

Indian Navy's new flag, inspired by Shivaji,

September 5, 2022

In news– The Prime Minister of India has recently unveiled the new Naval Ensign (flag) at Kochi, which bears the seal of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, who laid the foundations of a modern navy.

Changes in Indian Navy's Naval Ensign-

- The **naval ensign until now was the St George's Cross set on a white background**, with the national emblem placed at the intersection and the Indian flag in the top left quadrant.
- The **patron saint of England, St George lived in the 3rd century** and is still identified with ideals of honour and gallantry.
- The Newly unveiled new Naval Ensign (flag) at Kochi bears the seal of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.
- **The new Ensign has the national flag on the upper canton (top left corner)**, and a blue octagon encompassing the National Emblem sitting atop an anchor.
- The anchor, depicting steadfastness, has been superimposed on a shield inscribed with the Navy's motto, Sam No Varunah, in Devanagari.
- The octagonal shape represents the eight directions, symbolizing the Navy's multi-directional reach and operational capability.
- **The octagon, with a golden double border, has been inspired by the Raja Mudra(seal)** of the Maratha emperor Shivaji, which was adopted when he was only 16 years old.
- The **new Naval Ensign has replaced the one that carried the Saint George's Cross** with the Tricolour in the canton.

- That **Ensign was essentially a successor to the pre-Independence ensign** of the Indian Navy which had the red George's Cross on a white background with the Union Jack of the United Kingdom on the top left corner.
- The St George's Cross was dropped from the naval ensign earlier too.
- The **navy's ensign from 1950 to 2001 was the St George's Cross** on a white background, with the national flag in the upper canton.
- **It was changed in 2001 to an Indianised ensign** that displayed only the Indian flag and the navy crest, bringing commonality with the flags of the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force that have the national flag and the respective service crests set on red and blue backgrounds respectively.
- In 2004, following problems of recognition of Indian warships at sea – the navy returned to its pre-2001 ensign with the addition of the state emblem placed at the intersection of the cross.
- **The next change in ensign was introduced in 2014 when the words "Satyamev Jayate" were placed** under the national emblem at the centre of the St George's Cross.

Shivaji and the seas-

- Chhatrapati **Shivaji Maharaj put great emphasis on sea-faring prowess**, and laid the foundations of a modern naval force in the 17th century.
- Shivaji's empire reached the west coast after 1656-57, when his dominions touched Kalyan.
- In the same year, **he decided to establish a navy in order to protect his territory from the Siddis**, and to secure ports and merchant ships in order to ensure smooth maritime trading that brought in revenue and customs duty.
- **His vision for establishing a naval wing of his military was based in his belief in "Jalameva yasya, balameva"**

tasya", which translates as "He who rules over the seas is all powerful".

- **Between 1661 and 1663, the naval wing of the Maratha empire came into existence**, and at its peak included 400-odd ships of various kinds and sizes.
- These included both battleships and other vessels of varying shapes and purposes, such as gurab, tarande, galbat, shibad, and pal.
- **Shivaji's navy tasted its first success when he used 85 ships to attack Basuru near Kundapura in today's Karnataka**, and returned with a huge booty.
- Shivaji also ordered the construction of the **naval fort, the Vijaydurg, the twin to Sindhudurg fort**, in 1653.
- Between 1653 and 1680, Shivaji built more naval forts such as Sindhudurg and Kolaba.
- Many of the forts remained unconquered and were used by the Marathas for strategic purposes, to keep a watch on enemies approaching via the seas.
- North Konkan's Kalyan and Bhivandi, which were part of the Bijapur territory, came under Shivaji's control by 1657.
- The Maratha navy continued to be a formidable force even after Shivaji, led by admirals such as Angre.
- **The Maratha empire fought the Mughals, the Dutch, and the English at sea, and held its own against all of them.**
- The **Indian Navy** has always acknowledged this fact, and **has named a training establishment in Lonavla as INS Shivaji** and a shore based logistics and administrative hub of Western Naval Command, Mumbai, as **INS Angre after Kanhoji Angre**, the acclaimed **Maratha naval commander**.
- The **use of the octagonal design of the seal of Shivaji on the new Naval Ensign** is a formal stamp on the umbilical ties of the Indian Navy with the navy of the Maratha empire.

Kanhoji Angre(1669-1729)-

- Kanohji Angre was the **commander of Maratha navy, and is credited with laying a strong naval foundation** which ensured that the Marathas were a sea-faring power to reckon with.
- Kanhoji is credited with holding his own against the English, Portuguese and Dutch naval forces.
- He ensured that the merchants plying their trade for the Maratha empire were protected on the seas.
- He **set up a base in Colaba with more bases at Suvarndurg and Vijaydurg near Ratnagiri.**
- In the estimation of many historians, **Kanhoji was the greatest naval commander in pre-modern Indian history.**
- **Before the Marathas, the Cholas had a formidable sea-faring fleet of ships** which, though not being strictly warships, were able to lead expeditions all around the Bay of Bengal.

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