

Knowing the history of our national flag is of great importance since our present is strongly rooted in the glorious past

Saluting THE tricolour



The flag of any nation is a symbol of sovereignty, uniqueness in identity and pride in its heritage. The national flag of India was adopted in its present form during the meeting of Constituent Assembly held on July 22, 1947, days before India's Independence. It served as the national flag of the Dominion of India between August 15, 1947 and January 26, 1950 and that of the Republic of India thereafter.

EVOLUTION OF THE TRICOLOUR

It is intriguing to observe various changes that our national flag went through since its inception. In a way, it reflects political developments in the nation.

The first national flag in India is said to have been hoisted on August 7, 1906,

in the Parsee Bagan Square (Green Park) in Calcutta, now Kolkata. The flag comprised three horizontal strips of red, yellow and green with a row of lotuses in the top strip and a crescent and a sun at the bottom.

The second flag was hoisted in Paris by Madame Cama and her band of exiled revolutionaries in 1907. It was very similar to the first flag except that the top strip had only one lotus but seven stars denoting the Saptarishi.

The third flag went up in 1917 when the political struggle had taken a definite turn. Dr Annie Besant and Lokamanya Tilak hoisted it during the Home Rule Movement. This flag had five red and four green horizontal strips arranged alternately, with seven stars in the Saptarishi configuration

super-imposed on them. In the left-hand top corner (the pole end) was the Union Jack. There was also a white crescent and star in one corner.

During the session of the All India Congress Committee, which met at Bezwada

in 1921 (now Vijayawada), an Andhra youth prepared a flag and took it to Mahatma Gandhi. It was made up of two colours - red and green - representing the two communities, Hindus and Muslims. Mahatma Gandhi suggested the addition of a white strip to represent the remaining communities of India and the spinning wheel to symbolise progress of the nation.

The year 1931 was a landmark in the history of the flag. A resolution was passed adopting a tricolour flag as our national flag. This flag, the forbear of the present one, was saffron, white and green with Mahatma Gandhi's spinning wheel at the center. It was, however, clearly stated that it bore no other significance.

On July 22, 1947, the Constituent Assembly adopted it as Free India National Flag. After the advent of Independence, the colours and their significance remained the same. Only the 'Dharma Chakra' of Emperor Asoka was adopted in place of the spinning wheel as the emblem on the flag. Thus, the tricolour of the Congress Party eventually became the flag of Independent India.

COLOURS OF THE FLAG

● **SAFFRON:** The colour mainly stands for renunciation, disinterestedness, courage and sacrifice.

Former president of India Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan had explained, "Bhagwa or the saffron denotes renunciation or disinterestedness. Our leaders must be indifferent to material gains and dedicate themselves to their work." The saffron has been traditional colour of ancient India. Saffron, in general, represents fire or 'Agni' and is often used to symbolise sacrifice and renunciation.

● **WHITE:** It symbolises truth, peace and purity'. White is often seen as a symbol of light. Radhakrishnan here held the view that the 'white' is that light which leads us to the path of truth and guides our conduct.

● **GREEN:** It is often associated with nature. It symbolifies our relation to the soil. The green is symbol of fertility, the fertile soil that gives life to plants on which all other lives depend. Green represents the auspiciousness of the land.

● **ASHOKA CHAKRA:** The chakra (wheel) represents 'Dharma' or righteousness and the progressive movement. Considered to be the wheel of law, it reminds us that those who work under the symbol of this flag have to follow their work principle and keep on moving in that direction, because stagnation brings no progress.

— Reuben Paul

A must-know

There's a Flag Code in place that has to be strictly adhered to while unfurling the tricolor. The national flag is a horizontal tricolor of deep saffron (kesari) at the top, white in the middle and dark green at the bottom in equal proportion. The ratio of width of the flag to its length is 2:3. At the centre of the white band is a navy blue wheel, which represents the chakra. Not treating it with the respect it deserves could get one in trouble. We've listed certain dos and don'ts here.

THE DOS

●● The national flag may be hoisted in educational institutions (schools, colleges, sports camps, scout camps et al). An oath of allegiance has been included in the flag hoisting ceremony in schools.

●● A member of public, a private organisation or an educational institution may hoist/display the national flag on all days and occasions, ceremonial or otherwise consistent with the dignity and honour of the flag.

●● Section 2 of the new code accepts the right of all

private citizens to unfurl the flag on their premises.

THE DON'TS

●● The flag cannot be used for communal gains, drapery, or clothes. As far as possible, it should be flown between sunrise and sunset, irrespective of the weather.

●● The flag cannot be intentionally allowed to touch the ground or the floor or trail in water. It cannot be draped over the hood, top, and sides or back of vehicles, trains, boats or aircraft.

●● No other flag or bunting can be placed higher than the flag. Also, no object, including flowers or garlands or emblems can be placed on or above the flag. The tricolour cannot be used as a festoon, rosette or bunting.

The tricolour represents the hopes and aspirations of a billion people in India. All Indians take immense pride in it. Several people including members of the police, paramilitary forces and the military have laid down their lives to keep the tricolour flying in its absolute glory. Honour and respect it this Independence day!

