

up their traditional banners in favour of the new National flag. Accordingly, on 23 June 1947 a Committee was constituted headed by Dr Rajendra Prasad for recommending a new National flag. The committee after several deliberations came up with its unanimous decision to retain the Purna Swaraj flag by replacing the 'charkha' with the 'Dharma Chakra' - the 'Wheel of Law' of Emperor Asoka. The design of the wheel was taken from abacus of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century A.D. Sarnath Lion Capital. The sample of the flag was made by Surya Badr-ud din Tyabji. It was then decided that Pandit Nehru would place the recommendation before the Constituent assembly on 22 July 1947.



Pandit Nehru, presenting the new flag (Fig. 7) to the Constituent Assembly said: "... this

flag that I have the honour to present you is not, I hope and trust, a flag of the dominion over anybody, but a flag

of freedom not only for ourselves, but a symbol of freedom for all people who may see it. And wherever it may go – and I hope it will go far – not only where Indians dwell as our ambassadors and ministers but across the far seas where it may be carried by the Indian ships, wherever it may go, it will bring a message of comradeship, a message that India wants to be friend with every country of the world and India wants to help any people who seek freedom. That hope will be the message of this flag everywhere".

At the stroke of midnight 14-15 August 1947, free India's National flag was hoisted atop the Council House (Parliament Bhavan). The flag was presented by Hansa Mehta representing the Flag Presentation Committee, comprising all women members of the Constituent Assembly, as a gift from the women of India.'

In short this is the story of our flag so proudly we hail.

**By Sekhar Chakrabarti**



**Sekhar Chakrabarti** (born in 1946) is an internationally known philatelist. His collection 'Flags on Stamps' have been shown in several World/International exhibitions held under the auspices of the Federation Internationale de Philatelie (FIP). His name found a place in the Limca Book of National Records in India for his collections of most stamps issued from foreign countries featuring the Indian National flag. Author of

the book "The Indian National Flag unfurled through Philately". His other passion is Vexillology, i.e. study of flags. He has curated solo-exhibitions in India and in Egypt, organized by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), In 2013 he became the first Indian to present a paper in the 25th International Flag Congress (ICV) at Rotterdam, Netherlands. He has been invited to present his paper on 'Understanding history through flags' in the 26th International Flag Congress in Sydney in Sept 2015.. He lives in Kolkata, India.

## Cultural Calendar - August 2015

# 6

Thursday  
5.30 pm

### "Anjali"

A tribute to the legendary Bharathanatyam exponent and guru Late. Padmashri Adyar K. Lakshman.

by Smt. Krishanthi Raveendra, Smt. Padmini Selvendrakumar, Smt. Vyjeyanthimala Selvarathnam, Smt. Vasugy Jegatheeswaran, Vasuki Mukunthan, Smt. Subithra Kirubaharan, Smt. Vasanthi Kunchithapatham, Smt. Jeeva Ratnaraja, Smt. Geethanjali Sudharshan and Sri. Jayantha Karunasekara.

In association with Media Manthraa.  
Venue: ICC Auditorium

### 69th Independence Day Celebrations

Bandish Fusion - A musical evening  
by Tabla Maestro Pt. Subhen Chatterjee and group

Venue: Bishops College Auditorium,  
No.11, Perahera Mw., Colombo 03 (Admission by invitation)

# 14

Friday 7.00 pm

# 21

Friday 3.00 pm

### Film Screening : Lagaan

Directed by Ashutosh Gowariker

(Duration 3 hrs 35 mins)

Venue : ICC Auditorium

### Sri Lankan emotional dance

(a new genre of dance, introduced to commemorate 21 years of the ACDD academy, which will be performed using sign language and for classical Sinhalese songs and classical music)

by Nilan Maligapse and ACDD Academy

Venue : ICC Auditorium

# 28

Friday 6.00 pm



**BANDISH FUSION** is an experience of soul-stirring effect of sheer melodic beauty fused with incredible rhythms taking one to a whole new level of musical raptures. KARMA kicked off its journey way back in 1985, with a team of some of the top ranking musicians of our country, being one of the very first bands of its kind in India and also is the longest existing bands of the country. It plays a novel fusion music which combines Indian music with elements of contemporary Jazz, Afro-cuban and Mediterranean music. Their musical style was an unprecedented blending of genres combined with complex rhythms in unusual time signatures with a thoughtful blend of improvisational concept that was rooted in jazz as well as Indian music and harmonic influence from European classical music. Pt. Subhen Chatterjee is an Indian percussionist and tabla player who began his training in tabla under Sri Swapan Choudhry. He has accompanied eminent vocalist Girija Devi on several recordings including Songs of Varanasi for Nimbus Records. Not restricting himself to one single Gharana, Subhen went on to learn the intricacies and beauty of other Gharanas that he introduced in his playing and which has made his style of playing so unique and distinctive. In 1985 he created the fusion band Karma.

Programmes subject to change

Admission to all programmes are on first come first served basis except 14th August event

**All are cordially invited**

UNICE ARTS, 2330195



# Sanskarika

Newsletter of the Indian Cultural Centre, Colombo

August 2015



P.C: PTI

## 69<sup>th</sup> Independence Day Celebrations

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## Cultural Tapestry

### Indian National Flag: Its Evolution and Adoption

Every country has a National flag. It is an explicit outward symbolic expression of how a country sees itself. Flags became wide spread symbols of national identity from early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Before the French Revolution of 1789, it was monarchy and not the common people, who had a flag. With the advent of 'Nation-State' concept and the ensuing growth of nationalism - flags have become a globalised phenomenon.

In India, flags as special insignia have been used at least since the Vedic times. In Rig Vedas, written in about 5000 B.C., flags were described as Ketu. In ancient Indian literatures and epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, we see a large number of kings and princes each with distinctive dhavjas or flags. All flags in India, whether ancient or medieval, were either personal or social or religious. The concept of national flag took long time to develop.

Before the British came, there was not really an India. The British win in the "Battle of Plassey" in 1757 paved the way for the formation of a United States of India as a unit. The official British flag for India, the Union Jack defaced with the motto "Heaven's Light Our Guide" had practically no appeal to the Indian body politic. In 1905, Lord Curzon's declaration of 'Partition of Bengal' became at once a turning point in the Indian independence movement.

It was at this point of time, termed as great wave of national struggle, the need to unite the whole of India became paramount and the question of invention of a distinctive pan-Indian National flag began to be discussed in the press.

One of the first serious attempts at flag-making came from Sister Nivedita, an Irish disciple of Swami Vivekananda in 1904. The design of her flag was inspired by the ancient symbol of the Vajra or Thunderbolt. Vajra is a symbol of Lord Buddha. It implies 'The Selfless Man'. It was the weapon of Lord Indra. Rishi Dadhichi's selfless offering of himself had created the thunderbolt. The original flag made of pure silk is preserved at Acharya Bhavan Museum, Bose Institute, Kolkata.



Fig. 1: Nivedita's flag at Acharya B h a v a n Museum.

Nivedita's flag was adorned by the symbol of the Vajra placed in between the words 'Bande' and 'Mataram' in Bengali with 108 jyotis embroidered along the outer periphery. The number 108 is a perfect three-digit multiple of three, its components adding up to nine, which is the sum of triple threes. Three is 'Trinity' that represents supreme balance in the form of creation, maintenance and destruction or transformation.

The amazing transformation of the slogan 'Bande Mataram', also spelt as 'Vande Mataram' derived from an innocent song of a 19<sup>th</sup> century novel 'Ananda Math' penned by Bankimchandra Chatterjee into a

revolutionary 'war cry' was the work of the youth in Bengal charged with their desire for liberation from foreign rule.

There were two other flags that had the slogan 'Bande Mataram' emblazoned - the Calcutta Flag of 1906 and Madame Bhikaji Rustom Cama's flag of 1907.



The Calcutta Flag (Fig.2) was the first tricolour National flag hoisted in Calcutta on the first anniversary of the partition of Bengal observed as 'Boycott Day' on August 7, 1906. It had the word 'Bande Mataram' written in Sanskrit. This flag was also raised by Dadabhai Naoroji at the Calcutta session of the Congress in December 1906.



Bhikaji Cama's Flag (Fig 3) was a strikingly similar flag with minor deviations. It was displayed at the International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart, Germany by Madame Cama and her band of exiled revolutionaries on August 22, 1907. The flag was made by Hem Chandra Kanungo (Das) in Paris.



(Fig 4) In 1915 Dr. Annie Besant started the Home Rule

movement in India. The National flag she introduced in consultation with Bal Gangadhar Tilak and B. P. Wadia had two colours - red representing the Hindus and green for the Muslims. The stars were arranged in the configuration of 'Saptarishi' constellation. The inclusion of the Union Jack made the flag unacceptable to the masses.

Although the flag essays as described above were derived from the cultural manifestations of India, they didn't find much patronage or support for adoption as the National flag and subsequently relegated to history.

In 1916, Pingali Venkayya, an avid flag enthusiast, came up with a booklet titled 'A National Flag for India' wherein he had presented twenty-four flag designs. Pingali also organized an exhibition to garner support for a truly Indian National flag.

The Tricolour, known as 'Swaraj flag' was first evolved at AICC meeting at Bejwada in 1921 when a 'green & red' flag made by Venkayya and improved by Mahatma Gandhi with the addition of a white stripe at the top. The idea of 'charkha' came from Lala Hansraj of Jalandhar. Mahatma Gandhi in an article in Young India in April 1921 wrote;

"A flag is a necessity for all nations. Millions have died for it, it is no doubt a kind of idolatry which it would be a sin to destroy. For a flag represents an ideal. The unfurling of the Union Jack evokes in the English breast sentiments whose strength it is difficult to measure. The Stars and Stripes mean a world to the Americans. The Star and the Crescent will call forth the best bravery in Islam.

It will be necessary for us Indians-Hindus, Mohammedans, Christians, Jews, Parsis, and all others to whom India is their home-to recognise a common flag to live and to die for".



(Fig. 5) Swadeshi Flag on book cover.

As per wishes of Mahatma Gandhi, Pingali Venkayya transferred the 'white over red over green with a charkha' design onto Khadi bunting.

Though the first tricolour, was not officially accepted by AICC, it began to be hoisted in all Congress occasions. Gandhiji's approval made it sufficiently popular. The flag was in use till 1931. Objections were raised from time to time with the communal interpretations of the Swaraj colours - Green was made to represent the Muslims - Red the Hindus and the neutral White - all other lesser communities. Conflicts around the flag widened after the breakdown of Congress-Khilafat alliance in 1924. Muslim League's attitude changed, they were no longer inclined to accept the Swaraj flag. Sikhs demand for inclusion of their colour into the flag also gained momentum around the same time. Swaraj flag failed to get a pan-Indian acceptance.

Seized with the conflicts around the flag, the AICC set up a 'Flag Committee' in its Karachi session in April 1931 to go into the question of the National flag for recommending a flag for acceptance after examining the objections against the present Swaraj flag. The Committee came up with an

'All saffron flag with a brown charkha embellishing the upper quadrant'. The flag was instantly rejected by the national leaders apprehending the new flag would create more disunity than bring harmony amongst the fellow countrymen.

(Fig. 6) Purna Swaraj Flag Undaunted with the setback, the Congress Working Committee presided over by Sardar Ballavbhai Patel met again in Bombay in the same year in August 1931. The CWC came up with a new tricolour named 'Purna Swaraj Flag' by changing the colour red into saffron and shifting the white band in the middle; "Saffron over White over Green emblazoned with a blue Charkha in the centre". It implied that the colours stood for qualities not communities; the saffron for courage and sacrifice, white for truth and peace, and Green for faith and strength. The charkha stood for the welfare of the masses. Once the new flag was approved, Dr N.S. Hardikar took the task of transferring the design onto Khadi - the cloth of freedom.



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### The National Flag of India.

On 20 February 1947 the British Parliament announced to transfer powers to India by June 1948. With nation-wide euphoria on imminent freedom, resentment surfaced over the continuation of 'charkha' - a symbol synonym with the Congress party - on our National flag. It was felt necessary to re-design a National flag, which would be acceptable to all the political parties, as well as, convince the Princely States, hitherto enjoying partial sovereignty, to give