result the ardour to preserve and defend it from losing that particularity is absent: the warrior and the hero are dumb in *Jana Gana Mana*. Neither does it embody the essence of historical India, the country that had created sublime scripture and royal epic and beautiful drama, gripped life with a happy inexhaustible versatility, built grandly in stone and wood, fashioned majestic institutions, cast the lines of harmonious polities and thrilled with the luminous colourful warp and weft of the careers of memorable men, the country that had grown a passionate pilgrim of both eternity and time and developed a flexible yet ineradicable individuality numerous centuries before Islam's crescent ever dawned on its farthest horizon. Where in *Jana Gana Mana* are the recognisable features of cultural Indianness? We have only a blurred beauty, a diffused light which can never serve to draw forth the deep *svabhava* of the national Being which has broken through all bonds and risen again with its world-unifying yet characteristically Indian face. Those two words, "Eternal Charioteer", are scarcely clear enough to stamp any vivid Indianness upon it: they make just a poetic image, they do not call up the figure of Sri Krishna who

charioted Arjuna at the same time to triumph over his enemies and to the Vision of the Cosmic Deity-the Vision that is itself so typically Indian. Throughout the poem we feel a disappointing though never undignified washing away of the fact that the force of unification cannot come by an assembled and outwardly constructed "universal religion" but only by plunging into the wide vibrating heart of the Indian spiritual consciousness which, behind all sectarian excrescences, holds in its multi-rhythmed rapture the secret of a spontaneous fundamental universality. To achieve lasting and natural unity of being we must not annul Indianness but be Indian in the central infinity-focussing sense and develop out of its ancient spiritual potencies a new vision that is no less recognisably Indian for all its modernism and secular State-idea. Lastly, *Jana Gana Mana* keeps a cleavage between the concept of India and the concept of the Divine, instead of making them converge and fuse: India here is only the country whose destiny is dispensed by God, she is collectively held to be separate from the Supreme in the phrase about the latter, "Thy finger points the path to all people", and in the sentence about the former, "My country lay in a deathlike silence of swoon". There is indeed a pervading suggestion that India has a spiritual aspiration and adventure, but it is not set aglow and her spiritual origin and destiny are not revealed with a flaming finality by making the Supreme shine out through her Soul. (IWSKDS: 24–26)

II—The Paramount Qualities of "Vande Mataram"

1.

All that Jana Gana Mana, despite its fineness, fails to convey is brought with rare felicity in *Vande Mataram*. The unique union, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, of sweetness, simple directness and high poetic force in *Vande Mataram* is difficult to translate with absolute accuracy into English verse from the original Sanskrit interspersed with a few Bengali words. But the inspired drive of it is admirably caught in general in Sri Aurobindo's own rendering which is born of his having felt it in his very blood-stream during the days when he led the revolt of Bengal against foreign rule:

Mother, I bow to thee!

…

Not a single demand in order to get the ideal national anthem for India is left unanswered here by a poetic language and rhythm that come with the mystical inevitability of what is called the mantra -- the visionary word springing by some identification of the hidden poetic self with the deep heart of the thing to be uttered, and catching in the moment of identification the secret divine truth and reality which has figured forth that thing. Not only is each phrase replete with precise and necessary

significance, but the various phrases form an unfolding scheme both artistically and philosophically satisfying, a three-stepped progression which, in a speech delivered thirty-one years ago in the grand square of the National School of Amraoti, Sri Aurobindo is reported to have explained. As with the individual, so with the nation, there are three sheaths or bodies -- the gross or outer, the subtle or inner, the causal or higher. The first consists of the physical elements, the shape, the visible organic functioning. In Bankim Chandra's poem it is the rapid rivers and the glimmering orchards, the winds and the harvests waving, the moon-magical nights in forest and on riverside. A transition from the outer body to the inner is through the human populations, the warrior men who are the physical instruments of the fine frenzy of freedom that is hers. Their teeming vitality is the cry of independence she sends forth from the inner to the outer -- the inner that is a formation of beautiful disciplined powers, an inspired energy, a pure passion, an illumined thought, a righteous will, an aesthesis enchanting and refining. This subtle sheath of her being bears hints of a still greater mode of her existence and by those hints the supra-individual and national self of her mingles, in our enthusiasms as well as in our meditations, with all the symbols of the Infinite and the Eternal our religious nature instals everywhere in our land. That still greater mode is the prime creative arch-image, at once single and many-aspected, whose evolving

expression is the vast world with its nations and peoples. Cause and controller from its transcendental status, it is the Divine Truth of all formulated being, the ever-living supreme Personality whose power and bliss and knowledge are the perfection towards which we aspire in this country of ours when we love so vehemently the soil sanctified by hero and saint and seer and when we fling ourselves so happily into the service of the majestic and maternal Presence that we feel to be the indivisible India stretched in a myriad harmonious moods across space and time.

The revelatory vision and the mantric vibration distinguishing *Vande Mataram* throw *Jana Gana Mana* entirely into the shade. And it is no wonder that not Tagore's but Bankim's song has been the motive-force of the whole struggle for India's freedom. Until it burned and quivered in the hearts of our patriots and rose like a prayer and incantation on their lips, the country was striving with an obscure sense of its own greatness: there was a vagueness, a lukewarmness, a fear: we were overawed by the material prowess and pomp of our foreign rulers and our efforts to find our true selves were spoiled by either an unthinking imitation of the West or else a defensive anti-Western conservatism. We had not struck upon the master-key to the problem of national existence. Then, from a book that had been neglected when it first appeared, the music of *Vande Mataram* rang out into the ambiguously agitated air of the nation's reawakening

consciousness. Sri Aurobindo was at that time the political guru of Bengal. He realised at once the creative energy packed into this poem. With a gesture as of an ultimate world-secret found at last, he scattered the words of Bankim Chandra all over idealistic Bengal from whose "seventy million voices" that are rightly celebrated in the poem they spread to Gujarat and Maharashtra and beyond. In his own life he incarnated the presence of the mighty Mother with her aura of mystical consciousness. Under the spell of this presence a giant determination and zest took birth in the entire land, beginning a movement whose goal was bound to be independence. No sacrifice was too exacting, no suffering too poignant to be endured, not death itself could terrify. Laughing and singing, the patriots fought and served and died. Through all the long years during which the struggle for swaraj went on, *Vande Mataram* stimulated and supported the peoples of India, instilling into them a hope and a strength beyond the human. It is the one cry that has made modern Indian history; not political speeches, but this magical strain breaking through Bankim Chandra from the inmost recesses of resurgent India's heart and interfused by Sri Aurobindo with India's mind and life as the true national anthem, brought us, two years ago, on the fifteenth of August which was also the seventy-fifth birthday of Sri Aurobindo, our political liberation. To put such a saviour-song on any other footing than that of the national anthem

is to be disloyal to the Power that has given us a new birth. To overlook the fact that it has been a saviour-song because it is ideally the national anthem of India is to set ourselves out of tune with the glorious future calling to our glorious past." (IWSKDS: 26–30)

2.

"When a country's collectivity is disposed to occult insight the national soul is most clearly grasped by the patriot heart: thus in Ireland and in India we find the intensest response to the superhuman presence constituting the nation. Especially in India with her endless history of rishi and yogi and bhakta and avatar, patriotism is at its roots a religious fervour, and the most creative of its many forms has been the one with which it started on its career of revolt against British rule—the one which found its most puissant expression in the upsurge of Bengal during the partition of this province by Lord Curzon and which went to its fiery work with that open acknowledgement of the national soul, the worshipping cry of *Vande Mataram*, 'I bow to you, O Mother.' This cry rang throughout the many decades of the country's toil for freedom and even now when superficial purposes have sought officially to replace Bankim Chandra's inspired anthem, replete with the very essence of Indianness, by the more deliberate more cosmopolitian composition, *Jana Gana Mana*, the outleaping apostrophe to the Goddess that is India has not

lost its appeal—still in a myriad bosoms the flame of occult recognition burns—through the officially secular mind itself of those in charge of the government the Mother, though often obstructed, works secretly her will. In the instance of a country like India the outwardly unconscious choice of a date like August 15 for the Independence Day must be traced to no fortuitous concourse of atoms in the brains of her Ministers but to the deep design of her national soul." (IWSKDS: 316-317)

Section Thirteen: The Newspaper *Bande Mataram*

A nationalist newspaper *Bande Mataram* was started on 6th August 1906. Sri Aurobindo joined *Bande Mataram* as an assistant editor. On 2 June 1907 the first issue of the weekly edition of *Bande Mataram* was published. Issued every Sunday, the weekly edition was intended for circulation all over India.

1.

"We gave in full yesterday the article of the *Indian Patriot* in which our contemporary criticised the action of the Bengal Government in searching the *Bande Mataram* [Newspaper] office as a preliminary, it is presumed, to a prosecution under the sedition clause. We thank our contemporary for his sympathy, but we are bound to say that he does not seem to have entirely grasped the political gospel preached by [Newspaper] *Bande Mataram*. The *Patriot* seems to be under the impression that it is a gospel of violent despair. Because England has refused to hear our prayers and melt at our tears, therefore we advocate an appeal to force. But this is not and has never been our attitude. Those who are at present responsible for the policy of this paper were never believers in the old gospel of mendicancy and at no time in their lives were associated with Congress politics; they publicly opposed the Congress propaganda as futile and doomed to failure at a time when the country at large was full of a touching but ignorant faith in prayers and resolutions and British justice. Despair and

disappointment therefore could not possibly be the root of their policy. It is rather a settled, reasoned and calm conviction we have always held, but for which the country was not ripe until it had gone through a wholesome experience of disillusionment. Neither is our teaching a mere gospel of brute force. We preach on the contrary a great idea in the strength of which we are confident of victory. All that we contend is that we must reach the realisation of that idea in the same way as other nations by utter self-devotion, by self-immolation, by bitter struggle and terrible sacrifices, and that we cannot hope and ought not to wish to have liberty given us at less than its eternal and inevitable price." 6 August 1907 (CWSA 7: 625)

2.

Our First Anniversary

"The [Newspaper] *Bande Mataram* has completed the first year of its existence. It was started on the 6th of August last year and its anniversary falls strictly on that date. But it is only in the fitness of things that the organ of Indian Nationalism should choose the birthday of Nationalism in the country for the purpose of observing its anniversary. The 7th of August, therefore, has another importance to the Nationalists of Bengal who brought into existence their accredited journal just in time to hail that historic date. We shall only be telling the truth if we notice here that the birth

of our paper took place under the most favourable auspices. It came into being in answer to an imperative public need and not to satisfy any private ambition or personal whim; it was born in a great and critical hour for the whole nation and has a message to deliver which nothing on earth can prevent it from delivering. The *Bande Mataram* has been before the public for a year and it has, we believe, rendered a tolerably fair account of itself. It claims that it has given expression to the will of the people and sketched their ideals and aspirations with the greatest amount of fidelity. It is for this reason that it has received a splendid reception in almost all the provinces of India. The amount of support it has got in the first year of its existence surpasses all previous records in Indian journalism. The political ideal of the people has changed, the desire for freedom is a force to be reckoned with and if anybody has any doubt on the point, success of the *Bande Mataram* should set it at rest. Our constituents are aware of the difficulties in our way and we hope they will stand by us till we shall have fulfilled our mission." 7 August 1907 (CWSA 6: 629)

3.

A Compliment and Some Misconceptions

"We extract in another column the opinions and interpretations of the London *Times* anent the [Newspaper] *Bande Mataram*. It is gratifying to find the

Thunderer so deeply impressed with the ability with which this journal is written and edited, even though the object of this generous appreciation be to point us out as the tallest oak of all on which the lightning may most fitly descend. But we feel bound to correct certain misapprehensions into which the *Times* has too readily fallen. It suits the *Times* to pretend that the Nationalist movement in India is a pure outcome of racial hatred and that the creation and fomentation of that hatred is the sole method of Indian agitators and the one object of their speeches and writings. But Nationalism is no more a mere ebullition of race hatred in India than it was in Italy in the last century. Our motives and our objects are at least as lofty and noble as those of Mazzini or of Garibaldi whose centenary the Times was hymning with such fervour a few days ago. The restoration of our country to her separate existence as a nation among the nations, her exaltation to a greatness, splendour, strength, magnificence equalling and surpassing her ancient glories is the goal of our endeavours: and we have undertaken this arduous task in which we as individuals risk everything, ease, wealth, liberty, life itself it may be, not out of hatred and hostility to other nations but in the firm conviction that we are working as much in the interests of all humanity including England herself 12 August 1907 635 as in those of our own posterity and nation. That the struggle to realise our ideal must bring with it temporary strife, misunderstanding,

hostility, disturbance, that in short, it is bound to be a struggle and not the billing and cooing of political doves, we have never attempted to deny. We believe that the rule of three hundred millions of Indians by an alien bureaucracy not responsible to the nation is a system unnatural, intrinsically bad and inevitably oppressive, and we do not pretend that we can convince our people of its undesirability without irritating the bureaucracy on one side and generating a strong dislike of the existing system on the other. But our object is constructive and not destructive, to build up our own nation and not to destroy another. If England chooses to feel aggrieved by our nationbuilding, and obstruct it by unjust, violent or despotic means, it is she who is the aggressor and guilty of exciting hatred and ill-feeling. Her action may be natural, may be inevitable, but the responsibility rests on her, not on Indian Nationalism." 12 August 1907 (CWSA 7: 634–635)

Other Comprehensive Compilations by Jamshed M. Mavalwalla

Other comprehensive collections compiled by the same compiler are listed below. These works are available for free download through the Sri Aurobindo Society's publications website:

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67. Delight Secretly Supports All Our Sufferings
68. Purity in Sadhana

One compilation is available only in printed book form: *Sadhana of the Psychic Being*