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The Man Who Drew the Flag: Pingali Venkayya at 150

2 August 2026 ·

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The Man Who Drew the Flag: Pingali Venkayya at 150

2 August 2026 · 4 min read ·

✓ Every fact web-verified against primary sources

The 150th birth anniversary of Pingali Venkayya, whose design formed the basis of the Indian National Flag, was marked on August 2, 2026, with tributes from the Prime Minister, the Home Minister and the Defence Minister.

THE MAN

PARAMETER	DETAIL
Born	2 August 1876 , near Machilipatnam , in present-day Andhra Pradesh
Popularly known as	“Jhanda Venkayya”
Occupations	Gandhian, linguist, geologist, agricultural researcher
Presented flag design to Gandhi	1 April 1921 , at Vijayawada
Design adopted by the Indian National Congress	1931
150th birth anniversary	2 August 2026

Venkayya was not solely a flag designer, and reducing him to that role understates him considerably. He was a serious scholar of languages, including Japanese, which earned him another nickname, and he conducted geological and agricultural research, working notably on cotton cultivation. The flag was the work of a polymath who had spent years studying flags of the world before producing his own design.

FROM VENKAYYA’S DESIGN TO THE TIRANGA

The Indian National Flag did not arrive fully formed. Tracing the sequence is a favourite examination target because each stage involved a specific change and a specific reason.

STAGE	YEAR	DEVELOPMENT
Venkayya presents his design to Gandhi at Vijayawada	1921	Two bands, red and green, representing the two major communities
Gandhi's suggestion	1921	Add a white band to represent the remaining communities of India, and a charkha across all three to represent self-reliance and the dignity of labour
Adopted by the Indian National Congress	1931	The tricolour with saffron, white and green, with the charkha in the centre, formally adopted as the Congress flag
Adopted as the National Flag	22 July 1947	The Constituent Assembly adopted the Tiranga, replacing the charkha with the Ashoka Chakra , the 24-spoked wheel from the Lion Capital at Sarnath

The substitution of the Ashoka Chakra for the charkha in 1947 is the change most worth understanding: the charkha was a symbol associated with a particular political movement and its economic programme, while the Ashoka Chakra, the wheel of dharma, offered a symbol of law, righteousness and motion that predated and outlasted any single movement, appropriate for a sovereign state rather than a national movement.

THE FLAG'S LEGAL ARCHITECTURE

INSTRUMENT	CONTENT
Flag Code of India, 2002	Consolidated the instructions and conventions governing display of the flag; amended in 2021 and 2022 to permit machine-made and polyester flags and to allow display day and night
Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971	Criminalises insult to the National Flag, the Constitution and the National Anthem
Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950	Restricts commercial and improper use of national symbols
Article 51A(a)	Makes it a Fundamental Duty of every citizen to respect the National Flag and the National Anthem

THE NAVEEN JINDAL CASE

In **Union of India v. Naveen Jindal (2004)**, the Supreme Court held that the right to fly the National Flag freely with respect and dignity is a **fundamental right under Article 19(1)(a)**, as an expression of allegiance and feeling toward the nation. The judgment converted flag display from a privilege regulated by

executive instruction into a constitutionally protected form of expression, subject to reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2) and to the discipline of the Flag Code.

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 1: The Indian national movement; the role of symbols and mass mobilisation; personalities associated with the freedom struggle.

Prelims pointers:

- **Pingali Venkayya:** born **2 August 1876** near **Machilipatnam**; presented his flag design to Gandhi at **Vijayawada on 1 April 1921**.
- The Indian National Congress adopted the tricolour with the charkha in **1931**.
- The **Constituent Assembly adopted the National Flag on 22 July 1947**, replacing the charkha with the **Ashoka Chakra**, the 24-spoked wheel from the **Lion Capital at Sarnath**.
- **Flag Code of India, 2002**, amended **2021 and 2022**.
- **Union of India v. Naveen Jindal (2004):** flying the flag is a fundamental right under **Article 19(1)(a)**.
- **Article 51A(a):** Fundamental Duty to respect the National Flag and National Anthem.

★ FACTS CORNER, KNOWLEDGE PEDIA

PINGALI VENKAYYA:

Born 2 August 1876 near Machilipatnam, Andhra Pradesh; 150th anniversary 2 August 2026.

Known as “Jhanda Venkayya”; also a linguist, geologist and agricultural researcher.

Presented his design to Gandhi at Vijayawada, 1 April 1921.

FLAG EVOLUTION:

1921: red and green bands; Gandhi suggested adding white and the charkha.

1931: adopted by the Indian National Congress.

22 July 1947: adopted by the Constituent Assembly, with the Ashoka Chakra replacing the charkha.

LEGAL FRAME:

Flag Code of India, 2002 (amended 2021, 2022).

Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.

Article 51A(a): Fundamental Duty to respect the National Flag.

Union of India v. Naveen Jindal (2004): flying the flag is a fundamental right under Article 19(1)(a).

Sources: Ministry of Culture, Press Information Bureau, Supreme Court of India

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