

# Indian gives UAE twist to national song

Suchetha renders Vande Mataram in 8 languages, ending with Arabic verse

**DUBAI**

**BY SAJILA SASEENDRAN**

Chief Reporter

As India marks 150 years of Vande Mataram, UAE-based Indian expat singer Suchetha Satish has given the national song a distinctly cross-border spin, taking the composition through seven Indian languages before closing with a verse in Arabic.

The Guinness World Record holder for most languages sung in a concert, Suchetha, says the project, "Vande Mataram Beyond Borders", grew out of



## ■ Suchetha Satish

an invitation from the Indian People Forum. The community group of Indian expats in the UAE asked her to create a special rendition of the song for the song's 150th anniversary.

The release came even before a fresh political row in India last week reignited a decades-old debate over the song's later verses and their religious imagery, even as the government

leads a year-long commemoration of its 150th anniversary, with the full version sung at official flag-hoisting ceremonies.

However, Suchetha, a Dubai-based university student hailing from the south Indian state of Kerala, says she wanted to do something that reflected both the diversity of India's languages and the idea that music doesn't really recognise borders while paying tribute to the patriotic song.

"That thinking is what pushed me to look beyond Indian languages altogether and bring in Arabic, the mother tongue of our second home, for the first time," she told *Gulf News*. For the Arabic verse, Suchetha turned to veteran Emirati poet Dr Shihab Ghanem, whose contribution ended up giving the project its title.