

REVIEW ARTICLE

Red Cross Emblem Its Use and Misuse**Venkatesh Maled^{1*} and Shailesh Male²**

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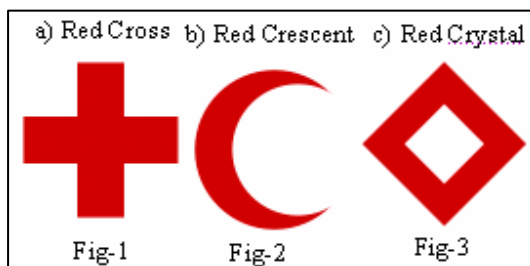
Abstract: Geneva Convention in 1964 initiated the Red Cross movement to help the wounded soldiers. The Red Cross emblem was used during war to rescue workers/soldiers. After that incident soon it became popular and doctors, health workers, paramedical people, chemists etc started using it unofficially. This emblem was derived from color reversal of Swiss national flag to honor the country in which the Red Cross society was originated. Unauthorized use of Red Cross emblem is punishable offence in India U/S 12 r/w 13 under chapter IV of Geneva Convention Law. Since long time doctors are identified by Red Cross emblem hence one can evolve an acceptable emblem and get it registered for doctor's use.

Key Words: Red Cross emblem, Emblems, Use & Misuse.

Introduction:

As we all know Red Cross is a doctors/clinic/hospital symbol for a common man/public. Till today even though efforts have been made by so many health organizations through papers, journals and awareness programmes, this misconception was deep seated in the public. If we have a look at these awareness programmes there is lot of material on internet and various medical journals regarding the origin, use and misuse of this Red Cross emblem. Let us have a brief look at this. According to the suggestions of Swiss businessmen Sir Henry Dunant in Geneva Convention of 1863-64 International Red Cross movement was established and Red Cross emblem was approved which was derived from color reversal of Swiss National Flag [1].

In 1914 during First World War there was no organization for relief service in India. Indian Red Cross society Bill was introduced on 3rd march 1920 by Sir Claude Hill in Indian Legislative Council and was passed on 17th march 1920.

International Red Cross Emblems: 1) Recognized Emblems:

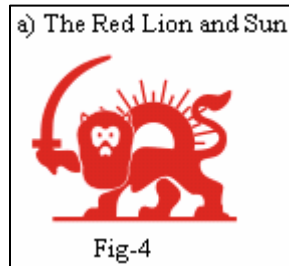
The Red Cross emblem was approved in 1863-64; the emblem was endorsed by the 16 signatories of the Geneva Convention. The Red Cross flag should not be confused with the national flag of England, Barcelona etc. In order to avoid this confusion the Red Cross symbol is also called "Greek Red Cross".

The Red Cross was originally intended to be reverse image of the flag of Switzerland. The Red Cross is most popular emblem among medical, paramedical faculty and all sections of public till date. This is the cause for its rampant misuse [2] (Fig-1).

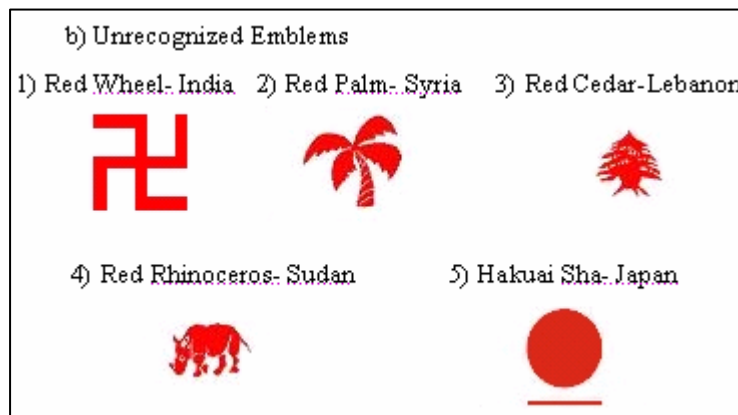
The Red Crescent emblem was first used by International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) volunteers during the war between Russia and Turkey in 1877-78. The symbol was officially adopted in 1929. Most of the Muslim nations objected to this, because it reminded Muslims of their crusaders, and as a result an additional emblem was provided. Though the crescent is traditionally associated with Islam, the Red Crescent is a color reversal of the Ottoman flag, which was later adopted into the modern Turkey flag. The Turkey flag has white colored crescent at an end and star at the centre over a red background but Red Crescent is reversal of color combination with crescent moved to centre and devoid of star over white background² (Fig-2).

The new emblem Red Crystal (Fig-3) was designed in Geneva Convention 2005 for easy recognition and to make it more universally acceptable through different cultures, devoid of religious factors keeping in mind the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which are often associated with Christianity and Islam respectively. The societies are permitted to use Red Crystal only at the side of a regular Red Cross and Red Crescent emblems [2].

2) *Recognized Emblems not in use:*



The Red Lion and Sun Society (Fig-4) was established by Iran in 1922 and recognized by Red Cross Society in 1923. The new Islamic Republic of Iran has replaced this Red Lion and Sun with the Red Crescent to be consistent with most other Muslim nations in 1980 [2].



Many nations of the world have described various emblems for recognition but they were rejected by Red Cross Society, some of them are as follows [3].

Discussion

As per Geneva Convention only four recognized emblems are to be used to denote the following:

- 1) Military Chaplains
- 2) For the care of injured and sick armed forces members
- 3) Armed force medical personnel and equipments
- 4) International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement organizations

The misuse of Red Cross emblem was reported sporadically all over the world. Unfortunately, the misuse is widespread by all sections of medical fraternity from doctors to paramedical persons especially in India. The misuse is rampant among all kinds of doctors from pseudo doctors to super specialists. It is often used as a general symbol to indicate first aid, medical supplies and civilian medical services. The symbol is indiscriminately used over hospitals, buildings and vehicles. Misuse appears in movies, television and in software games also [2].

The emblem of the Red Cross on a white background and the words “Red cross” or “Red Crescent” may not be employed, either in time of peace or in time of war, except to indicate or to protect the medical units and establishments. The National Red Cross Societies and other societies designated in article 26 shall have the right to use the distinctive emblem conferring the protection of the Convention within the framework of the present paragraph. National Red Cross Society may in time of peace, in accordance with their rational legislation, make use of the name and emblem of the Red Cross for their other activities which are in conformity with the principles laid down by the International Red Cross Conferences. When those activities are carried out in time of war, the conditions for the use of emblem shall be such that it cannot be considered as conferring the protection of the convention [2].

Misuse of the Red Cross emblem is punishable offence U/S 12 r/w13 of chapter IV of Geneva Convention Law. Punishment may be forfeiture of the property on which it is displayed/ Rs. 500/- fine [4]. The misuse of this emblem is very deep seated in public, medical and paramedical persons. The Red Cross society should periodically take action against the misuse of it and highlight about who can use it in media. Now it is very important to educate doctors, paramedical persons and chemists about the importance of the emblem and not to misuse. Only education will not help to stop the misuse it require stringent law and increased punishment. This much is not sufficient to stop the misuse, we have to evolve an acceptable emblem for doctors, in this matter the Indian Medical Council and Indian Medical Association have to take action in this regard to evolve an acceptable emblem and popularize it [5].

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