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THE MAHATMA An Apotheosis

From A Correspondent
If there is one man Indians will remember today with deeper reverence than any other, it is the Mahatma—a great soul, a great patriot, an Indian cast in the heroic mould.

Apostle of the divine gospel of non-violence, Gandhiji has seen in recent years some rude shocks being administered to peace in India and the world—but never to his belief. First, much of the work of civilisation as men know it was consumed in the lurid flames of a global war. Then came the "Quit India" disturbances and "machine violence" on the part of an authority that could not comprehend the inescapable logic of the demand for the very commodity for which the Allies were fighting, namely freedom. And, last, India's communal riots, which have made division inevitable, have left him sad.

The meaning of "Quit India", woefully clouded and obscured in the white-heat of war, has seen full justification in subsequent events. True, the Mahatma was so Indian and to such a mood of sudden self-absorption in the post-Cripps delirium that he, with the Congress he led and inspired, was oblivious to the desperate war situation. After all, to the Mahatma India was, and will always be, the master passion of his life. In any case, he would have thrown in his full weight, as always, in the cause of non-violence—but he was not there to any or direct anything.

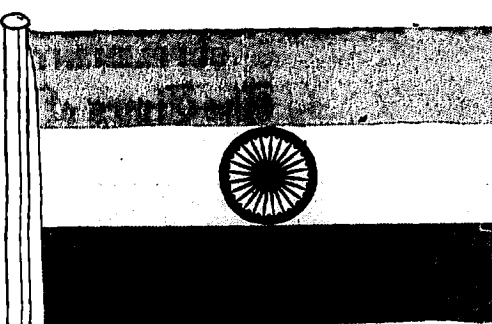
Roused The Nation

Who can deny that the life and work of the Mahatma for India have been an unequalled success? To his credit stands the glorious achievement that he roused the bovine, somnolent India to the deep significance of national consciousness, dignity, self-respect. After 30 years of his active leadership, India has become a land transformed and reached the full stature of independent nationhood.

India's once bedraggled, inarticulate millions, to whom the Mahatma has given a backbone and a voice, will symbolise Independence Day as his supreme achievement, remembering him with deep reverence and gratitude.

He has insistently stood for morality in politics, national or international. In all his battles he has had only two weapons: an offensive one—drawn from the armoury of pure faith in his cause; a defensive one—the impenetrable breast-plate of righteousness. He has fought, and he has made his nation fight, with clean, bare hands and an unconquerable soul. It is this repeated intrusion of morality in politics that has given the appearance of unreality and inconsistency to the Mahatma's words and actions, made him earlier "experiment with truth" and admit frankly some of his "Himalayan blunders." But time has shown the consistency and steadfastness of his goal by the way India has attained independence, with credit both to India and Britain.

FREE INDIA'S FLAG



This is the authorised design in terms of the following resolution passed by the Constituent Assembly on July 22, 1947:—
Resolved that the National Flag of India shall be a horizontal tricolour of deep saffron (top), 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 "Chakra". 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.

PRECIOUS SYMBOLISM OF WHEEL AND TRICOLOUR

(BY THE REV. H. HERAS, S.J.,
DIRECTOR, INDIAN HISTORICAL
RESEARCH INSTITUTE, BOMBAY)

The enthusiasm with which Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's motion on India's national flag was received by all sections of the Constituent Assembly was unprecedented. It was not merely because the colour scheme of the new flag is the same as that of the popular Congress flag, nor because the *lanchana* painted on it is the *chakra* of Asoka. There must be some other reason behind these facts. The psychology of the masses has generally a deep root in the soul of the nation.

It is true that Asoka carved the representation of the *chakra* on the monuments he erected, as may be seen in the Lion Capital of Sarnath; but he inherited that tradition from the Buddha himself who, after receiving his Buddhahood at Uruvela, told Upaka the mendicant that he was going to the city of the Kashihs "there to start my doctrine's wheel" (*Majjhima Nikaya*, II, 28). Following this tradition, the Buddhists carved the *chakra* as a symbol of *dharma*.



The wheel (Dharmachakra) on the abacus of the Sarnath Lion Capital of Asoka which is embodied in free India's flag.
Courtesy: The Royal Asiatic Library, Bombay.

In the representation of their shrines, as may be seen in the stupas of Barhut and Amaravati, or at the feet of the statues of the Buddhas, as the famous Sarnath Buddha shows.

Why was *dharma* symbolized by the *chakra*? Why is the connection between the moral law and the wheel? The wheel was in the late Vedic period the symbol of God, the Creator, who holds together the whole creation just as the spokes of the wheel are held with the felly and the hub; it cannot stand without them. But what is the relation between *dharma* and God that both might be symbolized in a wheel? Perhaps the Rigveda will give a suitable reply to this question: "The birds (the sun rays) are golden-coloured; up to the heaven they fly robed in the waters (clouds). Again they descend from the seat of Order, and all the earth is moistened with their fatness. Twelve are the felling and the wheel is single; three are the naves. What man hath understood it? Therein are set together



The Hon. Dr. Rajendra Prasad,
President of the Indian Con-
stituent Assembly.

spokes, three-hundred and sixty, which in nowise can be loosened." (*Rg. V.*, I, 184, 47-48).

This is the first time that the symbolical wheel is spoken of in India. The symbolism here is double, for the wheel itself is described as an emblem of the year with twelve months, three seasons and three-hundred and sixty days. In any case, the wheel in the midst of his description exclaims with reference to the wheel: "What man hath understood it?", which is an expression that always refers to God. Whom nobody may adequately understand. God is therefore symbolised in the wheel, which is likewise a symbol of the year. The seat of Order is *rita*, the supreme order of the universe, identified with God Himself. Very adequately therefore this Order is symbolised in the year, with its orderly succession of days, months and seasons. The wheel is a symbol of God because it is a symbol of *rita*, the supreme and eternal law of the universe, *satatana dharma*. No wonder therefore that the Buddha and Asoka used also represent *dharma*, which is the temporal reflection of the eternal law, under the same beautiful symbolism. That is the reason why the statues of Vishnu are represented holding a wheel in one of his hands, for God upholds *rita* as a manifestation of his own orderly essence.

Colour Scheme

The mystical meaning of this *chakra* stands in perfect agreement with the three colours selected for the flag. For the middle colour, on which the *chakra* itself is depicted, is white, which stands for purity, by which God is also represented for "He is immaculate" (*Ramadasa, Dasabodha VIII, 1, 8-50*), as He is "without fault, without taint" (*Svetasvatara Upanishad, VI, 19*), "stainless, uncontaminated." (*Ladd, Yogama Ramayana, Balakanda, ch. V*).

The other two colours represent the two-fold path that leads to Him, *jnana marga*. Green symbolises freshness and youth which the God-knower acquires for himself when acquiring knowledge. He who knows God becomes like unto Him, always fresh, always youthful. Such perfect knowledge cannot be acquired without renunciation. *Sannyasa*, symbolised in the saffron colour, is the cause of *jnana* and is perfected by it.

Let the *chakra* of modern India be gloriously lifted against the sky of our country as a symbol of our belief in the Omnipotence and Providence of God and as a pledge of the triumphs that await her in her peaceful endeavour; just as one day the *chakra* also appeared upon the sky of the ancient city of Kushavati leading "the great King of glory" to his victorious goal (*Maha-Budhasana Suttanta* of the Digha Nikaya).

India's Evolution Through The Ages

India's growth to political maturity has been slow but sure and by graded steps since the early times.

From Asoka, who taught *ahimsa* and toleration by edicts inscribed on rocks and pillars; Akbar, whose rule was one of the most unifying, impartial and tolerant in history; and Shrivaj, who built up a Maratha State, one comes to the advent of the British and the transfer of India (on the morrow of the Great Indian Mutiny) to the Crown in 1858 by the Queen's Proclamation, a promise of just and tolerant rule.

India's first political advance after the transfer was the Indian Councils Act of 1861, which enlarged both the Governor-General's Executive and Legislative Councils. The foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885 was a landmark reflecting the birth of political consciousness among the people.

The first British response came in the shape of the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909, which extended the elective principle and increased the popular element in the Councils. The second step forward—the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919—included Indians in the Viceroy's Executive Council and introduced "diarchy", with "transferred" and "reserved" subjects, in the provinces, thereby introducing the principle of responsible government.

1935 And After

Then came the Government of India Act of 1935, which regulated the form of Government till now. It provided for a Federation, which never came into being as the proviso that Princes should join was not fulfilled. Provincial autonomy, however, was ushered in on April 1, 1937. The Central Government, a transitional creation, had a Governor-General acting with the Council or on his own and under the control of the Secretary of State for India.

A new factor had arisen by 1940: Muslim awakening. The Pakistan resolution of that year demanded independent States for Muslim-majority provinces in the north-western and eastern zones of India.

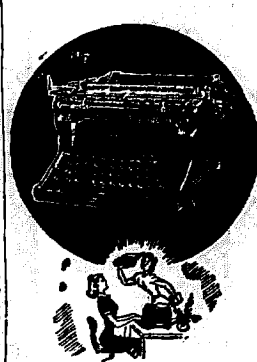
In the midst of the war, the "Quit India" resolution of the Congress demanded "the immediate ending of British rule in India" as "an urgent necessity" after the failure of the Cripps Mission in 1942.

In conformity with the British Cabinet Mission's plan of May 16, 1946, the Constituent Assembly of India met on December 9, 1946, without Muslim participation. The creation of an "Independent Sovereign Republic" was declared to be the objective. At a later session many States' representatives came in.

Widespread riots in India made division inevitable. The plan of June 3 was the blue-print of division; the Independence Bill of July 4 created the two Dominions of India and Pakistan.

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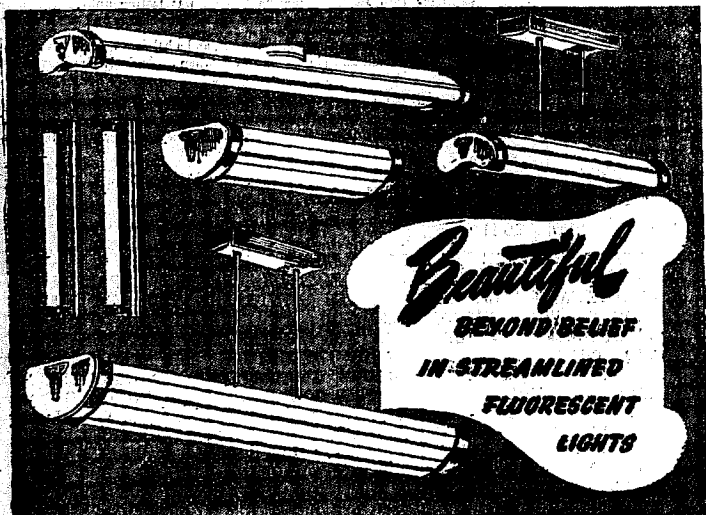
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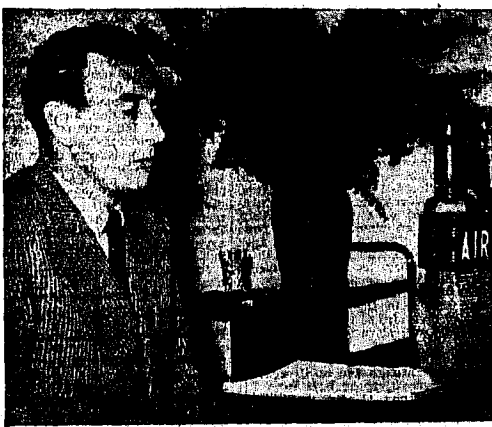
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