

“Our Tiranga : Our Pride”

Evolution of the Indian National Flag (The Flag Story)

Development : Pre-Independence



The Calcutta flag, 1906.

The idea of the national flag for India as a symbol of national pride germinated a couple of decades before our Independence. The very idea of India as consciousness was yet to be born, which would soon be, so was a flag to represent that unity, that consciousness. Dynasties, rulers and warriors, who were scattered across a colonized India, had their flags as symbolic representations of their reigns—but that was far from the Indian spirit. However, with the Indian independence movement and the rise of nationalistic consciousness there arose the desire for a flag among the Indians to represent the unity envisioned. The immediate cause of unfurling the first flag was felt with the announcement about the partition of Bengal in 1905—that day of the partition was declared the National Day of Mourning. A year later in 1906, during the anniversary of the anti-partition movement, a flag designed by Mr. Sachindra Prasad was unfurled. The fluttering of that flag sent ripples of desire for a unitary India in Indian minds.



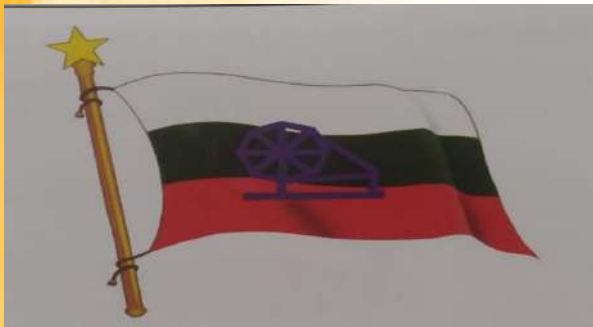
The Berlin committee flag, first raised by Bhikaiji Cama in 1907

At the international level, Madam Bhikaji Rustom Cama was the first person to unfurl a flag (the Berlin Committee Flag) that represented India in some way in an international forum, the 2nd International Socialist Congress in 1907. This flag was designed by Hemchandra Kanungo. The unfurling of this flag was preceded by a powerful speech by Madam Cama detailing the Indian political fights against the British.



The flag used during the Home Rule movement in 1917

In 1917, the Home Rule League Movement was ably led by Shri Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mrs. Anne Besant designed a flag to represent the spirit of the movement.



The Swaraj Flag, 1921

In 1921, during the Swaraj Movement, motivated by Mahatma Gandhi, Pingali Venkaiah designed the Swaraj Flag, otherwise also known as Charkha Flag. Representing the power of self-reliance, social and economic progress, and the common person—all aspirations for an Independent India—the Flag had the *Charkha* in the middle. It was made of khadi which was to

represent India's independence from foreign markets for the cloth. In 1921 without any resolution, it became the national flag of India. In 1923 as part of the Civil Disobedience Movement in Jabalpur a procession with the national flag was planned. Due to various events in this procession, it started being known as 'Jhanda Andolan'. The most significant achievement of 'Jhanda Andolan' was that it gave us a flag for which every Indian, irrespective of caste & creed, was willing to lay down his life.



The flag adopted in 1931.

The Congress Working Committee, at its Karachi meeting on April 2nd, 1931, appointed a seven-member Flag Committee, which after modification to the Charkha flag adopted a new flag in 1931. This was the origin of our Tiranga in its current form though it had a Charkha in the middle.

As Indian Independence was becoming a reality—a long-cherished dream of millions of Indians—the need for an Indian National Flag to represent the idea of India in its totality arose. An ad-hoc Flag Committee, under the headship of Dr Rajendra Prasad, was given the mandate to design the flag for free India. Upon obtaining Mahatma Gandhi's consent, the Committee decided to modify the Swaraj Flag designed by Pingali Venkaiah. The *Charkha*—the symbol evocative of an India dreaming of independence—was replaced by the Ashoka Chakra. This Flag was adopted on July 22, 1947, as the Indian National Flag. It unified the heartbeat of millions of Indians into a single rhythm.



Indian National Flag: A Matter of Right

India thus got a National Flag—the *Tiranga*—as a symbol of the freedom of “India”. But throughout the 20th Century since its adoption, the Flag remained as a “government flag” and was not available to common citizens to fly or display it except on a few selected occasions like Independence Day and Republic Day, etc. One young entrepreneur and patriot Shri Naveen Jindal contested the discrepancies of the decades-old rules restricting the display of the Flag by common citizen and fought a legal battle to make changes to it. It was his efforts that enabled every Indian to proudly fly the tricolour throughout the year with respect and dignity.

Shri Naveen Jindal had a fascination for Tiranga and its colours since childhood. However, his love for the Indian Flag grew stronger in 1990 while studying in the US when he witnessed the American's passion for their flag. They would display their "Stars and Stripes" at all places, on every occasion and event of their daily life. After his return from the US, Shri Jindal wanted to do the same, here in India, and display the Tiranga. He could not fly the Tiranga at his plant in Raigarh, and consequently, a prolonged legal battle ensued. The Divisional Commissioner of Bilaspur asked Shri Naveen Jindal to stop hoisting the Flag every day as no common citizen was allowed to hoist it every day.

According to the then Flag code of India, the flag could be flown only on ceremonial occasions, not on all days by common citizens. This unfair restriction was simply not acceptable to Shri Naveen Jindal. This prompted Mr Jindal to wage a prolonged legal battle which lasted for a decade. The battle culminated in the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India ruling on 23 Jan 2004 that the hoisting and displaying of the Indian National Flag with dignity and respect is a fundamental right of every citizen of India as per Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution of India. To effectively implement the order of the Supreme Court and to uphold the

dignity of the National Flag, which has become available to the citizens of India, Mr Jindal established an NGO named the “Flag Foundation of India”. The Foundation aims to enlighten the citizens of India about their rights and responsibilities towards the National Flag.

Later as a Member of the Indian Parliament, Shri Naveen Jindal took up the issue of amending the provisions of the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act (1971) to allow Indians to wear the *Tiranga* above the waist. In 2005, Naveen Jindal’s efforts yielded outstanding results as both houses of Parliament voted to amend the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act. ***Today, Indians have the right to display the Tiranga on their garments above the waist with due respect and dignity.***

Latest Amendments in Flag Code

Since its inception in 2003, the efforts of the Flag Foundation of India have been to write and persuade the ruling governments, at various points in time, to liberalise the rules regarding the display of the Indian National Flag.

The Flag Foundation of India has been making constant endeavours to educate the masses about their rights and responsibilities towards the national flag.

It is also to the credit of FFI that in 2009 it installed the first monumental flag in a public place both during day and night (otherwise night flying was forbidden till then) after obtaining due permission from the Government of India. With this initiative now it has become a wave in India to install monumental flags all across the country

Know these things related to the National Flag!

- The Flag Foundation of India is making constant efforts to educate the Indian population broadly about the following information related to the National Flag:
- Public can fly the Tricolor at their homes or workplaces for 365 days of the year.
- Public can hoist the national flag both day and night at their homes or workplaces.
- The fabric of the national flag should be cotton, silk, polyester or khadi.
- One should not mark any type of figure or letter on the National Flag.
- One shall not hoist a damaged National Flag. Damaged flags should be destroyed completely at a place far away from the public eye after paying due respects to the Flag.
- Public can display the national flag on their garments in a respectful manner above the waist.
- For more details refer to **the Flag Code of India 2002.**

Shri Naveen Jindal on the Significance of colours imbibed in the Indian National Flag:

“Saffron stands for sacrifice: let us make it about selfless service to our society with honesty.

“White stands for purity; let us make it about corruption-free probity in public life”.

“Green stands for growth: let us make it about sustainable development”.

“The Ashok Chakra is the wheel that denotes movement, a way forward to peace, progress and prosperity”.

The Tiranga Pledge:

Shri Naveen Jindal appeals to all the countrymen to take the following pledge on the Tiranga.

“I take a pledge on my Tiranga that I will dedicate myself to the nation and work for the good of my country” (Courtesy- Flag Foundation of India)

Let us spread the message...

Jai Hind