

SYMBOLS AND EMBLEMS OF RELIGIONS

Dr M.D. Thomas

Symbol is a sign, mark, object, etc., looked upon as representing something. It is a visible thing that resembles an invisible reality. It represents the quality of something in a pictorial language. Symbolization is making the portrait of ideas and emotions by the use of symbols.

Emblem is a symbol or device that represents something. It introduces the characteristics of an entity or group. It is a design that reflects the ideological essence and cultural affinities of a given societal unit. It highlights the social sensibilities, religious affiliations and the spiritual level of a community. It stands to uphold the inner spirit of the given concept and context it belongs to.

Symbols and Emblems are as old as human civilization. It has been the produce of the human culture right from the advent of civilization. They have originated from the diverse traditions, customs and beliefs. Differences in climate, colour, language, ideologies, interests, dress designs, eating habits, geographical surroundings, and the like, are responsible for their multifarious singularities. Their form and significance are subject to change in the course of the history. But they have always been there. They will continue to be part of the individual groups of tribes and castes, continents and nations, or religions and cultures.

The human society has evolved various symbols for expressing different aspirations and experiences of life. Heart is the symbol of love. Dove is the symbol of peace. Statue is a person in the visible form. Idol is considered to represent God. Red symbolizes danger and green announces permission. Flag stands for a nation or an ideology. Turban is the symbol of the Sikhs. Banner speaks of a group or an event. Some symbols get fixed as emblems, representing a community or a nation.

A symbol or an emblem gives a given grouping an independent identity and status. It helps one to distinguish one from the other. It gives the entity a sense of individuality and dignity. It facilitates building up one's self-esteem as a unit with a difference. It stands for the sensitivities and sensibilities of a community, may it be moral, religious, social, ethnic, national, or any other. An emblem can even awaken a dead conscience. It has the power to charge the drooping spirit.

Religious symbols and emblems are those that have evolved in a certain religious history or are appropriated to represent a religious concept or tradition. Sociological factors are often responsible for identifying certain phenomenal categories with the

respective communities as their religious symbols or emblems. Diverse religious traditions have considered certain colour as sacred for them. For example, green for Muslims, saffron for Hindus and Buddhists, white for Jains, Christians and Brahmakumaris, and the like. Similarly, almost all the religious communities have accepted certain emblem/s and symbols as characteristic of their tradition. They speak volumes of their religious perspective and devotion to life. They represent the respective tradition. They characteristically portrait the genius of the tradition, as regards their implications and applications.

A symbol or an emblem is sacred for the one who holds it, even beyond the realm of logic. The sacredness of any emblem has to be honored, without any compromise. Disregarding the symbol or the emblem can violate the human sentiments of the community, which it belongs to. Therefore, it is a moral imperative for every one to respect the sacred symbols and emblems of all religious traditions. A clear understanding of their deeper implications and significance is an inevitable foundation for developing the spirit of social bonding and promoting harmony among the diverse religious and other communities of the society.

Dr M.D. Thomas

Founder Director, Institute of Harmony and Peace Studies

Floor 1, A 128, Sector 19, Dwarka, New Delhi 110075

Tel.: 09810535378 (p), 08847925378 (p), 011-45575378 (o)

Email: mdthomas53@gmail.com (p), ihps2014@gmail.com (o)

Website: www.mdthomas.in (p), www.ihpsindia.org (o)

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/mdthomas53>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/mdthomas53>

Academia.edu: <https://independent.academia.edu/MDTHOMAS>