

## Controversy over 'Vande mataram' irrelevant: Javed Akhtar

Veteran Bollywood scriptwriter and lyricist Javed Akhtar believes the controversy over the national song 'Vande mataram' is obsolete and those who have any objection to it should simply not sing it.

He was referring to the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Hind Tuesday asking Muslims not to sing the song on the grounds that some of its lines were 'against the religious principles of Islam'.

'It's a non-issue and unnecessarily provocative. I've written songs with 'Vande mataram' in them. I used the term 'Vande mataram' in Priyadarshan's 'Saza-e-Kala Pani', ' Akhtar told IANS.

'Then I used the term for a song in 'Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani' and finally for a song that's used at the military academy at Dehradun. Please don't make an issue out of a non-issue.'

He believes the 'controversy is old and obsolete. 'Vande mataram' is part of Bankimchandra Chatterjee's novel 'Anand Math'. All the villains in this novel are Muslims. Ultimately the Muslims lose and the novelist feels happy that the British have come to save us from these so-called 'barbaric' Muslims.

'This is the song of militant sadhus in the novel. There were two stanzas of strong religiosity in this song. When talk arose of making 'Vande mataram' the national anthem it was pointed out by rational elements that the novel was anti-Muslim.

'The Congress decided to take out the two rabidly religious stanzas and the rest of the song was retained. The controversy ended there.

'What is this new resistance? The objection is redundant. You don't want to sing 'Vande mataram', don't! Who is forcing you? I sing it. I don't see it as objectionable. If you do, don't sing it. Why do you insist on bringing such irrelevant matters centrestage?'

While the Jamiat passed a resolution supporting an earlier decree against the song, it drew fierce criticism from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which called the move 'anti-national'.

*Subhash K. Jha* ( © IANS / India eNews)