

# Ancient Indian symbol of the swastika

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**In news-** There has been renewed discussion in media reports on the swastika, the ancient symbol that was once used across the world.

## Origin of the swastika symbol-

- The word *swastika* comes from the Sanskrit *svastika*, which means “good fortune” or “well-being.”
- The motif (a hooked cross) appears to have first been used in Eurasia, as early as 7000 years ago, perhaps representing the movement of the sun through the sky.
- To this day, **it is a sacred symbol in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Odinism.** It is a common sight on temples or houses in India or Indonesia.
- The researchers say the Swastika dates back at least 11,000 years and have traced its spread to western and Middle-Eastern civilizations.
- In fact, one of their key findings is that a Ukrainian Swastika, believed to date back 12,000 years to the Paleolithic Age.
- **The ancient symbol has been found in Mesopotamia, the Americas, Algeria, and the Far East.**
- **In Asia, the swastika symbol first appears in the archaeological record around 3000 BCE in the Indus Valley Civilisation.**
- **It also appears in the Bronze and Iron Age cultures around the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea.**
- It has religious-philosophical connotations that differ depending on representation, based on the direction (clockwise or anticlockwise) in which the swastika is

facing.

- The swastika is commonly seen in India today as a ubiquitous symbol adorning temples, homes, vehicles, and on walls above entrances and doors and it carries a purely auspicious and welcoming meaning.
- Unlike the black hakenkreuz of the Nazis, the **swastika used by Indians is usually red or yellow in colour**, is not tilted to the right, and **has dots at each corner**, which are believed to **represent the four Vedas**.

### **Swastika symbol adoption by Hitler-**

- Despite its **association for centuries with the symbolism and practice of the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain religions**, many people in Europe and America see the swastika only as the defining symbol of the antisemitic, racist, fascist Third Reich (1933-1945) of Adolf Hitler.
- **After the defeat of Nazism and the end of World War II, the swastika was banned in Germany and subsequently in other European countries** such as France, Austria, and Lithuania.
- Neo-Nazi groups around the world, however, continued to use the symbol and flag to rally support, and to identify themselves.
- **In 1920, Hitler formally adopted the swastika hakenkreuz (hooked cross in German) rotated clockwise at 45 degrees as the symbol of his National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party).**
- Hitler wrote that he decided upon the **final iteration of the Nazi Party's flag, a black swastika encompassed by a white disc**, which was placed on a red background.
- These colours— **red, black and white** – were specifically drawn from the flag of the German Empire, which after its collapse in 1918 was succeeded by the Weimar Republic.
- For Hitler, the symbol not only harked back to an idealised imperial past, but laid out the ideology of

National Socialism and its hope for the future.

- He wrote, “The red expressed the social thought underlying the movement. White the national thought. And the swastika signified the mission allotted to us – the struggle for the victory of **Aryan mankind...**”
- In the **Nazi worldview, the German people were the direct descendants of the Aryan “master race”** and, therefore, belonged to a racial stock that was superior to all other peoples.
- For the Nazis, maintaining the racial purity of the German people was paramount, and all communities that were in their worldview inferior, were to be eliminated.
- The **Finnish Air Force started to use the symbol in 1918, well before the rise of Hitler, and it was only in 2020 that media reports said that it had “quietly dropped” the logo.**
- The **Nazi appropriation of the swastika is sometimes traced to the German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann, who in 1871 excavated more than 1,800 variations of swastika-like symbols** on pottery fragments at the site of ancient Troy in Turkey.
- Similar designs had been found on pottery in Germany, which led Schliemann to conclude that the swastika was a “significant religious symbol of our remote ancestors”.
- **From the late 19th century, scholars in Europe began to argue that the swastika was a sign of the Aryan race,** which had remained pure and resisted the influence of other races and language groups.
- The **Nazis identified the Jewish people as the foremost enemy,** whom they sought to persecute and ultimately exterminate. While antisemitism itself had existed in Europe for many centuries before the rise of the Nazis, it reached an unprecedented peak under the Third Reich.
- During the Holocaust (1941-1945), the Nazi German state murdered approximately 6 million European Jews. Another

5 million people that they deemed to be inferior or a threat were killed as well – these included the Romani people, Slavic peoples (Poles and Russians), black Germans, homosexuals, disabled Germans, communists, socialists, prisoners of war, and Jehovah's Witnesses.

- All these terrible crimes against humanity were carried out under the swastika flag.