

Editorial of the Day – 07.11.2025

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1. Justice in food – On new EAT–Lancet Commission report – (TH)

General Studies 3 – Agriculture & Environment (Interlinked)

Topic – Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation – (Link to planetary boundaries, GHG emissions from agriculture, soil/water pollution from fertilizers).

Introduction

The latest EAT–Lancet Commission report provides a stark warning on the state of global food systems, identifying them as a primary driver of the planet's climate, biodiversity, and water crises. The report redefines "Justice in food systems" as the critical need to ensure that the necessary transition towards sustainable production also results in diets that are both healthy and affordable for all populations.

1. Food Systems at the Heart of Planetary Crises

Driving Planetary Breaches – The EAT–Lancet Commission report underscores that global food systems are a primary driver behind five of the six breached planetary boundaries.

Massive Climate Impact – These systems are responsible for approximately 30% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Deeply Interlinked Crises – The report reveals how climate change, biodiversity loss, water stress, and chemical pollution are deeply interlinked through the methods of global food production and consumption.

Uneven Environmental Pressures – The environmental burden is not uniform across the system – Animal-based foods are the source of most agricultural emissions. Grains (cereals), on the other hand, dominate the use of resources like nitrogen, phosphorus, and water.

2. Unsustainable Resource Use and Systemic Risks

Biogeochemical Overload – The report highlights a grim picture of resource use. The nitrogen surplus (from fertilizers) now exceeds safe planetary limits by over two times, leading to severe soil and water quality degradation.

The "Rebound Effect" Risk – A key warning is that mere "efficiency gains" (e.g., higher productivity per acre) can backfire. Without strong policy correction, higher efficiency may simply spur *more* production, thereby negating any environmental benefits.

A Narrow Path to Safety – The Commission cautions that even if all proposed comprehensive reforms—from emission cuts to global dietary shifts—are implemented, the world's food systems would barely be restored to ecological safety by 2050, particularly in the domains of climate and freshwater.

Questioning Economic Models – The report challenges the dominant economic assumption of achieving 127% GDP growth in 30 years. It argues for a new focus on slower, more resilient growth that can withstand climate shocks, rather than growth at any cost.

3. India's Dietary Patterns and Affordability Challenge

The Cereal-Dominant Diet – India's current dietary pattern is dominated by cereals. While this successfully meets basic calorie needs, it falls short on nutritional diversity.

The Sustainability–Affordability Conflict – To meet 2050 sustainability benchmarks, the Indian diet would need to shift towards a higher intake of fruits, vegetables, legumes, and nuts.

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Price and Justice Concerns – This necessary shift could raise consumer prices, creating a significant affordability crisis. Justice in this transition means ensuring healthier diets remain affordable and culturally compatible.

Import Dependence – Many regions are already food-vulnerable due to a dependence on imported foods, exposing them to extreme price volatility.

4. Beyond Diet – Towards Systemic Food Reform in India

"Diet-First" Approaches Will Fail – The report explicitly warns that "diet-first" approaches (e.g., simply telling people to eat differently) are likely to fail in India.

Cultural & Institutional Barriers – This is because –

1. Food preferences are deeply shaped by non-market forces like religion, caste, and convenience.
2. Institutional procurement (like the PDS and midday meal schemes) defines demand and agricultural production patterns.

A Better Approach for India – A more effective transition must involve systemic policy changes –

Set Standards – Limit harmful inputs like chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Use Fiscal Incentives – Adjust policies (taxes/subsidies) to make minimally processed foods (like fruits, vegetables, legumes) cheaper.

Align Procurement – Reform PDS and midday meal procurement to prioritize regional, affordable, and nutritious dishes, moving beyond just rice and wheat.

5. Reforming Supply Chains and Resource Use

Supply-Side Reforms are Crucial – It is not enough to just change consumption; production itself must be reformed.

Key Issues to Address

1. Critical water scarcity and severe groundwater depletion.
2. Widespread soil degradation.
3. High fossil-fuel dependence in storage and transportation (cold chains, logistics).

Ending Harmful Incentives – India must gradually withdraw open-ended incentives (like free electricity for agriculture) that encourage unsustainable groundwater extraction and shift to sustainable irrigation models.

6. Ensuring Justice and Accountability

Barriers to Fairness – The report identifies major social and economic barriers to a fair transition –

1. Market concentration and corporate dominance by a few large companies.
2. Weak labour safeguards and low wages for workers and small farmers.

Requirements for a Justice-Oriented Transition –

1. Strengthening the collective bargaining power for both workers and small farmers.
2. Ensuring consumer participation in making regulatory and policy decisions.

Fragmentary Safeguards – Current safeguards for workers and consumers are "fragmentary" and must evolve into strong institutional guarantees for an equitable and sustainable food future.

Conclusion

The EAT-Lancet report concludes that transforming global food systems requires far more than just dietary shifts. It demands fundamental policy reform, resource justice, and equitable access for all. For India, the key challenge is to successfully balance the competing demands of nutrition, affordability, and environmental sustainability. True progress lies not in a single solution, but in a holistic approach that combines local food diversity, sustainable irrigation, fair markets, and protected worker rights to safeguard both planetary health and human well-being.

Source – <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/justice-in-food-on-eat-lancet-commission-report/article70248318.ece>

2. Important stanzas of 'Vande Mataram' dropped in 1937, divisive mindset still challenge for country – PM Modi

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General Studies 1 – Modern Indian History

Topic – The Freedom Struggle – its various stages and important contributors/contributions (Use of "Vande Mataram" as a nationalist slogan).

Introduction

"Vande Mataram," meaning "Mother, I Bow to Thee," is a poem composed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in the 1870s. It was later included in his 1882 novel, *Anandamath*. The composition evolved from a poem into a powerful, emotional slogan that served as an unofficial anthem for the anti-British freedom struggle, gaining particular prominence during the Swadeshi movement following the 1905 partition of Bengal.

Origins and Significance

Author and Publication – Bankim Chandra Chatterjee wrote the song in a mix of Sanskrit and Bengali. It was published in his novel *Anandamath*, which depicted a revolt by Hindu ascetics (Sannyasis) against the Muslim rulers and the British.

Symbol of Resistance – The song and its slogan became a potent rallying cry for revolutionaries and freedom fighters. It inspired countless individuals to make sacrifices, including laying down their lives, for the nation's independence.

First Public Performance – The song was first sung in a musical tune by Rabindranath Tagore. This historic performance took place at the 1896 session of the Indian National Congress (INC) in Calcutta.

Core Objections from the Muslim League

The primary objections raised by the Muslim League and other Muslim nationalists stemmed from the song's strong religious and historical context, which they felt was exclusionary.

Idolatry and Monotheism – The later stanzas of the full poem explicitly personify the motherland (Bharat Mata) as Hindu goddesses like Durga and Lakshmi. It uses imagery such as the motherland having "hands that strike" and "swords of sheen." In the monotheistic principles of Islam, bowing down to or worshipping any entity other than God (Allah) is considered shirk (idolatry), which is a grave sin.

Context of the Novel *Anandamath* – The novel *Anandamath* itself was viewed as having anti-Muslim overtones. This perception arose because the plot involved Sannyasi rebels fighting against antagonists that included the era's Muslim rulers as well as the British.

Promotion of a 'Hindu Nationhood' – Critics argued that the song promoted a sectarian (Hindu-centric) view of nationalism. They contended that conflating the idea of the motherland with a Hindu deity was incompatible with the concept of an inclusive, secular nation that represented all communities.

The Congress Resolution and Compromise (1937)

The Indian National Congress faced a dilemma – how to honor the song's immense role in the freedom struggle while addressing the genuine concerns of Muslim nationalists.

The Resolution – The Congress Working Committee (CWC) passed a resolution in Calcutta on October 26, 1937, to find a middle path.

Partial Adoption – The CWC decided to adopt only the first two stanzas of "Vande Mataram" as the party's national song.

Rationale for Compromise – The CWC reasoned that these first two stanzas were purely descriptive, celebrating the beauty of the motherland (e.g., "rich with thy hurrying streams, bright with orchard gleams"). They concluded that these stanzas contained no objectionable communal or religious content. The remaining stanzas, which contained the overt references to Hindu deities, were officially dropped from party use.

Key Figures – Leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru supported this compromise to maintain communal harmony. Nehru, after reading an English translation of *Anandamath*, noted to Tagore that the novel's background was "bound to irritate Muslims."

Status – "Anthem" vs. "Song" (1950)

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Despite the 1937 compromise, the controversy persisted. When the Constituent Assembly had to choose national symbols for an independent and secular Republic of India, a final decision was made on **January 24, 1950**.

Feature	National Anthem - "Jana Gana Mana"	National Song - "Vande Mataram"
Composer	Rabindranath Tagore	Bankim Chandra Chatterjee
Adoption Date	January 24, 1950 (As National Anthem)	January 24, 1950 (As National Song)
Original Language	Highly Sanskritized Bengali	Mixed Sanskrit and Bengali
Theme	Celebrates "Unity in diversity" and invokes the "destiny-maker of India."	A tribute to the Motherland, personified as a goddess (in the full, original version).
Status	Has official constitutional recognition; rules of decorum and a fixed duration (52 seconds) must be followed.	Does not have formal constitutional recognition but was accorded equal status and reverence by the Constituent Assembly.
Reason for Selection	Its secular and inclusive nature, emphasizing the unity and diversity of India, made it acceptable to all communities.	Honored for its historic role as the powerful, primary rallying cry of the independence movement, despite its controversial undertones.

Conclusion

The selection of "Jana Gana Mana" as the National Anthem and "Vande Mataram" as the National Song represents a foundational compromise in Indian nationalism. This dual designation was essential to balance historical reverence for the revolutionary fervor of "Vande Mataram" with the constitutional requirement for secular, all-inclusive national symbols. While "Vande Mataram" remains the emotional song of the freedom struggle, "Jana Gana Mana" serves as the officially accepted expression of the Indian State's commitment to unity and diversity. Both compositions are accorded equal status and respect, collectively symbolizing India's rich history and its commitment to a pluralistic future.

Source - <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/150-years-of-vande-mataram-pm-releases-stamp-coin/article70251435.ece>