

वंदे मातरम्

बंकिमचन्द्र चट्टोपाध्याय¹

वन्दे मातरम्

सुजलां सुफलां मलयजशीतलाम्
शस्य श्यामलां मातरं ।

शुभ्र ज्योत्स्ना पुलकित यामिनीम्

फुल्ल कुसुमित द्रुमदलशोभिनीम्,

सुहासिनी सुमधुर भाषिणीम् ।

सुखदां वरदां मातरम् ॥ वन्दे मातरम् ...

सप्त कोटि कण्ठ कलकल निनाद कराले

निसप्त कोटि भुजैर्ध्रुत खरकरवाले

के बोले मा तुमी अबले

बहुबल धारिणीं नमामि तारिणीम्

रिपुदलवारिणीं मातरम् ॥ वन्दे मातरम् ...

तुमि विद्या तुमि धर्म, तुमि हृदि तुमि मर्म

त्वं हि प्राणाः शरीरे

बाहुते तुमि मा शक्ति,

हृदये तुमि मा भक्ति,

तोमारै प्रतिमा गडि मंदिरे मंदिरे ॥ वन्दे मातरम् ...

त्वं हि दुर्गा दशप्रहरणधारिणी

कमला कमलदल विहारिणी

वाणी विद्यादायिनी, नमामि त्वाम्

नमामि कमलां अमलां अतुलाम्

सुजलां सुफलां मातरम् ॥ वन्दे मातरम् ...

श्यामलां सरलां सुस्मितां भूषिताम्

धरणीं भरणीं मातरम् ॥ वन्दे मातरम् ...

¹ Refer to the attached article for more details

Translation by Shri Aurobindo Ghose²

Mother, I bow to thee!
Rich with thy hurrying streams,
bright with 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 sword flesh out in the 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!
Though who savest, arise and save!
To her I cry who ever her foeman drove
Back from plain and Sea
And shook herself free.

Thou art wisdom, thou art law,

² According to Bhavan's book, Vande Mataram by Moni Bagchee, (pg. 66), "Bankin Chandra composed the song in an inspired moment, Rabindranath sang it by setting a tune to it and it was left to the genius of Aurobindo to interpret the deeper meaning of the song out of which India received the philosophy of new Nationalism."

Shri Aurobindo's birthday was also on 15th of August.

Thou art heart, our soul, our breath
Though art love divine, the awe
In our hearts that conquers death.
Thine the strength that nervs 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,
Lovilest of all earthly lands,
Showering wealth from well-stored hands!
Mother, mother mine!
Mother sweet, I bow to thee,
Mother great and free!

Another independent attempt of English translation by Keshab Bhattarai³

Salutations (to you), oh Mother!

(You are blessed with) Richness in water resources, plenty of fruits (and forest resources), flushed with cool air breezing from Malaya mountains;
Green with rice plants o ! our motherland
Salutations (to you), oh Mother!

Where nights are made joy-
ous by sparkling light
very beautiful by buds-flowers-
and rows of trees

Always looking pleasant, sweet speaking
giver of happiness and riches
o! our motherland!
Salutations (to you), oh Mother!

Seventy million voices are heard (praising you) in "kalakala" sound
many million hands have taken swords (for your protection)
How can I say that you are a helpless woman?
I pray (to you), oh savior mother adorned
with strength, the destroyer of enemies.
Salutations (to you), oh Mother!

You are embodiment of wisdom, virtues
(religion), love, and the essence (of everything).
You are certainly the life force in (our) bodies.
Oh Mother, you are strength in (our) arms,

Oh Mother, you are devotion in (our) hearts,
Your (sacred) image is in every temple
Salutations (to you), oh Mother!

You are indeed the ten-
handed "Durga" goddess,
you are the goddess of wealth, Kamala or
Laxmi, residing on the lotus,
you are the bestower of (power of) speech and
knowledge - Goddess Saraswati, I pray to you.
I salute you oh pure unmatched Goddess Kamalaa.

You are blessed with water resources,
blessed with plenty of fruits,
Salutations (to you), oh Mother!

You are peaceful, kind, pleasant, and beautiful.

Oh Mother earth, nourisher, salutations.
Salutations (to you), oh Mother! Vande Mataram.

³Please provide corrections to kbhattar@lynx.dac.neu.edu

Line by line attempt of English translation
by Keshab Bhattarai⁴

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सुहासिनीं सुमधुर भाषिणीम् ।

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You are embodiment of wisdom, virtues
(religion), love, and the essence (of every-
thing)

त्वं हि प्राणाः शरीरे

You are certainly the life force in (our) bodies

बाहुते तुमि मा शक्ति,

Oh Mother, you are strength in (our) arms,

हृदये तुमि मा भक्ति,

Oh Mother, you are devotion in (our) hearts,

तोमारै प्रतिमा गडि मंदिरे मंदिरे ॥ वन्दे मातरम् ...

Your (sacred) image is in every temple.

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वाणी विद्यादायिनी, नमामि त्वाम्

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Oh Mother earth, nourisher, salutations.

Salutations (to you), oh Mother!

Excerpts from “Story of a Song: Ecstasy and Agony” by Shivaramu

Part 1

GENESIS OF JANAGANAMANA:

W.B. Yeats is a great Irish poet. He was a friend of Tagore's, and a great admirer of his works. He wrote a beautiful introduction to Tagore's Gitanjali. Once an Indian disciple of Tagore met Yeats. In a letter to Lady Gregory in America, Yeats mentioned that he had told him that Sarojini Naidu's brother was unhappy that Tagore wrote a poem welcoming King George V. He also narrated to her an appetising story he had from the disciple warning her that it was strictly off the record. It concerns the circumstances in which Janaganamana was composed: “The National Congress people asked Tagore for a poem of welcome. He tried to write it, but could not. He got up very early in the morning and wrote a very beautiful poem, not one of his best, but still beautiful. When he came down, he said to one of us, ‘Here is a poem which I have written. It is addressed to God, but give it to Congress people. It will please them. They will think it is addressed to the King.’ All Tagore's own followers knew it meant God, but others did not.” (The Indian Express, June 3, 1968)

The Calcutta Congress session began on December 26, 1911. The proceedings on the first day began with Vandemataram. The second day was entirely devoted to things connected with the welcoming of King George V, and this day the song Janaganamana was sung, and at the closing ceremony Rajbhujia Dutt Choudhary's 'Badshah Hamara' was sung. On the third day Saraladevi sang her own composition 'Namo Hindustan'.

The news papers reports had the following comments on Janaganaman:

“The Bengali poet Babu Rabindranath Tagore sang a song composed by him specially to welcome the Emperor.” (Statesman, Dec.28, 1911)

“The proceedings began with the singing by Babu Rabindranath Tagore of a song specially composed by him in honour of the Emperor.” (Englishman, Dec.28).

“When the proceedings of the Indian National

Congress began on Wednesday 27th December 1911, a Bengali song in welcome of the Emperor was sung. A resolution welcoming the Emperor and Empress was also adopted unanomously.” (Indian, Dec. 29, 1911)

In the eyes of many leaders of the day, loyalty to the nation and loyalty to the Emperor were identical. King George V had proclaimed on Dec.12 the annulment of the partition of Bengal. There was therefore nothing unnatural or extraordinary in a Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore, composing or singing a song in praise of the Emperor out of gratitude. But differences of opinion were bound to arise when the question of its adoption as the national anthem came up. The choice of a national anthem should undoubtedly be one which can be a fountain of inspiration by the sanctity of its origin.

Rabindranath Tagore did not contradict newspaper reports which characterised Janaganamana as a song composed in honour of King George V. Gradually the tide of nationalism began to affect the old values. Loyalty to the country and loyalty to the King became irreconcilable. Honour, devotion and love of the country not only ceased to co-exist with honour, devotion and love of King Emperor, but mutually antagonistic.

Also the British government which was charging people with sedition for singing Vande Mataram extended high regard to Janaganamana. It was sung in Government schools, and in scout groups which fostered loyalty to the British throne. At the time British quit India, a fighter plane was presented by England to India, and on this occasion Janaganamana was sung. The British also praised the song. It is anybody's guess as to why they praised it?

ACCEPTENCE AS NATIONAL ANTHEM

January 26, 1950 was set for the Indian Republic. The national anthem was to be chosen before the election of the President. The objection advanced Vandemataram was that unlike Janaganamana it did not suit band music, but Master Krishna Rao had solved the difficulty. He had given a demonstration before the members of the Constituent Assembly who had to decide the issue.

Moreover, there was generous appreciation from experts in Bombay, both official and professional. It was therefore expected, that unless the technical objection was a mere facade, the Constituent Assembly would adopt Vande Mataram as the national anthem. The Government's objections having been disproved, the nation heaved a sigh of relief.

Mahatma Gandhi wanted Vande Mataram to be our national anthem. The song was invariably sung at his prayer meetings. After Vande Mataram was sung on August 29, 1947, Gandhi ji said, "Vande Mataram should be set to music so that millions can sing it together, and feel the thrill. They should all sing in the same raga, with the same bhava. Shantiniketan or some other competent institution should design an acceptable raga." This wish of Gandhi ji was fulfilled through Master Krishni Rao's craftsmanship.

After this time, the whole of Bengal, under the leadership of its Premier Dr B. C. Roy, took up the campaign in favour of Vande Mataram.

In view of this background, the possibility of the members of the Constituent Assembly, inspired by sentiments of patriotism, adopting Vande Mataram as the national anthem was indeed strong. But things were happening behind the scene.

Part 2

AND THE CONTROVERSY STARTED

Pt. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar founded the Gandharva Mahavidhyalaya. A well-known musician, he was also a proud patriot. He brought into vogue the tradition of singing national songs at public functions. In the dawn of the Swadeshi movement, he started the tradition of singing Vande Mataram in Lahore, and carried it to different parts of the country. He commanded not only immense scholarship, but a magnetic personality and a wonderful voice. He was regarded with great respect by the national leaders of the freedom movement. It was their desire that he should sing Vande Mataram at the commencement of every Congress session. Paluskar attended Congress session, year after year, since 1915, and his performance captured the hearts of delegates.

In 1923 the Congress session was held at Kakinada, which is now in Andhra Pradesh. As usual Paluskar was invited to it. He rose to sing Vande Mataram. Maulana Mohamed Ali was the President of the Congress that year.

"When Vishnu Digambar rose to sing Vande Mataram in conformity with tradition, Maulana Saheb raised an objection on the ground that music was taboo to his religion. The leaders assembled were completely bewildered. Vishnu Digambar was incensed, and hit back: 'This is a national forum, not the platform of any single community. This is no mosque to object to music. There is no justification for a ban on music here. When the President could put up with the music in the presidential procession, why does he object to it here?' Having silenced the President, without waiting for his reply, he proceeded to sing Vande Mataram and completed it. Respect for his sense of national pride and love of the motherland grew. The people admired his moral courage, and applauded him heartily." (Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, National Book Trust, p.54)

It came as a great shock to the people that Maulana Md. Ali should object the singing of Vande Mataram. There was no doubt that this was an indication of a mentality of separatism which refused to identify itself with the mainstream of national life. But this episode did little damage either to the greatness or the popularity of the song. Mahatma Gandhi repeatedly referred to the virtues of this national anthem. "When we sing that ode to the motherland, Bande Mataram, we sing it to the whole of India." (Kesari January 1924)

The opposition of Muslim League to Vande Mataram, however, continued to wax and they started putting pressure on Congress leadership against the singing of this song. It was the height of irony on the part of the Muslim League, which was bent upon breaking the unity of India, emotionally, geographically, and in all other ways, to express its concern about 'the growth of genuine nationalism'. Those in Congress who were eager to pander to every slightest wish of the League were agitated, and a feeling developed that unless ML is dissatisfied and it was won over the unity of the country would be imperilled. In such a situation CWC in 1937 decided

to maim and curtail the national song.

The CWC appointed a sub-committee with Maulana Azad, Nehru, Subhash Chandra Bose and Acharya Narendra Dev as members to review the eligibility of VM to the status of national anthem. The committee was to take the guidance of Rabindranath Tagore. And this sub-committee endorsed the CWC's resolution to adopt VM in its truncated form as the national anthem:

“Anandmath was the story of a heroic struggle against foreign rule. Because it happened to be a Muslim rule, a fresh objection was raised. Bankim's object was to arouse through his novels a patriotic awakening among the people so that they became conscious of their slavery under the British. He couldn't do it overtly, but his fiction achieved the purpose. The revolutionaries of Bengal accepted it in this spirit in the early part of the century; it became the mantra of those who mounted the gallows in a bid to emancipate the country from alien bondage...The Congress, however, in order to conciliate the Muslims, mutilated the song and ordered that only first two stanzas of it should be sung.” (Muslim Politics, S. Mukherjee, p.53)

But Muslim League continued its campaign to dethrone even the first two stanzas of the VM. In the legislative assemblies they would boycott the singing of the song or raise point of orders or bring adjournment motions etc. and would make a plea that ‘singing of VM is a declaration of war on Islam.’ To appease them in Madras assembly from January 28, 1938, the practice of reciting from the Quran and a prayer in English was also introduced. But ML was not satisfied, it continued to demand the deletion of VM from national movement, and to this effect it passed a resolution (Pirpur Report, Nov.15, 1938) which listed numerous grievances of the Muslims, VM song had topped the list.

Part 3

AFTER INDEPENDENCE,

THE CONTOVERSY CONTINUED

In GOI's publication (Our National Songs), it is said that experts were of the view that Vande Mataram lacked rhythm and movement. Of course they were official experts, and remain unidentified.

In their opinion the essential qualification of a national anthem is ‘tal’ (beat) and hence recommended Janaganamana.

Mahatama Gandhi called Janaganamana a religious hymn, not the national anthem, but he characterised numerous times Vandemataram as the national anthem.

About Janaganamana, Humayun Kabir agrees with the view expressed by Gandhiji. “In a sense it is more a religious hymn for all mankind than a national anthem for any country.” (Rabindaranath Tagore, a Centenary Vol.p.152)

And let us see what are the sentiments expressed by many about VM:

Vandemataram was an expression of nationalism, its very soul, and therefore the national anthem. It quickly spread throughout India, and was on the lips of millions as the national anthem. (Maharishi Aurobind in ‘Mahayogi’ p.47)

“The greatest and most enduring gift of the swedeshi movement was Vande Mataram, the uncrowned national anthem.” (The Cambridge History of India, Vol.IV, p.608)

“Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's poem Vande Mataram first appeared in his novel Anandamath in 1882, and soon became the Marseillaise of the nationalist movement throughout India.” (A Book of India, B.N. Pande, p.67)

“Bande Mataram: A song which occurs in Bankim Chatterjee's novel. The song was quite popular during nationalist agitations in the early part of this century in Bengal. Subsequently it became a kind of unofficial national anthem.” (Nehru, The first sixty years, Vol.II, p.577)

“Vandemataram, which at the beginning of the 20th century became the anthem of the Indian nationalist movement, is the motherland personified.” (Tilak and the Struggle for Indian Freedom, p.253)

“Vande Mataram! These are the magic words which will open the door of his iron safe, break through the walls of his strong room, and confound the hearts of those who are disloyal to its call to say Vande Mataram.” (Rabindranath Tagore in Glorious Thoughts of Tagore, p.165)

Therefore, it was the natural expectation that this great national anthem would continue as the official national anthem of India. It was used in the Constituent assembly, and was sung by Smt. Sucheta Kriplani. But soon a discordant note began to be heard. Much to the surprise of its own members, the Constituent assembly deferred the question of adopting the national anthem again and again. Who were behind the controversy and what were their motives? The following excerpt from Pt. Nehru's statement on this issue may provide some clue:

“It is unfortunate that some kind of argument has arisen between VM and Jana. VM is obviously and indisputedly the premier national song of India, with a great historical tradition and intimately connected with our struggle for freedom. That position it is bound to retain and no other song can displace it. It represents the passion and poignancy of that struggle but perhaps not so much the culmination of it. In regard to the national anthem tune, it was felt that the tune was more important than the words, and this tune should be such as to represent the Indian musical genius as well as to some extent the Western, so that it might easily be adapted to orchestra and band music, and to playing abroad. The real significance of the national anthem is perhaps more abroad than in the home country. Past experience has shown that Janagana tune has been greatly appreciated and admired abroad...VM with all its very great attraction and historical background, was not easily suitable for orchestras in foreign countries.. It seemed therefore that while VM should continue to be the national song par excellence in India, the national anthem tune should be that of Janaganamana, and the wording of Janagana be altered suitably to fit in with existing circumstances.” (Glorious Thoughts of Nehru, p.139)

The above rational and criteria for selecting a national anthem coming from the PM, had shocked the people of India. These ideas of Nehru's were severely criticised in the press and in other forums universally. The Gallup polls conducted by some organizations on this issue showed that 95VM as the national anthem.

“When the objection was raised to the adoption of VM as the national anthem on the

ground that it was full of idolatry, Aurobindo said Durga to whom it paid homage was none other than Bharata Mata symbolising Knowledge, Power, Greatness and Glory.” (Resurgent India, p.191)

The charge that VM cannot be set to the tune to suit band and foreign orchestra was disproved when it was set to melodious tune by an ace musician Master Krishna Rao, but Nehru ji did not budge. And Dr Rajendra Prasad who was presiding the Constituent assembly on 24 January 1950 made the following statement which also became the final decision on this issue:

“The composition consisting of words and music known as Janaganamana is the National Anthem of India, subject to such alterations as the Government may authorise as occasion arises, and the song Vande Mataram, which has played a historic part in the struggle for Indian freedom, shall be honored equally with Janaganamana and shall have equal status with it. (Applause) I hope this will satisfy members.” (Constituent Assembly of India, Vol.XII, 24-1-1950)

Part 4

HOW WAS THE SONG COMPOSED?

It is true that Vande Mataram blossomed forth in Anandamath, but it is even more true that it was Bankim's intention that it should blossom forth beyond Anandamath. For Vande Mataram, the song, was composed before Anandamath was written.

How Bankim saw the wonderful vision that worked as a most powerful spiritual lever in the movement for his country's liberation, how he immortalised that vision in the hymn are not fully known. But this much is known that one auspicious moment arrived, in 1875, when Bankim took a holiday to escape from the hectic life of Calcutta. He boarded a train bound for his native town Kantalapada. As the city left behind, there was greenery all around and his heart filled with joy. The contemplation of the motherland with her rich rivers, flowers, fruits and forests sent a pulsating current through Bankim. In that instant the sod was turned into divinity by magic. His eyes and ears became alert, hungry. His inner eye beheld the motherland in all her rich variety and beauty; his inner ear listened

to voices from the earth, the air and the sky. And Nature begot her song! She gave it to benevolent Bankim! He bowed and received the gift. And then he reduced it to writing, as one who saw and heard the whole of it.

Vande Mataram!

Those lakes, and rivers, the sacred Ganga, Jamuna, Godavari, Saraswati, Narmada, Sindhu, Kaveri; and those groves laden with fruits of many kinds, a very paradise on earth; and the soft breeze which gently kisses as it passes by; and the endless greenery....

Sujalam suphalam

Malayaja sheetalam

Sasya shyamalam

Mataram!

And the land bathed in moonlight, trees and creepers gay with tender leaves and flowers, the sweet smile and melodious voice.....

Shubhra jyotsna pulakitayamineem

Phullakusumita drumadala shobhineem

Suhasineem sumadhura bhashineem

Sukhadam, varadam Mataram!

And the leonine roar that issues from multi-million throats; the blinding flash of millions of swords leaping up in an instant; and the spectacle of unfettered strength triumphantly trampling the enemy under its elephantine foot....

Koti koti kantha kalakala ninadakarale

Koti koti bhujairdhrutakharakaravale

Ke bale ma tumi abale

Bahubala dharineem

Namami tarineem

Ripudala varineem

Mataram!

The ancient land of giver of the Vedas, and those centers of devotion, power and knowledge....

Tumi vidhya tumi dharma

Tumi hridi tumi marma

Twam hi pranah shareere

Bahute tumi ma shakti

Hridaye tumi ma bhakti

Tomarayi pratima gadi

Mandire mandire!

Jaya Durgi....Sri Lakshmi....Sri Saraswati...
motherland! the Goddess incarnate

Twam hi Durga dashapraharana dharinee

Kamala kamaladala viharinee

Vani vidyadayinee

Namami twam

Namami kamalam

Amalam atulam

Sujalam suphalam

Mataram

Vande Mataram!

The one evergreen, ever new, and endowed with riches of many kinds....

Shyamalam saralam

Susmitam bhushitam

Dharaneem bharaneem

Mataram!

The song was born, Bankim put the infant in the cradle of Anandamath. He knew the great promise of the infant. The prophet was aware of the historic role it would play in times to come.

Part 5

HOW THE SONG VANDEMATARAM GETS INCORPORATED IN THE ANANDAMATH?

At the beginning of this novel:

A human voice breaks the midnight silence of a dark, dense forest:

“Will not my desire be fulfilled?”

“What price are you prepared to pay for it?”

The counter-question was the answer.

“My life, and all that is mine.”

“Your life is not of much moment; anyone can sacrifice it.”

“What else can I offer? Name the price.”

“Devotion!”

Holding life cheap, banishing the fear of death, devotion illumines the frontiers of the human mind in

a sudden upsurge. The center of such devotion is Mother, the symbol of the Motherland! That was the premises on which the song Vandemataram gets incorporated in the novel.

A description of this Motherland occurs in Chapter 10:

Bhavananda is in a different mood. He is no more a sanaysin, bold and inflexible. He is no more the ruthless general of the army. He isn't the arrogant man who a moment ago had humbled Mahendra. Amid the beauty of the land and water bathed in moonlight, his mind dances like an ocean in tide at the sight of the moon. Bhavananda turns gay and eager for friendly conversation. He is eager to talk. He makes many attempts to talk, but Mahendra does not respond.

And then Bhavananda begins to sing for himself:

Vande Mataram
Sujalam Suphalam
Malayaja Sheetalam
Mataram!

He sings with all his heart and soul, with great devotion, and his masculine voice, so pleasing to the ear, echoes and re-echoes, and filling the whole horizon with its resonance, creates an indescribable atmosphere...

Mahendra hears the song and is amazed. He cannot understand it. He asks who is the Mother, fed by rivers, fruit-bearing trees and fanned by the cool breeze of the mountains.

Bhavananda does not seem to pay attention to the question. He is immersed in the song. Without pausing to answer him, he continues:

Shubhrajyotsna pulakitayamineem
Phullakusumita drumadala shobhineem
.....
.....

Mahendra at first thinks that it may be an invocation to Durga. And then he feels it could not be. It is a description of the country, not of the Goddess Durga. At that point Bhavananda wants to speak. The meaning of the song, and the way of his

life, were not different. He explains it: "We do not accept any other Mother. Jananee Janambhoomishcha swargadapi gariyasi. The motherland is our Mother; apart from her we have no mother, father, brothers, wife or children, home of personal life; sujala, suphala, malayaja sheetalam, that is all we have."

And then Mahendra understands the import of the song. He asks Bhavananda to continue the song. And as he sings tears roll down his cheeks...

And a new inspiration overcomes him. And now he is new person!

This is how other characters of the story get inspired and united. The sublime characters which take part in the great story of Anandmath and grow up in elevating atmosphere display not only patriotism of a high order, but also the terrific strength of the sinews. They are living sparks which in the face of humiliation, burst into flames. They carry their love of the motherland into action. Koti koti kantha kalakala ninada karale! Koti koti bhujairdhruta kharakaravale! These lines are then witnessed in earth-shaking events.

Individuals are mere tools.

The saga of the struggle and sacrifices of the heroes and martyres of freedom is nothing but a manifestation of the unconquerable will of the great Mother who inspired the saint and prophet Bankim to write Anandamath and give unto us Vande Mataram, the hymn of Liberty!