# Jana Gana ManaControversies[[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jana_Gana_Mana_(hymn)&action=edit&section=3" \o "Edit section: Controversies)]

**Historical significance**[[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jana_Gana_Mana_(hymn)&action=edit&section=4" \o "Edit section: Historical significance)]

The poem was composed in December 1911, coinciding with the visit of King George V at the time of the [Coronation Durbar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Delhi_Durbar) of [George V](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_V_of_the_United_Kingdom), and "Bharat Bhagya vidhata" and "Adhinayaka" was believed to be in praise of King George V as per the British newspapers. The composition was first sung during a convention of the then loyalist [Indian National Congress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_National_Congress) in [Calcutta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calcutta) on 26 Dec 1911.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jana_Gana_Mana_%28hymn%29#cite_note-2) It was sung on the second day of the convention, and the agenda of that day devoted itself to a loyal welcome of George V on his visit to India. The event was reported thus in the British Indian press:

"The Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore sang a song composed by him specially to welcome the Emperor." (*Statesman*, Dec. 28, 1911)
"The proceedings began with the singing by Rabindranath Tagore of a song specially composed by him in honour of the Emperor." (*Englishman*, Dec. 28, 1911)

"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 unanimously." (*Indian*, Dec. 29, 1911)

***Counter arguments***

Many historians aver that the newspaper reports cited above were misguided. The confusion arose in British Indian press since a different song, "Badshah Humara" written in[Hindi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindi) by Rambhuj Chaudhary,[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jana_Gana_Mana_%28hymn%29%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-3) was sung on the same occasion in praise of the monarch. The nationalist Indian press stated this difference of events clearly:-

"The proceedings of the Congress party session started with a prayer in Bengali to praise God (song of benediction). This was followed by a resolution expressing loyalty to King George V. Then another song was sung welcoming King George V." ([*Amrita Bazar Patrika*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amrita_Bazar_Patrika), Dec.28,1911)

"The annual session of Congress began by singing a song composed by the great Bengali poet Ravindranath Tagore. Then a resolution expressing loyalty to King George V was passed. A song paying a heartfelt homage to King George V was then sung by a group of boys and girls." (*The Bengalee*, Dec. 28, 1911)

Even the report of the annual session of the Indian National Congress of December 1911 stated this difference:

"On the first day of 28th annual session of the Congress, proceedings started after singing Vande Mataram. On the second day the work began after singing a patriotic song by Babu Ravindranath Tagore. Messages from well wishers were then read and a resolution was passed expressing loyalty to King George V. Afterwards the song composed for welcoming King George V and Queen Mary was sung."

On 10 November 1937 Tagore wrote a letter to Mr Pulin Bihari Sen about the controversy. That letter in Bengali can be found in Tagore's biography *Ravindrajivani, volume II page 339* by *Prabhatkumar Mukherjee*.

"A certain high official in His Majesty's service, who was also my friend, had requested that I write a song of felicitation towards the Emperor. The request simply amazed me. It caused a great stir in my heart. In response to that great mental turmoil, I pronounced the victory in Jana Gana Mana of that Bhagya Vidhata [ed. God of Destiny] of India who has from age after age held steadfast the reins of India's chariot through rise and fall, through the straight path and the curved. That Lord of Destiny, that Reader of the Collective Mind of India, that Perennial Guide, could never be George V, George VI, or any other George. Even my official friend understood this about the song. After all, even if his admiration for the crown was excessive, he was not lacking in simple common sense."

Again in his letter of 19 March 1939 Tagore writes,

"I should only insult myself if I cared to answer those who consider me capable of such unbounded stupidity as to sing in praise of George the Fourth or George the Fifth as the Eternal Charioteer leading the pilgrims on their journey through countless ages of the timeless history of mankind." *(Purvasa, Phalgun, 1354, p738.)*

Moreover, Tagore was hailed as a patriot who wrote other songs too apart from "Jana Gana Mana" lionizing the Indian independence movement.He renounced his knighthood in protest against the 1919 [Jallianwala Bagh Massacre](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jallianwala_Bagh_Massacre%22%20%5Co%20%22Jallianwala%20Bagh%20Massacre). The Knighthood i.e. the title of 'Sir' was conferred on him by the same King George V after receiving the [Nobel Prize in Literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nobel_Prize_in_Literature) for "Gitanjali" from the government of Sweden. Two of Tagore's more politically charged compositions, "[Chitto Jetha Bhayshunyo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chitto_Jetha_Bhayshunyo%22%20%5Co%20%22Chitto%20Jetha%20Bhayshunyo)" ("Where the Mind is Without Fear" :Gitanjali Poem#35) and "[Ekla Chalo Re](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ekla_Chalo_Re%22%20%5Co%20%22Ekla%20Chalo%20Re)" ("If They Answer Not to Thy Call, Walk Alone"), gained mass appeal, with the latter favoured by Gandhi and Netaji.

**Literary interpretations**[[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jana_Gana_Mana_(hymn)&action=edit&section=5" \o "Edit section: Literary interpretations)]

The proponents of the controversy stress the usage of the following words and phrases to claim that Jana Gana Mana was written for the King and the Queen of England-

**Stanza 1:** (Indian) People wake up remembering your good name and ask for your blessings and they sing your glories.
**Stanza 2:** Around your 'throne' people of all religions come and give their love and anxiously wait to hear your kind words.
**Stanza 3:** Praise to the 'King' for being 'the charioteer'.
**Stanza 4:** Drowned in deep ignorance, and suffering, poverty-striken, this unconscious country waits for the wink of our eye and your mother's (Earth's) true protection.
**Stanza 5:** In your compassionate plans, the sleeping Bharat (India) will wake up. We bow down to your feet O Queen(Earth), and victory come to Rajeshwara(the lord of the lords).

***Counter arguments***

The supporters of the nationalist message of Jana Gana Mana claim that "King","Throne" and "chariot" refer to the Almighty who will lead India to freedom. "Ma" on the other hand is more likely to refer to "The Motherland" i.e. India, than King George V's mother- The Queen. In [Amar Sonar Bangla](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amar_Sonar_Bangla%22%20%5Co%20%22Amar%20Sonar%20Bangla), the national anthem of Bangladesh, Tagore has used the word "ma" and "mata" numerous times to refer to the motherland. In his deeply mystic book "[Gitanjali](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gitanjali%22%20%5Co%20%22Gitanjali)" (an offering of songs to the God) Tagore has used the same metaphor of God as "King":-

**Poem #50:**[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jana_Gana_Mana_%28hymn%29#cite_note-4)"I had gone a-begging from door to door in the village path when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream and I wondered who was this King of all Kings!"
**Poem #51:**[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jana_Gana_Mana_%28hymn%29%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-5)"The King has come- but where are lights, where are wreaths? Where is the throne to seat him?..... Open the doors, let the conch-shells be sounded!"
**Poem #35:**[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jana_Gana_Mana_%28hymn%29%22%20%5Cl%20%22cite_note-6)"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high...Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake."

The following phrases ignored by the proponents of the King George V controversy strengthen credibility of Jana Gana Mana's patriotic message:-

**Stanza 1:**"Jana gana mangaldayako" The saving of all people waits in thy hand. The saving referred to here, could be from British imperialism.
**Stanza 2:** The call of the Lord (not the King or Queen)is announced in every Indian home continuously in their prayers. He brings "*Oikyo*" i.e. unity of the people to gain freedom.

**Stanza 3:** "Jugo Dhabito Jaatri" (Pilgrims of the ages) are those who follow the path leading to God, not to some King or Queen of British Empire. Similarly "Biplabo" i.e. fierce revolution is our freedom struggle and "Shankhodhwoni"(conch-shell sound) in mythology announced the start of a "battle", here- nationalist struggle against the Empire. This is a path of sacrifice and only God can protect from fear and misery (Sankato Dukho).

**Stanza 4:** Through nightmares and fears, our mother i.e. motherbhumi protected us in her lap, not the Queen.
**Stanza 5**"Nidrito Bharato Jaagey" (Sleeping India awakens). This phrase has been used at least once by every nationalist poet to awaken the masses for revolution against British Imperialism. The "Supreme King" makes a mockery of King George V in the sense that the protector of India is a king above all mortal kings.

**Regional aspects**[[edit](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jana_Gana_Mana_(hymn)&action=edit&section=6" \o "Edit section: Regional aspects)]

Another controversy is that only those provinces that were under British rule, i.e. Punjab, Sindh, Gujarat, Maratha, Dravid (South India), Orissa and Bengal, were mentioned. None of the princely states – Kashmir, Rajasthan, Hyderabad, Mysore or Kerala – or the states in North-East India, which are integral parts of India now, were mentioned. Neither the Indian Ocean nor the Arabian Sea was included, since they were directly under Portuguese rule at that time. But opponents of this proposition claim that Tagore mentioned only the borders states of India to include complete India. Whether the princely states would form a part of a liberated Indian republic was a matter of debate even till Indian Independence. 'Dravida' includes the people from the south (though Dravida specifically means Tamil and even then, the same consideration is not given for the south since there are many distinct people whereas in the north each of the distinct people are named) and 'Jolodhi' (Stanza 1) is Sanskrit for "seas and oceans". Even North-East which was under British rule or holy rivers apart from Ganges and Yamuna are not mentioned to keep the song in its rhythm. India has 28 states, 7 union territories.

In 2005, there were calls to delete the word "Sindh" and substitute it with the word [Kashmir](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kashmir). The argument was that [Sindh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sindh%22%20%5Co%20%22Sindh) was no longer a part of India, having become part of Pakistan as a result of the [Partition](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partition_of_India) of 1947. Opponents of this proposal hold that the word "Sindh" refers to the [Indus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indus_river) and to [Sindhi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sindhi_people) culture, and that Sindhi people are an integral part of India's cultural fabric. The [Supreme Court of India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme_Court_of_India) declined to change the national anthem and the wording remains unchanged.