

AN EVENT TO FLAG

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Attendees wave the national flag during the 'Har Hath Tiranga' programme of the Delhi government, on the eve of Independence Day, in New Delhi. | Photo Credit: PTI

As the nation celebrates 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav', with the accompanying - 'Har Ghar Tiranga', we must, while saluting the flag, ponder over the events that led to the birth of this great national emblem. The Constituent Assembly made an invaluable contribution in giving us this great national flag. The debates and events that took place in its adoption were thus.

On July 22 July, 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru moved the following Resolution before the Constituent Assembly of India: "Resolved that the National Flag of India shall be horizontal tricolour of deep Saffron (*Kesari*), white and dark green in equal proportion. In the centre of the white band, there shall be a Wheel in navy blue to represent the *Charkha*. The design of the Wheel shall be that of the Wheel (*Chakra*) which appears on the abacuse of the Sarnath Lion Capital of Asoka... The diameter of the Wheel shall approximate to the width of the white band and the ratio of the width to the length of the Flag shall ordinarily be 2:3."

The event marked the culmination of a freedom struggle across over 100 years, in which millions of Indians, men, women and children, sacrificed their lives and livelihood. The national flag was a slight changeover from the swaraj flag which was first hoisted at the Indian National Congress Session in Calcutta in 1911 by the late Dadabhai Naoroji. The flag was adopted not by a formal resolution, but by popular acclaim and usage, adopted much more by the sacrifice that had surrounded it in the past few decades. Nehru declared, with hope and trust, amid cheers, that this flag was not "a Flag of Empire, a Flag of Imperialism, a Flag of domination over any body, but a Flag of freedom not only for ourselves, but a symbol of freedom to all people who may see it".

The original flag had a *charkha* but it had a wheel on one side and spindle on the other, and if one looked at the flag from the other side, the spindle would come the other way and the wheel the other, making the flag look disproportionate. Looking at this practical difficulty, the *charkha* was replaced by the *chakra* (wheel), being a symbol of "India's ancient culture"; "a symbol of the many things that India had stood for through the ages".

Seth Govind Das dismissed some thoughts attributing a communal angle to the colours by saying, "I would remind you of the war of Independence of 1857. At that time, the colour of our flag was green and under it we fought that battle. It was at that time not the colour of Muslims alone or of Hindus but of all those who fought the war of Independence."

S. Radhakrishnan said, "The Flag links up the past and the present. It is the legacy bequeathed to us by the architects of our liberty. Those who fought under this Flag are mainly responsible for the arrival of this great day of Independence for India.... "

Saiyid Mohammad Saadulla said, "In my opinion the Flag symbolises the evolution of our aspirations, the fulfilment of our struggles and the ultimate result of all our sacrifices." In his view, the white portion of the flag was a reminder that we should be pure not only in word but also in deed, and that "purity should be [the] motto of our life — individually as well as in connection with the State... The *Dharma chakra* of Asoka reminds us of the condition of the people at the time of that great Buddhist Emperor of India. He ruled not for his personal aggrandisement but for the contentment, peace and prosperity of the people under his

charge....”

Pandit Govind Malaviya put the debate on a higher pedestal by declaring that “The flag may be of a piece of white cloth of any other insignificant material, but when it is accepted as a National Flag, it becomes the emblem of national self-respect.... It becomes its dearest object.”

“Remember,” said Sarojini Naidu, “under this Flag there is no prince and there is no peasant, there is no rich and there is no poor. There is no privilege there is only duty... and sacrifice. Whether we be Hindus or Muslims, Christians, Jains, Sikhs or Zorostrians and others, our Mother India has one undivided heart and one indivisible spirit. Men and women of reborn India, rise and salute this Flag! I bid you, rise and salute the Flag,” she said, amidst thunderous cheers.

The President of the Assembly, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, at the end of the lively and sombre debate, put the resolution to vote and the motion was adopted, with the whole Assembly standing.

Let us hope India continues its progress for generations to come under the aegis of the Flag, “*Vivat, Crescat, floreat* India (May India under the aegis of this Flag live, grow and flourish)”. Article 51A describes Fundamental Duties of every Citizen of India including “to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the national Flag and the National Anthem” as also “to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom”.

Let us hope and pray that the National Flag is revered at all times in light of the spirit under which it was born.

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