

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF SYMBOLS AND GRAPHIC REPRESENTATION IN ANCIENT INDIAN FLAGS

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Abstract

The flag a sacred symbol has played a significant role in the life of a man since earliest times. Flag was basically an object of faith. The symbol and graphic invested in it with sanctity and supernatural aura. The aim of this paper is to explore the various symbols and graphic representations on ancient Indian flags; Research would also like to explore the evolution, meaning and significance of those symbols on the flags. Flag had a much older tradition in India is clearly borne out by the Indus seals. The people of Indus valley used flag in third millennium B C. The Vedic Aryans carried flag in the battlefield and in every effort was made to pull down flag of the enem. Many scholars believed in flag evolved from the totem. It assumed the form of portable standard when carried to the battlefield. Flag further assumed the form of Permanent flag post with flag [dhvaja-stambha] when worshipped in a temple. Later the primary position of dhvaja-stambha was usurped by the anthropomorphic deity and it was relegated to a secondary position and allotted some space outside the temple. Ancient India, we find that there was no common flag in the sense in which we understand today the term national. There were a number of flags with numerous symbols and variety of graphics and number of depended upon the number of heroes or leaders in war. Every leader had his own insignia to distinguish one division from the other. The device avoided confusion in the ranks both during the march of an army and in action in battlefield. It is in the light of these observations that the use of symbols in religion and for that matter in ancient Indian flags has to be viewed. Detail review of the symbols and graphic representations on flags during various phases and dynasties of ancient India will be the main focus of the present research paper. In many cases symbols originally represented natural objects like hills, plants, animals, rivers and several other phenomena. All these representations might be having pictographic effect, may be with some mythic or cosmological background. The symbols most widely used a flag emblems may be classified under the headings of Animals and birds, Plants and flowers like, Objects of nature, Secret objects and Weapons. The need for a symbol among the primitive societies to express their identity and unity and the use of tribal totem to that end seems to have led to the birth of the flag. The study of symbols and graphic representation on ancient flags leads to some interesting conclusions. It has been established that origin of flag lies in the totem. Secondly in the scheme of flag symbols held an important position and not the shape of the flag. It is notable in ancient Indian flags that excepting for the epics that flags are nowhere spoken of in relation to the individuals. Symbols on the flags are connected with the faith of the bearer and therefore we could trace many religious symbols, e. g eagle, circle, monkey, lion, bull etc. In fact almost all the symbols can be explained in relation to religion. Religious connection on symbols of flags evoked highest degree of devotion indeed. Thus flag has been treated as sacred object all over the world from earliest times. The symbols and graphic representations on flags speak in volumes depending on the interpretation of the researcher.

Keywords: Ancient, Indian, flags, symbols