National Symbols

On the 68th anniversary of the Indian republic, let us recall how our national emblems were selected and adopted nearly seven decades ago. With the end of the British rule in India all symbols of the Empire also disappeared. It was necessary that independent India should have its own emblems in which quintessential India would manifest. Three symbols were approved and adopted by the Constituent Assembly.

1. Lion Capital of Ashoka from Sarnath, which became India’s state seal
2. The Dharma Chakra (Wheel of Law) that adorns the Centre of the national flag
3. The Shlok from Mundaka Upanishad ‘Satyameva Jayate’ (Truth alone triumphs) that became the national motto.

The above symbols were chosen very carefully keeping in view their significance in the civilizational continuity of India and also their acceptability by the people of a nascent republic.

In the Lion Capital, taken from Ashokan pillar found at Sarnath, four lions sit back to back on top of the pillar. In the national emblem, however, only three lions are visible. One is in front and two are in profile, the third being hidden from the view. Lion is a symbol of courage and strength and signifies the sovereignty of the state. Four lions surveying four directions with their mouths open, not in a roar but in an alert repose, indicate many things: constant all-round vigilance, equality and justice in all spheres of life and the spreading of dharma through word of mouth in all directions.

The Chakra having 24 spokes which is at the centre of the national flag is also a part of the Lion Capital. It is on the abacus of the Sarnath pillar along with four animals viz. a bull, an elephant, a horse and a lion. Whereas the four animals symbolically represent four stages of Buddha’s life, the Chakra is the symbol of a movement. According to tradition when Buddha delivered his first sermon at Sarnath he started a movement, a Dharmachakra, wheel of the law of Dharma which referred to a Code of Conduct. The 24 spokes in the Chakra on the Lion Capital represent the number of hours in a day suggesting the importance of time which is constantly on the move. The wheel also denotes motion. In the national flag it represents dynamism and movement towards progress round the clock and the Wheel of Law in modern terms could be interpreted as the rule of law.

Referring to the Wheel in the national flag, Nehru informed the Constituent Assembly, “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 Ashoka column…. that Wheel is a symbol of many things that India had stood for through the ages.” Making a formal announcement of the National Flag to the Constituent Assembly on July 22, 1947, Nehru stated thus: “Resolved that the National Flag of India shall be a 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 which appears on the abacus of the Sarnath Lion Capital of Ashoka.”

The national motto is taken from a shloka in the ancient Indian scripture, the Mundaka Upanishad. The full shloka is:

MU: 3.1.6:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{satyameva jayate nārtamsatayena} \\
\text{panthā vitato devayānāḥ} \\
\text{yenākramantyṛṣḥ hyāptakāmāyatra} \\
\text{tat satasya paramain niḍhānīm} \\
\end{align*}
\]

which translates to:

“Truth alone triumphs; not falsehood
Through truth divine path is spread out
by which the sages whose desires
have been completely fulfilled, reach
where lies the supreme treasure of truth

‘Satyameva Jayate’ was adopted as the national motto of India in May 1949. It is inscribed in Devanagari script at the base of the national emblem.

Taken together, the three emblems denote righteousness, sovereignty, the rule of law and the power of the state.

Ananya Vajpeyi in her book Righteous Republic: The Political Foundations of Modern India suggests that the national symbols of India were the choice of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India, who was fully supported by Dr. Sarvpalli Radhakrishnan, the philosopher-statesman who became the first Vice President of the Indian republic and subsequently its President. She says that Nehru was greatly impressed by the Mauryan period of ancient India, particularly emperor Ashoka of the Mauryan dynasty who united almost the whole of India under one rule. She quotes Nehru’s letter to his daughter which is included in Glimpses of World History in which he says, “I am afraid I am little too fond of running down kings and princes. I see little in their kind to admire or do reverence to. But we are now coming to a man who, inspite of being a king and emperor, was worthy of great admiration. He was Ashoka, the grandson of Chandragupta Maurya…. And for an Indian it is an especial pleasure to think of this period of India’s history…. Nearly the whole of India, except a tiny tip in the south, was under him, and it was easy enough for him to complete the conquest of this little tip. But he refrained.”

There were several reasons for Nehru’s admiration for Ashoka. For example, the latter making non-violence his main principle of governance impressed Nehru, who was himself a man of peace, a great deal. Ashoka’s consideration and kindness to non-Buddhists made a great impact on Nehru for whom secularism was an article of faith. The practice of sending ambassadors to other countries of Asia, which Ashoka had started, coincided with Nehru’s own ideas of foreign policy based on internationalism. Addressing the Constituent Assembly on the national flag, Nehru said, “For my part I am exceedingly happy that we have associated with this flag of ours not only this emblem, but in a sense, the name of Ashoka, one of the most magnificent names not only in India’s history but in world history…. ….Now because I have mentioned the name of Ashoka I should like you to think that the Ashokan 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-off countries and went abroad not in the way of an Empire and imperialism but as ambassadors of peace and culture and goodwill.” Ananya Vajpeyi has beautifully articulated what according to her appears to be the rationale behind India’s national emblems. She writes, “The decisions to take the Lion Capital as India’s seal and to place the Dhammachakra at the centre of the national flag suggests that Nehru wanted both to appropriate the antiquity of the Mauryan imperium to equip the new republic with a historical ancestor that had adequate political weight as well as desirable ethical standards.” Whether the Constituent Assembly and Nehru also thought so will remain a matter of conjecture.

Nehru was a modern man who wanted India to progress following the path of science and technology. But he also had a keen sense of history and while trying to discover India for himself he found the Mauryan period of Indian history, particularly the reign of emperor Ashoka, most inspiring and the symbolism of the Lion Capital and the ethics of Upanishads most appropriate symbols for the new republic.
“Finding our Origins with the James Webb Space Telescope”

Dr. Jaydeep Mukherjee, Director, NASA Florida Space Grant Consortium, Florida Space Institute, USA delivered a Special Space Science Lecture on “Finding our Origins with the James Webb Space Telescope” on Saturday, 25th Nov 2017 at 6:00 pm in the Sky Theatre of Nehru Planetarium. Here are excerpts from his talk.

Dr. Jaydeep in his lecture stated that since its launch in 1990, the images from the Hubble Space Telescope (HST) have been captivating people all over the world. The HST did not just produce amazing pictures. Its scientific instruments revolutionized our understanding of the universe. In spite of all these results, the HST did have some limitations. First, its orbit restricts what can be seen. Secondly, HST passes through a section of the Van Allen radiation belts, where charged particles from the solar winds are trapped by the Earth’s magnetic field. These encounters cause high background radiation, which interferes with the instruments’ detectors. It’s impossible for the telescope to make observations during these periods.

He further said Hubble’s science pushed us into looking at longer wavelengths and to “go beyond” what Hubble has already accomplished. In particular, more distant objects are more highly red-shifted, and their light is pushed from the UV and optical into the near-infrared. Thus observations of these distant objects (like the first galaxies formed in the Universe, for example) require an infrared telescope. The James Webb Space telescope (JWST) is a successor to the HST. JWST will primarily look at the Universe in the infrared. The longer wavelengths enable JWST to look much closer to the beginning of time and to hunt for the unobserved formation of the first galaxies, as well as to look inside dust clouds where stars and planetary systems are forming today. JWST will have a much bigger mirror than Hubble. This larger light collecting area means that JWST can peer farther back into time than HST is capable of doing. HST is in a very close orbit around the earth, while JWST will be 1.5 million kilometers (km) away at the second Lagrange (L2) point.

He ended his talk by saying JWST will be the most important observatory of the next decade and will serve thousands of astronomers worldwide. It will study every phase in the history of our Universe, ranging from the first luminous glows after the Big Bang, to the formation of solar systems capable of supporting life on planets like Earth, to the evolution of our own Solar System.
Lunar Eclipse of January 2018

There are in all 5 eclipses in 2018 out of which three are partial solar eclipses taking place on 15 Feb, 13 Jul and 11 Aug but are not visible from India. The other two total lunar eclipses both are visible from India. The first one is on 31 Jan which is partially visible from India and second one is on 28 July which is entirely visible from India.

During a lunar eclipse, the shadow of earth can be seen traveling across the lunar disk. There are three stages of a total lunar eclipse - penumbral, umbral and totality.

To understand this, let us think of a shadow of an object which is kept close to a screen. The shadow is sharp and it outlines the object quite clearly. But as we move the object away from the screen the shadow starts becoming defused. At one stage we see a dark central shadow surrounded by more defused outer shadow. The central dark shadow is called umbra and the outer is penumbra.

Moon is about 3.84 lakh kilometers from Earth. At this distance, the shadow of earth has both umbra and penumbra. During the total lunar eclipse, moon first enters penumbral shadow of earth. This shadow is very faint and most often, the beginning of this phase of the eclipse is missed by a casual observer. The progress of the penumbral shadow becomes apparent when more than half of the moon is covered by it.

Umbral shadow of Earth on Moon is very distinct and its progress can be easily noticed. When the moon is entirely covered by the umbral shadow, it is a total lunar eclipse.

After this, the Moon comes out of shadow of Earth in a reverse sequence.

During the total phase of lunar eclipse, Moon appears red in colour. The reason is very similar to red apparition of Moon (or Sun) when it is rising or setting. Fine particles in the atmosphere of earth scatter blue component of solar spectrum and what reached us is the red part. These red wavelengths further travel and fall on moon giving it a reddish hue during the total phase of the eclipse.

There have been times when a volcanic explosion preceded a total lunar eclipse. In July 1992, Mt. Pinatubo of Philippines erupted. The total lunar eclipse of 10 Dec ’92 was so dark that for a while the moon appeared to have vanished from the sun and the sky was as dark as that on a new moon night.

Details of total lunar eclipse of 31 Jan 2018.
Time given in IST

For Mumbai:- Moon rises 18:27  Sun sets 18:31

Moon enters penumbra: . . . . . . . . . . . . 16:19:28
Moon enters umbra: . . . . . . . . . . . . 17:17:50
Start of totality: . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 18:21:06
Maximum eclipse: . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 18:59:33
End of totality: . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 19: 37:59
Moon leaves umbra: . . . . . . . . . . . . . 20:41:15
Moon leaves penumbra: . . . . . . . . . . 21:39:41

Duration of total phase: 1h 16m 53s
Duration of umbral phase: 3h 23m 25s
Duration of penumbral phase: 5h 20m 14s

Note: this second full moon on 31st Jan is the second full moon in a calendar month. It is also called ‘blue moon’. We shall discuss blue moon in later issues of the newsletter.
Rang Gurjari
A Gatha of Historical Gujarati Rangbhumi-2018

Nehru Centre is happy to organize a programme “Rang Gurjari” - A Gatha of Historical Gujarati Rangbhumi

Synopsis

Art of theatre is a form of communication where human emotion is communicated not alone through its vocal support but body language is also used which was termed as ‘Vachika’ & ‘Angika’ abhinaya in the Natyashastra. Natyashastra is a collection of relevant portion adapted from 4 vedas which help an individual to perform his duties as a tool of communication.

Apart from theatrical approach, folk art simultaneously grew. It is impossible to pinpoint what started first. Folk Art grew in different regions taking into account the regional approach of that particular area. Blauvai, which started as a theatre in Gujarat was used as a dance in Rajasthan.

Rang Gurjari started with reference of Natyaved and then it steadily moved towards Blauvai and grew as man had the potential to adopt things around him. In the 7th century the Parsis arrived in Sanjan in Gujarat. They were highly influenced by English theatre and they used these form to culminate into Parsi theatre. As time passed on music and other mediums were used in theatre and ‘Bhangwadi’ - a theatre form much similar to ‘Natya Sangeet’ grew in the Kalbadevi region of Mumbai. Slowly and steadily the Gujarati stage, highly influenced by exchange of views of each region, started writing plays in Gujarati till date.

Credits:

Director - Manoj Shah
Dramaturg - Satchit Puranik
Lights - Shekhar Fadke

Writer - Satya Mehta
Music - Kanhaiya
Costume - Rajiv Bhatt
Set - Kabir Thakore

Performance by Team of Ideas Unlimited
Production - Ideas Unlimited
Produced by Janam Shah

24th January 2018, 6.30 pm, Nehru Centre Auditorium

Entry: Entrance Cards will be available on 20th January 2018 from 10.30 am until availability of the entrance cards from the Booking Counter of the Nehru Centre Auditorium.

Review:

Nehru Centre’s 29th Mushaira was held on 16th December 2017 at the Nehru Centre Auditorium. It was inaugurated by Prof. Shehpar Rasool along with Janab I. M. Kadri, General Secretary, Nehru Centre. Eminent Local and Outstation Poets enthralled the audience with their choicest of ghazals and nazms. The Mushaira was a grand success.
Programmes for January 2018

INDIAN ART ICON RAJA RAVI VARMA

The 25th Indian Master’s Retrospective inaugurated by Shri Ramavarma Thampuram (Descendant of Raja Ravi Varma) on 15th December 2017 will be on view till Saturday 6th January 2018.

Monday 1st January to Saturday 6th January 2018
(AC Gallery)

ROHAN MORE .
MUKEH SHOUDHARI .
MANISHA SHINDE

Rohan completed G.D.A. and A.T.D. in Painting from Karandikar Kala Academy, Mumbai. His paintings are figurative compositions in oil on canvas.

Mukesh received G.D.A., A.T.D. from Karandikar Kala Academy. His portraits and landscapes are in oils and water colours. He has had many shows and won awards.

Manisha has done G.D.A., A.T.D. and Diploma in Indian Aesthetics. She has participated in many shows. Her paintings are in Ink on canvas.

Tuesday 2nd January to Monday 8th January 2018
(Circular Gallery)

PARAMESH PAUL

Paramesh is a self-taught artist. He has extensively exhibited in India and Dubai. He has attended many camps. His paintings are realistic in acrylic on canvas.

Tuesday 9th January to Monday 15th January 2018
(AC Gallery)

SHEEPA SHARMA

Sheela has B.F.A. degree in Art from Lucknow. She is a mouth and foot painter. She has won National award and won Regional award from U.P. Government. Her paintings are on human figures in acrylic on canvas.

Tuesday 9th January to Monday 15th January 2018
(Circular Gallery)

ROHIT GORE .
MUKTA PUSALKAR .
SATISH MANE .
SACHIN MANCHARE .
PRASAD PARKHE .
YOGESH LOKHANDE

Rohit has obtained Diploma in Sculpture & Modelling from Sir J. J. School of Art, Mumbai. His sculptures are in metal and scrap.

Mukta secured G.D.A. from Kalavishwa, B.V.A. from S.N.D.T. and M.F.A. from Sir J. J. School of Art, Mumbai. Her paintings are abstracts in acrylic on canvas and portraits in water colours.

Tuesday 16th January to Monday 22nd January 2018
(AC Gallery)

UNITED 12

A group of 12 artists from Pune are exhibiting in this show. Each artist has his / her own style, subject and medium.

Tuesday 16th January to Monday 22nd January 2018
(Circular Gallery)
The 25th edition of the Indian Masters’ Retrospective was organized by showcasing the works of the Indian Art Icon Raja Ravi Varma. The exhibition was inaugurated on 15th December 2017 by Shri Ramavarma Thampuram (Descendant of Raja Ravi Varma). He also released a catalogue on Raja Ravi Varma published by Nehru Centre, on this occasion. Also present on the occasion were Shri I. M. Kadri, General Secretary, Nehru Centre. The event was attended by a large number of artists and art lovers. The exhibition will be on view till Saturday, 6th January 2018 for the art lovers.
Suggested Reading for Republic Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sr. No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Indian republic: Issues and perspectives</td>
<td>M. G. Chitkara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ancient Indian republics: From the earliest times to the 6th century A.D.</td>
<td>Shivenandan Misra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>John Company to the republic: A story of modern India</td>
<td>Mushirul Hasan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Righteous republic: The political foundations of modern India</td>
<td>Ananya Vajpeyi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Indian national movement and constitutional development</td>
<td>D. C. Gupta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The story of the integration of the Indian states</td>
<td>V. P. Menon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Our constitution: An introduction to India’s constitution and constitutional law</td>
<td>Subhash Kashyap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The Indian constitution: Cornerstone of a nation</td>
<td>Granville Austin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The transfer of power in India</td>
<td>V. P. Menon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Workshops

Words and Wonder Workshop
By Sakshi Singh

A workshop aimed at making language fun and lovable so children can freely and passionately express themselves with words.

Date: Saturday, 6th January 2018
Time: 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.
Venue: Hall of Harmony
Age Group: 5-12 year olds

RSVP required: aratidesai@nehru-centre.org
Kindly register by Thursday, 4th January 2018