

(SHRI JAWAHARLAL NEHRU, JULY 22, 1947)

I do think that it is a very beautiful Flag to look at purely from the point of view of artistry, and it has come to symbolise many other beautiful things, things of the spirit, things of the mind, that give value to the individual's life and to the nation's life, for a nation does not live merely by material things, although they are highly important.

Mr. President, it is my proud privilege to move the following Resolution:

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 abacus of the Sarnath Lion Capital of Asoka.

The diameter of the Wheel shall approximate to the width of the white band.

The ratio of the width to the length of the Flag shall ordinarily be 2:3.

This Resolution, Sir, is in simple language, in a slightly technical language and there is no glow or warmth in the words that I have read. Yet I am sure that many in this House will feel that glow and warmth which I feel at the present moment for behind this Resolution and the Flag which I have the honour to present to this House for adoption lies history, the concentrated history of a short span in a nation's existence. Nevertheless, sometimes in a brief period we pass through the track of centuries. It is not so much the mere act of living that counts but what one does in this brief life that is ours; it is not so much the mere existence of a nation that counts but what that nation does during the various periods of its existence; and I do venture to claim that in the past quarter of a century or so India has lived and acted in a concentrated way and the emotions which have filled the people of India represent not merely a brief spell of years but something infinitely more. They have gone down into history and tradition and have added themselves on to that vast history and tradition which is our heritage in this country. So, when I move this Resolution, I think of this concentrated history through which all of us have passed during the last quarter of a century. Memories crowd in upon me. I remember the ups and downs of the great struggle for freedom of this great nation. I remember and many in this House will remember how we looked up to this Flag not only with

pride and enthusiasm but with a tingling in our veins; also how, when we were sometimes down and out, then again the sight of this Flag gave us courage to go on. Then, many who are not present here today, many of our comrades who have passed, held on to this Flag, some amongst them even unto death, and handed it over as they sank, to others to hold it aloft. So, in this simple form of words, there is much more than will be clear on the surface. There is the struggle of the people for freedom with all its ups and downs and trials and disasters and there is, finally today as I move this Resolution, a certain triumph about it—a measure of triumph in the conclusion of that struggle.

Now, I realise fully, as this House must realise, that this triumph of ours has been marred in many ways. There have been, especially in the past few months many happenings which cause us sorrow, which has gripped our hearts. We have seen parts of this dear motherland of ours cut off from the rest. We have seen large numbers of people suffering tremendously, large numbers wandering about like waifs and strays, without a home. We have seen many other things which I need not repeat to this House, but which we cannot forget. All this sorrow has dogged our footsteps. Even when we have achieved victory and triumph, it still dogs us and we have tremendous problems to face in the present and in the future. Nevertheless it is true I think—I hold it to be true—that this moment does represent a triumph and a victorious conclusion of all our struggles, for the moment.

There has been a very great deal of bewailing and moaning about various things that have happened. I am sad, all of us are sad at heart because of those things. But let us distinguish that from the other fact of triumph, because there is triumph in victory, in what has happened. It is no small thing that that great and mighty empire which has represented imperialist domination in this country has decided to end its days here. That was the objective we aimed at.

We have attained that objective or shall attain it very soon. Of that there is no doubt. We have not attained the objective exactly in the form in which we wanted it. The troubles and other things that accompanied our achievement are not to our liking. But we must remember that it is very seldom that people realise the dreams that they have dreamt. It is very seldom that the aims and objectives with which we start are achieved in their entirety in life in an individual's life or in a nation's life.

We have many examples before us. We need not go into the distant past. We have examples in the present or in the recent past. Some years back, a great war was waged, a world war bringing terrible misery to mankind: That war was meant for freedom and democracy and the rest. That war ended in the triumph of those who said they stood for freedom and democracy. Yet, hardly had that war ended when there were rumours of fresh wars and fresh conflicts.

Three days ago, this House and this country and the world was shocked by the brutal murder in a neighbouring country of the leaders of the nation. Today one reads in the papers of an attack by an imperialist power on a friendly country South-East Asia. Freedom is still far off in this world and nations, all nations in greater or lesser degree, are struggling for their freedom. If we in the present have not exactly achieved what we aimed at, it is not surprising. There is nothing in it to be ashamed of. For I do think our achievement is no small achievement. It is a very considerable achievement, a great achievement. Let no man run it down because other things have happened which are not to our liking. Let us keep these two things apart. Look at any country in the wide world. Where is the country today, including the great and big powers, which is not full of terrible problems, which is not in some way, politically and economically, striving for freedom which somehow or other eludes its grasp? The problems of India in this wider context do not appear to be terrible. The problems are not anything new to us. We have faced many disagreeable things in the past. We have not held back. We shall face all the other disagreeable things that face us in the present or may do so in the future and we shall not flinch and we shall not falter and we shall not quit.

So, in spite of everything that surrounds us, it is in no spirit of downheartedness that I stand up in praise of this Nation for what it has achieved. It is right and proper that at this moment we should adopt the symbols of this achievement, the symbol of freedom. Now what is this freedom in its entirety and for all humanity. What is freedom and what is the struggle for freedom and when does it end. As soon as you take one step forward and achieve something further steps come up before you. There will be no full freedom in this country or in the world as long as a single human being is un-free. There will be no complete freedom as long as there is starvation, hunger, lack of clothing, lack of necessities of life and lack of opportunity of growth for every single human being, man, woman and child in the country. We aim at that. We may not accomplish that because it is a terrific task. But we shall do our utmost to accomplish that task and hope that our successors, when they come, have an easier path to pursue. But there is no ending to that road to freedom. As we go ahead, just as we sometimes in our vanity aim at perfection, perfection never comes. But if we try hard enough we do approach the goal step by step. When we increase the happiness of the people, we increase their stature in many ways and we proceed to our goal. I do not know if there is an end to this or not, but we proceed towards some kind of consummation which in effect never ends. So I present this Flag to you. This Resolution defines the Flag which I trust you will adopt. In a sense this Flag was adopted, not by a formal resolution, but by popular acclaim and usage, adopted much more by the sacrifice that surrounded it in the past few decades. We are in a sense only ratifying that popular adoption. It is a Flag which has been variously described. Some people, having misunderstood its significance, have thought of it in communal terms and believe that some part of it represents this community or that. But I may say that when this Flag was devised there was no communal significance attached to it. We thought of a design for a Flag which was

beautiful, because the symbol of a nation must be beautiful to look at. We thought of a Flag which would in its combination and in its separate parts would somehow represent the spirit of the nation, the tradition of the nation, that mixed spirit and tradition which has grown up through thousands of years in India. So, we devised this Flag. Perhaps I am partial but I do think that it is a very beautiful Flag to look at purely from the point of view of artistry, and it has come to symbolise many other beautiful things, things of the spirit, things of the mind, that give value to the individual's life and to the nation's life, for a nation does not live merely by material things, although they are highly important. It is important that we should have the good things of the world, the material possessions of the world, that our people should have the necessities of life. That is of the utmost importance. Nevertheless, a nation, and especially a nation like India with an immemorial past, lives by other things also, the things of the spirit. If India had not been associated with these ideals and things of the spirit during these thousands of years, what would India have been? It has gone through a very great deal of misery and degradation in the past, but somehow even in the depths of degradation, the head of India has been held high, the thought of India has been high, and the ideals of India have been high. So we have gone through these tremendous ages and we stand up today in proud thankfulness for our past and even more so for the future that is to come for which we are going to work and for which our successors are going to work. It is our privilege, of those assembled here, to mark the transition in a particular way, in a way that will be remembered. I began by saying that it is my proud privilege to be ordered to move this Resolution. Now, Sir, may I say a few words about this particular Flag? It will be seen that there is a slight variation from the one many of us have used during these past years. The colours are the same, a deep saffron, a white and a dark green. In the white previously there was the *Charkha* which symbolised the common man in India, which symbolised the masses of the people, which symbolised their industry and which came to us from the message which Mahatma Gandhi delivered. Now, this particular *Charkha* symbol has been slightly varied in this Flag, not taken away at all. Why then has this been varied? Normally speaking, the symbol on one side of the Flag should be exactly the same as on the other side. Otherwise, there is a difficulty which goes against the rules. Now, the *Charkha* as it appeared previously on this Flag, had the wheel on one side and the spindle on the other. If you see the other side of the Flag, the spindle comes the other way and the wheel comes this way; if it does not do so, it is not proportionate, because the wheel must be towards the pole, not towards the end of the Flag. There was this practical difficulty. Therefore, after considerable thought, we were of course convinced that this great symbol which had enthused people should continue but that it should continue in a slightly different form, that the wheel should be there, not the rest of the *Charkha* that is the spindle and the string which created this confusion, that the essential part of the *Charkha* should be there, that is the wheel. So, the old tradition continues in regard to the *Charkha* and the wheel. But what type of wheel should we have? Our minds went back to many wheels but notably one famous wheel, which had appeared in many places and which all of us have

seen, the one at the top of the Capital of the Asoka column and in many other places. That wheel is a symbol of India's ancient culture, it is a symbol of the many things that India has stood for through the ages. So we thought that this *Charkha* emblem should be there, and that wheel appears. For my part, I am exceedingly happy that in this sense indirectly we have associated with this Flag of ours not only this emblem but in a sense the name of Asoka, one of the most magnificent names not only in India's history but in world history. It is well that at this moment of strife, conflict and intolerance, our minds should go back towards what India stood for in the ancient days and what it has stood for, I hope and believe, essentially throughout the ages in spite of mistakes and errors and degradations from time to time. For, if India had not stood for something very great, I do not think that India could have survived and carried on its cultural traditions in a more or less continuous manner through these vast ages. It carried on its cultural traditions, not unchanging not rigid, but always keeping its essence, always adapting itself to new developments, to new influences. That has been the tradition of India, always to put out fresh blooms and flowers, always receptive to the good things that it receives, sometimes receptive to bad things also, but always true to her ancient culture. All manner of new influences through thousands of years have influenced us, while we influenced them tremendously also, for you will remember that India has not been in the past a tight little narrow country, disdaining other countries. India throughout the long ages of her history has been connected with other countries, not only connected with other countries, but has been an international centre, sending out her people abroad to far off countries carrying her message and receiving the message of other countries in exchange, but India was strong enough to remain embedded on the foundations on which she was built, although changes, many changes, have taken place. The strength of India, it has been said, consists in this strong foundation. It consists also in its amazing capacity to receive, to adapt what it wants to adapt, not to reject because something is outside its scope, but to accept and receive everything. It is folly for any nation or race to think that it can only give to and not receive from the rest of the world. Once a nation or a race begins to think like that, it becomes rigid, it becomes ungrowing; it grows backwards and decays. In fact, if India's history can be traced, India's periods of decay are those when it closed herself up into a shell and refused to receive or to look at the outside world. India's greatest periods are those when she stretched her hands to others in far off countries, sent her emissaries, ambassadors, her trade agents and merchants to these countries and received ambassadors and emissaries from abroad.

Now because I have mentioned the name of Asoka I should like you to think that the Asokan period in Indian history was essentially an international period of Indian history. It was not a narrowly national period. It was a period when India's ambassadors went abroad to far countries and went abroad not in the way of an Empire and imperialism but as ambassadors of peace and culture and goodwill.

Therefore this Flag that I have the honour to present to you is not, I hope and trust, 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. 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 Indian ships, wherever it may go it will bring a message, I hope, of freedom to those people, a message of comradeship, a message that India wants to be friends with every country of the world and India wants to help any people who seek freedom. That I hope will be the message of this Flag everywhere and I hope that in the freedom that is coming to us, we will not do what many other people or some other people have unfortunately done, that is, in a new-found strength suddenly to expand and become imperialistic in design. If that happened that would be a terrible ending to our struggle for freedom. But there is that danger and, therefore, I venture to remind this House of it—although this House needs no reminder—there is this danger in a country suddenly unshackled in stretching out its arms and legs and trying to hit out at other people. And if we do that we become just like other nations who seem to live in a kind of succession of conflicts and preparation for conflict. That is the world today unfortunately.

In some degree I have been responsible for the foreign policy during the past few months and always the question is asked here or elsewhere: what is your foreign policy? To what group do you adhere to in this warring world? Right at the beginning I venture to say that we propose to belong to no power group. We propose to function as far as we can as peace-makers and peace-bringers because today we are not strong enough to be able to have our way. But at any rate we propose to avoid all entanglements with power politics in the world. It is not completely possible to do that in this complicated world of ours, but certainly we are going to do our utmost to that end.

It is stated in this Resolution that the ratio of the width to the length of the Flag shall ordinarily be 2:3. Now you will notice the word “ordinarily”. There is no absolute standard about the ratio because the same Flag on a particular occasion may have a certain ratio that might be more suitable or on any other occasion in another place the ratio might differ slightly. So there is no compulsion about this ratio. But generally speaking, the ratio of 2:3 is a proper ratio. Sometimes the ratio 2:1 may be suitable for a Flag flying on a building. Whatever the ratio may be, the point is not so much the relative length and breadth, but the essential design.

So, Sir, now I would present to you not only the Resolution but the Flag itself.

There are two of these National Flags before you. One is on silk—the one I am holding—and the other on the other side is of cotton Khadi.