

National Flag

Essay No. 01

There are certain moments in the cultural and political life of a nation when the national flag comes into prominence. Every Indian is aware that the Prime Minister unfurls the national tricolor from the ramparts of the Red Fort every Independence Day on August 15 and indeed the observance of January 26th as Republic Day goes back to 31 December, 1929, when Jawaharlal Nehru hoisted the flag of the Indian National Congress, gave a call for purna swaraj and asked people to observe January 26 as Independence Day. The honoured dead are honoured with the flag and that if the national flag is attendant upon the birth of a nation, it equally accompanies in death those whose lives are construed as being symbolic of the nation.

Along with national anthem, the national flag is supremely and specially iconic of the nation – state. It is understood that the honour and integrity of the nation are captured by the flag and as the history of every country shows, the national flag is uniquely capable of enlisting the aid of citizens, giving rise to sentiments of nationalism and evoking the supreme sacrifice of death: in every respect, the national flag commands, not merely our respect, but our allegiance. When the then miss universe, Sushmita Sen, was taken on a triumphant parade through the streets of Delhi, the manner in which her carriage displayed the national flag was found to defiance of the regulations stipulated in the Flag Code – India, demeaned, indeed, it appeared as though Sushmita Sen had rendered it into an item of consumption. Though Sen could, under the laws of the land, have faced fines and imprisonment, her own iconic significance, as the reigning beauty queen of the world and as a supposed paean to the glory of modern Indian womanhood, was scarcely to be underestimated and was shown at that moment to be hardly less than the iconic significance attached to the flag.

The flag has once again come into the news. In a highly significant ruling on September 21st, the Delhi High Court directed that the Flag Code – India, which governs the use and display of the National Flag, could not be so interpreted as to prevent an ordinary citizen of India from flying in a respectful manner the National Flag from the premises of his or her business or residence. In any case, the Flag Code, ruled the Court, was not to be construed as law and its contravention came within the purview of either the Emblem Act or the prevention of Insult to National Honour Act.

Most Indians can scarcely have been aware that they were forbidden, apparently under pain of punishment, to fly the national flag from the premises of their

residential or office buildings and it is just as unlikely that the proverbial 'man on the street' will view the judgment of the Delhi High Court as of any consequence to him. But this is no small victory for the Indian citizen, when we consider that a very significant chapter of the history of the independence movement was woven around the hard-won struggle of Indians to fly the flag of their choice. The present flag is, to a considerable degree and certainly in essence, the flag to whose design none other than Mahatma Gandhi lent his and which the Congress was to adopt in 1921. Writing for Young India on 13 April 1921, two years after the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh, Gandhi observed that the red in the flag represented Hindus, the green stood for Muslims and that the white represented all other faiths, the spinning wheel in the middle of the flag pointed to the oppressed condition of very Indian, just as it evoked the possibility of rejuvenating every Indian household. Gandhi did not think that the matter of the national flag trifling, as he was to put it, "A flag is a necessity for all nations. Millions have died for it. It is no double a kind of idolatry which it would be a sin to destroy." If the Union Jack could evoke immeasurably strong sentiments in English breasts, was it not necessary that all Indians "recognize a common flag to live and to die for"?

Gandhi's flag, as it was known to English officials, was with some modifications formally adopted by the Congress in 1931 as the National Flag and this flag in turn became the basis, with the substitution of the wheel on the capital of Asoka's Sarnath Pillar for the charkha, for the National Flag chosen by the Constituent Assembly in July 1947. In the meantime, Indian nationalists and government officials over the right to fly the Gandhi or Congress flag. Indian nationalists found that hoisting the flag invariably attracted the wrath and often the vengeance, of British officials and usually the flag was ordered to be brought down.

Only once, at Bhagalpur in 1923, did the district official assent to a rare compromise, when he consented to have the Congress flag flown alongside the Union Jack, albeit at a lower height! This invited the reprimand of the Government of India and the British Cabinet, who wished to make it clear 'that' in no circumstances should the Swaraj or Gandhi flag be flown in conjunction with even below the Union Jack'. The more usual response was to go have men and boys who defiantly carried the Congress flag whipped and during the civil disobedience movement of 1930-33, boys as young as 8 years old were given 10-30 stripes each for this purported offence. A six – month long 'Flag Satyagraha' in Nagpur in 1923, in which a good part of the national leadership participated, led to the withdrawal of prohibitory orders on the use of the Congress Flag.

Thus, when we consider the arduous effort with which Indians established their right to fly their flag, it is all the more extraordinary, disturbing and deplorable that, in independent India, the state should have arrogated this right to itself and turned

it into a privilege. It is fitting that the judiciary should now have restored this fundamental right to Indian citizens.

Essay No. 02

Our National Flag

The National Flag of a country depicts its identity in the comity of nations. Every country of any significance has a National Flag. This item of a country identifies itself with the character and the typical characteristics of country.

Our Indian National Flag came into existence when we achieved our independence from the foreign yoke – the British rule in India. The flag has been well thought of and made to symbolise the ethics of the Indian people and as such, identifies with the people. The flag also depicts the targets of achievements set for itself by the country and its people. As such, the flag becomes an item of significance and respect for the people of the land. The name of our flag is the Tricolour because it consists of three colours and the pattern very simple like the people. It has horizontal stripes of same width in three colours. The three colours of the flag are, orange, white, and green. The orange strip is on the top, the white in the centre, and the green at the bottom. The colours are not taken just off hand, they all mean something or rather depict something. Each colour depicts the Indian expectations from the people and the country at large. The significance of each colour points to what the Indian people stand for, and, what is expected each one of them. The orange depicts Sacrifice- sacrifice for the family, the society and the nation, which each Indian is expected to do, for the integrated growth of the nation. This is in acceptance of the fact that, we Indians realise that there can be no achievement without sacrifice. The White strip in the centre denotes the purity in the hearts of the humans are all expected pure like the white colour itself- absolutely blemish people of India. Their thoughts and action to be less. The third strip is the colour of Green that stands for Prosperity. Thus, the three strips of the flag put together, symbolise India of the dream of Indians, at least those Indians who fought for the freedom of the country. They put their dreams in suitable colours and wanted all others to follow the path set for Indians of free India. Whether this beautiful dream materialises or not, the leaders of the freedom struggle clearly put the colours into their aspirations. In the centre of the White strip is imprinted the Chakra of Ashoka. This Chakra stands in the centre of all hopes, for Justice. With all these symbols as we are to understand them all, the Indian National Flag is a perfect symbolism of Indian fraternity.

The flag denotes the independence of the Nation and it carries the respect and the identity of the country, wherever it is put, or it flies. On all National and official buildings, the flag is a fixture a top, as a permanent feature and on the occasions

of National celebrations is unfurled on all housetops indicating the honour each and every Indian feels in unfurling it. When we see this National flag of India standing erect with flags of other countries, the hearts of all Indians are filled with a sense of pride and the head is held high. This flag is the honour, name, and fame of India.

Just as on celebrations the flag is seen atop buildings almost everywhere in the country, on tragic occasions like the deaths of patriots or leaders, the State declares a State mourning and then, the flag is also made to fly half-mast. In so doing, the country is to show its love and respect for the deceased. To indicate what the martyr or the leader has done for the country, even on his dead body, the Tricolour is wrapped which clarifies the point that, the dead did a lot for the country and died in the cause of service to the country. In so doing thus, the country is recognizing how much he did for the country.

The National flag is an object of respect for every India and, we must always salute to it whenever and wherever we see it. We must, in all spheres of life try to live up to the expectations put forth in this flag, due from us.