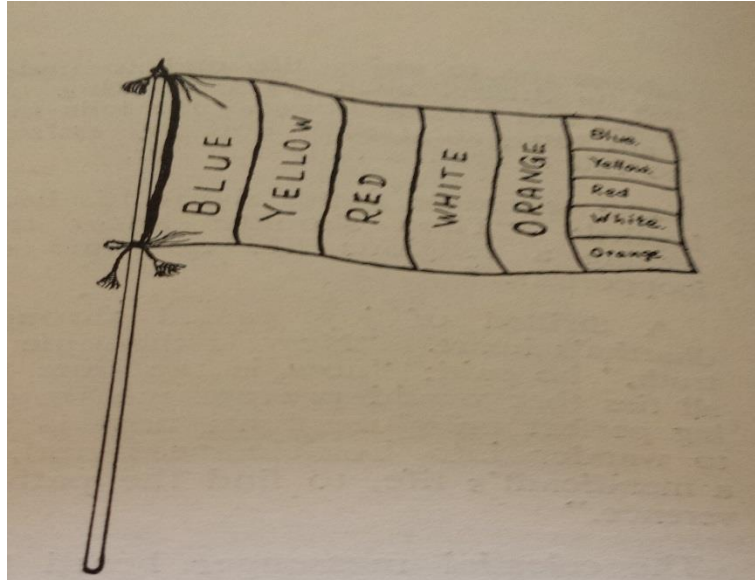


BUDDHIST SYMBOL

INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST FLAG



Buddhist flags was jointly designed by Mr. J. R. de Silva and Colonel Henry S. Olcott to mark the revival of Buddhism in Ceylon in 1880. The flag was first used in 1888 when Vesak was celebrated as a public holiday.

At the time, Colonel Olcott felt a need for a symbol for local Buddhists to rally around. He then designed a flag for the Buddhists from the colours of the Aura that shone around the head of the Buddha.

Its use become world-wide and now is being used in nearly 60 countries during festivities, particularly on the celebration of the birthday of the Buddha.

At the Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists held in Ceylon in 1950, many vital decisions were made and several important resolutions were passed. One of the resolutions aimed at unification of the Buddhist world through the adoption of a flag as a general symbol. The flag accepted as the World Buddhist Flag was the one in 6 vertical strips representing the six colours of the Buddha's aura namely royal blue, golden yellow, dark red, white, magenta orange, and a composite of all the five colours. The blue strip is near the flag staff and the composite one constitutes the free margin.

The flag is not only reminiscent of the spiritual aura of the Blessed One but is also a vital symbol of the Buddhist renaissance in modern times. Born with the dawn of the re-awakening of the Dhamma in Ceylon towards the last quarter of the last century, the flag has since then been in regular use not only in the island but also by the Maha Bodhi Society of India since its very inception.

It was therefore in the fitness of things that a flag with such a spiritual background and with such historical associations should have inspired the 60 nations of the globe, foregathered in the historic Conference at Colombo, for acceptance as the symbol of the unity of the Buddhist world. So much sentimental veneration was in evidence in favour of this flag that proposals for an altogether new flag, simpler in construction, rich in symbolism and comprised of an elongated orange triangle with the Asokan Dhamma cakka in its heart, were immediately withdrawn.

The six-striped flag is now the proud possession of the entire Buddhist world. The past and the present are made one in it. Its rays are as of the dynamic Dhamma, emanating from the personality of the Great Master Himself and thus uniting us with the perennial springs of eternal Truths. Yet with all that touch of antiquity, the flag is a modern conception, its birth being synchronous with the rebirth of the Dhamma in the modern world.

At once symbolic of the spiritual wisdom of the past and the source of untold inspiration and courage for benevolent action in the contemporary world, the flag is pregnant with values of great utility to the chaotic world of today. Its very sight is inspiration and its free flutterings in the air set our hearts to compassionate tunes and our minds into peaceful vibrations. In its presence we are awakened to our sacred obligations to humanity and to the ideals of wisdom and service.

Flag of the Dhamma, to which cruelty and war are unknown, the Buddhist flag unstained by a single drop of blood, human or animal, is indeed unique in human history. That is why it is the symbol of hope and peace.

Under this flag there can never be any aggression. It is the flag of social justice, of piety, of friendliness to gods, men and animals, of service to the needy, sick, and sorrowing, of selfless devotion to duty, of untiring efforts towards genuine happiness and peace, and above all, of the highest Glory, the Bliss of Nibbana.

Let us hope that wherever the glorious flag flutters in the high air, in Burma, Ceylon, or Thailand, in India, China, or Japan, in Europe, Africa, or America, or in the large and small islands in the Pacific, Atlantic and the Indian oceans, it shall scatter an aroma of peace, happiness and wisdom. When all the cities and towns, hamlets and cottages all over the world are blessed with such an aroma, conflicts shall cease and peace reign. That is the ideal to which this flag beckons us. With it in our hands and the universal peace message of the Buddha in our hearts, we must move over hills and dales, through forests and sheets of water, travel from land to land, from nation to nation, country, and even from life to life, till the sublime message of universal goodwill is firmly established all over the globe and peace brought to the world.

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