

The history of the development of Coat of Arms of The State of Udaipur, Mewar

HERALDS, INSIGNIAS, COATS OF ARMS

The East India Company

In the glory days of colonization around the beginning of the 19th century, the British vied with other European powers - Portuguese, Dutch, French, Spanish and the Belgian for dominance in the provinces in India. The European powers fought each other and many alliances were born. Provincial Hindu Maharajas and Muslim Nawabs, in trying to break free from the Mughal Empire, forged alliances with any European power willing to help. Diplomacy, intrigue and treachery was the order of the day. The British, having gained naval supremacy during this period and with astute court craft, emerged the winners in India. And so it came to be that the (British) *East India Company* almost became the masters of the Indian subcontinent. Then, in 1857 AD there was a serious uprising. With some difficulty the British managed to control the volatile situation. The British government blamed the East India Company for this sedition, and assumed direct jurisdiction over the Indian subcontinent.

In 1877, Queen Victoria proclaimed herself the Empress of India.

Queen Victoria, Empress of India

Great Britain during Victoria's reign was not just a powerful island nation. It was the centre of a global empire that fostered British contact with a wide variety of other cultures, though the exchange was usually an uneven one. By the end of the nineteenth century, nearly one-quarter of the earth's land surface was part of the British Empire as highlighted in pink on maps of the world, as more than 400 million people were governed from Great Britain, however nominally. India had started the century under the control of the East India Company, but was directly ruled by the British Crown after the 1857 Indian Mutiny - claimed by the British as a rebellion by the native soldiers and perceived by India as the first war of India's independence.



Her Majesty Queen Victoria
Empress of India (Kaisari-I-Hind)

A new Status for the Indian Princes

The status of the Indian Princes was further enhanced by a new constitutional relationship between Britain and India. The royal proclamation of 1858 announced the decision of the British Parliament that all rights previously enjoyed by the East India Company in India

were being resumed by the British Crown. Victoria thereby became Empress of India as well as Queen of the British Isles and Ireland, and India's Governor-General became her Viceroy as well as the British government's chief executive in India.

And so India had a new sovereign; and just as in Britain the monarch's position was buttressed by a hierarchy of hereditary nobles and by the awards of honours, so in India similar structures were created. The Star of India, a royal order of Indian knights, was introduced in 1861, and the first tour by a member of the British royal family took place in 1869. Meanwhile, India's aristocracy consisting of Maharajas, Rajas, Nawabs and so on was being further stratified and grouped to conform to British ideas of hierarchy. The grading of gun salutes and other minutiae of protocol provided a ready reckoner of status, status itself being assessed on the basis of historical and territorial credentials, good governance, charitable activities and, of course, demonstrations of loyalty.

Only when this structuring was complete was the keystone installed. In 1876, on the advice of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, Queen Victoria announced to the British Parliament that she was satisfied that her Indian subjects were *'happy under My rule and loyal to My throne'*, and so she deemed the moment appropriate for her to assume a new 'Royal Style and titles'. The style, it was later revealed, was to be imperial and the titles, in English, 'Empress of India' and, for the benefit of her Indian subjects, 'Kaiser-I-Hind'. When Victoria died and her son Edward VII ascended the throne, his title became Emperor of India. The title continued until India became independent from the United Kingdom on the August 15, 1947.

The Imperial Assemblage

In the autumn of 1876, in order to celebrate this new 'Royal Style and Title' and to impose Victoria's stature and dominance in the Indian sub-continent, preparations were commenced for the "Imperial Assemblage," which was announced by the Viceroy and would be held at Delhi on the first day of January in 1877, for the sole purpose of proclaiming to the Queen's subjects throughout India the assumption by Her Majesty of the title of "Empress of India." To this assemblage Lord Lytton further announced that he proposed *"to invite the governors, lieutenant-governors, and heads of administration from all parts of the Queen's Indian dominions, as well as the Princes, Chiefs, and Nobles in whose persons the antiquity of the past is associated with the prosperity of the present, and who so*



His Excellency Lord Lytton
Viceroy and Governor-General of India,
Grand Master of The Star of India

worthily contribute to the splendour and stability of this great empire."

In a vast tented city around the Ridge, outside Delhi, the new imperium was solemnised at this Imperial Assemblage. The official attendance of eighty four thousand included nearly all of India's 'sixty three ruling princes' and 'three hundred titular chiefs and native gentlemen'. Lord Lytton was the presiding Viceroy whose arrangements would provide a blueprint for all future imperial durbars. The objective of the Imperial Assemblage was therefore to bind princes and people together in common loyalty to their Sovereign.

Princes, Chiefs and Nobles!

It is with feelings of unusual pride that I find you here assembled from all parts of India to take part in a ceremonial which, I trust, will be the means of drawing still closer the bonds of union between the Government of Her Majesty and the Great Allies and Feudatories of the Empire...
(Lord Lytton)

Royal Insignias and Coat of Arms for the Indian Princes

In order to further sanctify the affiliation imposed upon the acquiescing Indian Princes by the dominant Imperial government, royal insignias and personal Coats of Arms were



Sword Presented by Lord Lytton to Maharana Sajjan Singh
at the Imperial Assemblage on the 1st day of January in 1877
(Made by Henry Wilkinson Pallmall, London)



His Highness The Maharana Sajjan Singh
of Udaipur

specially commissioned under the authority of the British Crown. For this, the Indian Princes were guided to the College of Arms based in London. The carrying of personal armorial insignia on shields and banners was prominent in India since feudal times, as a warrior in battle had to be recognized at a distance. These insignia were most commonly sported on banners and sundry battle accoutrements. In the West, during the Crusades a knight in battle would have had his face covered with the visor from his helmet and as such, had to be recognized from afar. Their particular marks and colours were worn outside their coat of chain mail on their surcoat and hence the expression "Coat of Arms."

Coats of Arms were, for the most part, freely adopted by individuals at some point in the middle ages or later. More often than not, an anecdote, true or legendary, is attached to the origin of a coat of arms. Also, for the most prestigious and important coat of arms, such as those of kingdoms, legends built up over their origins, and symbolic meaning was attached to them as well. It is true that some charges have some symbolic meaning attached to them, though the meaning is by no means universal nor is it unambiguous. Medieval men were fond of legends attributing peculiar behaviour to animals, and relating those examples of behaviour to human virtues or vices: thus, the animals became emblems of such virtue or vice. The eagle's presumed ability to stare at the sun without becoming blind became a source of metaphors. The pelican was supposed to open its breast with its beak to feed its young in times of distress, and the bird thus became a symbol of generosity or parental devotion and also of the Redemption, which is why it is often shown above the cross in 14th century depictions of the Crucifixion.

In 1877, Robert Taylor of the Bengal Civil Service designed the Coats of Arms for the Delhi Durbar. The duty of preparing or revising the armorial bearings for the Indian Princes was determined by Lord Mayo prior to the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh 1869-70. There was an understanding that there should be a procession of the 'native knights' and that on the banners should be depicted what might be taken for their arms. In 1875 preparations were being made for the grand ceremonial under the presidency of the Prince of Wales and it was natural for a large number of Princes to appear. As banners and insignias were repeatedly called for, Robert Taylor set about to collect information at his leisure and so was able to put together the most indigenously relevant information on each ruling principality in the Indian sub-continent. For example, a famous proverb or favourite saying of the reigning prince was often used as a motto.

Insignias for the principality of Meywar commissioned by the British Crown

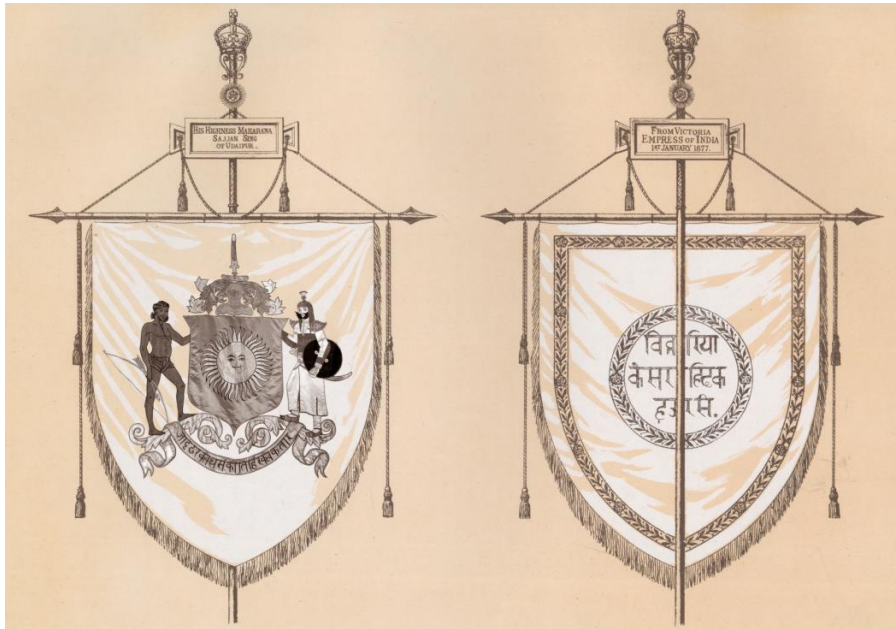
In his preface to The Princely Armory (1877) Robert Taylor B.C.S. makes a number of interesting and noteworthy comments - *"Some of the sketches sent to my offices (from the native princes) were curious enough. From Meywar I received an elaborately finished and coloured drawing; the shield was heart-shaped, deeply cleft, having in base a view of Cheetore (the ancient capital) and the hill-country of Meywar, and above it the straight sword worshipped at the Dusshera, which was given by a goddess to the family from whom a Rana conquered Cheetore; and flanking it the hero Rana Pertap wearing the sword Bheeramata given by another goddess ... and Eklinga Mahadeo, the divine patron of the house.*

In another manuscript commentary he says *"The symbol of the dynasty of Meywar a sun in strength is blazoned on nearly everything the Rana possesses; it is conspicuous over the great gate of the palace & in the great hall of audience, & for a thousand years a sun in a crimson field has marked the place of the Rana in war & in peace, too often when all was lost to save honour. This accordingly stands as the sole bearing of the Maharana and has been added as a mark of distinction to the arms of all the chiefs save one who traced descent to Meywar. The sword of the crest may be taken to commemorate any one of the famous four; the supporters commemorate the Oguna Bhil, and one of the nobles who fell fighting against Allahooden ... the motto of the family Jo drirha rakhe dharma koun tihin rakhe katar loosely translates as God will defend him who steadfastly defends his faith."*

In the Princely Armory (1877) the Mewar design is number 65 and blazoned-

Arms : Gules (a red colour, especially heraldry red) a Sun in Splendour
Crest : A Sword Erect
Supporteres : Bhil and Rajpoot Warrior attired for forlorn hope proper
Motto : Jo drirha rakhe dharma koun tihin rakhe katar
Livery Colour : Gules (a red colour, especially heraldry red) and Or

Incomparably the first among the Hindu Princes of India stand the Rana of Oodeypore head of the most ancient and most illustrious house of Meywara by "Hindus unanimously acknowledged to be legitimate heir to the throne of Rama and styled by them Hindua Sooraj Sun of the Hindus. Even adoptions, the blot on Indian genealogies in the eyes of an English herald were little known in this family till within the last half century, and the present Rana is descended in the male line from Bappa Rawal who founded the family in the eighth century... and the family claims to be descended from Loh, the eldest son of Rama..." (The Princely Armory, 1877)



Pattern of banner presented by The Empress of India to H E The Viceroy, The Governors, Lieut Governors & Ruling Chiefs of India

Coat of Arms for the State of Udaipur, Mewar

The Mewar Coat of Arms was custom-made during the reign of Maharana Shambhu Singhji who presided over the State of Mewar from 1861 to 1874 AD. Shambhu Singh inherited the gaddi throne, as a minor. Fortunately for him, the administration of the State was expertly managed with the advice and assistance of a British envoy, Political Agent Lt-Col Eden. At his instigation many reforms were introduced. Important roads were laid, much needed repairs were made to public utilities and the civil and criminal courts were improved. When the British Government handed over the reigns to Shambhu Singh at age eighteen, the treasury coffers showed a very heavy credit balance. The new Maharana continued the reforms and added considerably to them.

In the early part of his reign, Shambhu Singh put together the blueprint of what would go on to become a durable representation of Mewar its symbolic Coat of Arms. The spirit of this composition and its Crest denotes the upholding and protecting of freedom and the Fort is a symbol of independent existence.

In the Coat of Arms are represented:

1. Sword
2. Shiv-ling
3. Sun on the Shield
4. A Rajput warrior and a Bhil on either side of the Shield
5. Motto of the State underneath the Shield

Sword: The Sword is an emblem of power with which the Maharanas of Mewar single-handedly used in their abiding aspirations to keep India free from foreign dominance. The Sword was the main fighting weapon of the times. It is symbolic of power, knowledge and justice. The horse and ox represent loyalty and devotion. The dagger (Katar) is the emblem of independence and Red is the colour of royalty.

Shiv-ling: The Maharanas of Mewar are 'Shaivite' worshippers of Lord Shiv in his avatar of Shri Eklingji. They call themselves the Diwans of Shri Eklingji in whose name they lead as custodians over the State of Mewar. Shri Eklingji is the presiding deity of the House of Mewar.

Sun: Depicted in the Mewar coat of arms, the Sun at the top is representative of the lineage of the royal family of Mewar. The origin of the family traces its roots back to Lord Rama and the Sun God. This is why the royal insignia has a blazing sun in its crest. The intense patriotism of the Maharanas, their unflinching self-sacrifice and chivalrous character and high ideals has earned them the title of Hindua Suraj the Son of the Hindus.

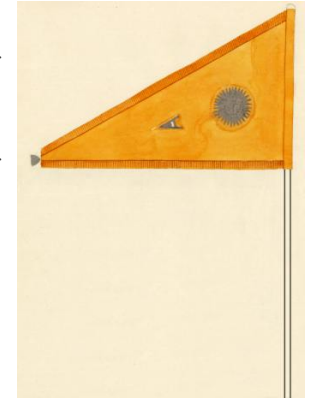
Warriors flanking the Shield: The picture, on the shield is the Fort of Chittor, the former capital of the state of Mewar, a symbol of independent existence. The two figures on either side holding the shield are that of a Bhil (Hill Tribesman) and a Rajput Warrior. Many soldiers in the Mewar army were from these two clans and hence pride of place is accorded to these enduring symbols of Mewar one with a Sword and Shield and the other sporting a bow and arrow in their hands. Strategically placed they indicate their unflinching support to the House of Mewar from times immemorial and particularly since the days of 'Guhil' who founded the State of Mewar in 568 AD. His descendants have ruled over the area ever since. Both the Rajput warrior and the Bhil have shaped the future and destiny of Mewar and have played an important role in carving the State of Mewar.

Motto: --Jo drirha rakhe dharma koun tihin rakhe katar-- The Almighty protects those who stand Steadfast in upholding righteousness.

During the early communications between the College of Arms in London and the Mewar court, artworks intended for the royal insignias were travelling up and down between the two. Some drawings were commissioned and put in production whilst others were side-lined. Mewar presented to the College of Arms, its most meaningful mythological and historical symbols which would fashion the suitable emblem. Because of this significant detailing, it came to be that the design for the banner is replete with



symbolism. A red shield is bracketed by a horse the pride of Mewar representing courage and valour and on the other side is the sacred cow a symbol of purity and abundance. These gloriously bedecked animals look into the top of the shield where rests the sun under a canopy of crimson and gold. Two smaller banners on either side of the sun in a sky blue and the other in crimson, again, have a sun and a dagger emblazoned on it. The base of the shield is skirted by a ribbon in royal blue upon which is etched the motto of the House of Mewar. It is the central metaphors the drawings within the shield that carry the most important symbolism. At the base is a relief sketch of the fort of Chittor. This finely contoured drawing articulates the promontory upon which this mighty fort stands. To the right is the Kirti Stambh (the seven story Tower of Victory) the triumph of Rana Kumbha. Above this illustration are two imposing figures flanking a potent sword which like the great Excalibur to King Arthur, is the enduring Rajput symbol of freedom and strength. The Rajput warrior's sword was almost an extension of his arm and so, it is given

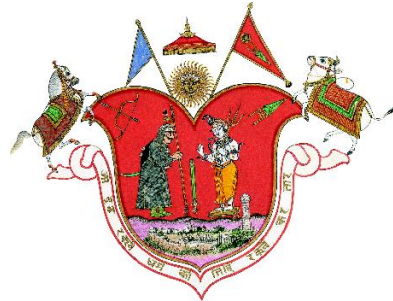


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pride of place as the central image in the banner drawing. To the left stands the iconic figure of the Rajput a sort of everyman figure representing the average Rajput male warrior of that time. He is clothed in full battle regalia and sporting a lethal spear. Opposite him stands Lord Shiva embellished in all his accoutrements with his left arm extended in a blessing over the fort of Chittor. Shiva, in his manifestation as Shri Eklingji is worshipped as the personal deity of the ruling family of Mewar.

This drawing is rich with meaning. Each representation carries with it a wealth of history and mythology. Every colour is chosen with care and deep consideration. The animals in motion, the beaming sun atop the shield, the smaller banners flapping in the wind; each image is a diagram of the story of Mewar. There is, however, one small error. This error often goes unnoticed but the meticulous eye of Mewar captured it even as it went past the sensitivity of Robert Taylor and his design team. The hand of Lord Shiva blessing the Rajput is unnaturally twisted. Though this minuscule error was noted, the Maharana of Mewar decided to overlook this minute detailing and present the logo to the College of Arms for final sanctioning. And so it came to be that the logo was commissioned and became prelude to the symbol of Mewar.

The original drawing sent from Udaipur to the College of Arms is now being used as the logo for the in-house Son et Lumiere Show. The Mewar Sound and Light show is an integral part of the philanthropic and corporate activities of the House of Mewar and thus entitled *The Legacy of Honour*. The *Coat of Arms* used as the logo for this unique presentation, was the very first emblem sent from the House of Mewar to be registered with the College of Arms. It is therefore the oldest recorded insignia from Mewar and thus more appropriate tribute as the show is a passage through the glorious history of Mewar, an unbroken lineage of fifteen centuries. The state flag of Mewar was specially commissioned on the occasion of the Imperial Assemblage, 'The Princely Armoury' held at Delhi on 1st January 1877 when there was a majestic display of the Coat of Arms of the Ruling chiefs of India. The Crest, Insignias and Motto somewhat altered have all stood the test of time from their initial conceptualisation. The drawings and historic data were provided by the 'Meywar' court and the final product was put together under close supervision by Robert Taylor and his offices.



The original drawing of Mewar Coat of Arms sent from Udaipur to the College of Arms, London

Overall, the theme of this coat of arms stands for the principle of upholding and protecting freedom. The dictum, underneath the crest, is the abiding motto of the House of Mewar:

--Jo drirha rakhe dharma koun tibin rakhe katar--

The Almighty protects those who stand Steadfast in upholding righteousness.

The House of Mewar is the longest serving legacy in the world. In India, usually, history segues into mythology. In the case of the House of Mewar, authenticated records prove that 734 AD was the year of institutionalisation of this legacy. The House of Mewar is characterised by an inviolate adherence to its motto "*The Almighty protects those who stand Steadfast in upholding righteousness.*"

Unfortunately, the English word righteousness cannot capture the depth of meaning associated with the word 'dharma'. 'Manava Dharma' has defined conduct of all the Maharanas of Mewar. It is based on the ethics of self-respect and respect for others.

Dharma implies concepts of justice, virtue, morality, righteousness, law and duty. Dharma, literally 'the way' means good ethical practices, and it is up to each individual to fulfil their destiny to the best of their ability and situation in life. The correct working out of one's dharma, above all other obligations, is the primary dogma of great teaching texts such as the *Bhagvad Gita*.

The inheritors of this legacy were born as custodians of the perennial human values: Respect for mankind, respect for independence, and service to the community. Each Maharana fought the trials of circumstance, sometimes at the cost of death. Irrespective of the antics of the times, the inheritors ensured that Mewar remained the only legacy in India never to fail its motto. The son-et-lumiere is a faithful recreation and historically authenticated story-telling of these perennial human values. And the reason why it is performed at The Manek Chowk, Mardana Mahal inside the The City Palace Complex, Udaipur is because the son-et-lumiere is a part of the attempt to preserve the 'living heritage' of the House of Mewar. Twenty four Maharanas have built on and added to the palace they inherited from Udai Singh II in the 16th century to the present day custodian Shriji Arvind Singh Mewar. It is only appropriate that the story of the world's longest and most faithful custodianship be represented by a logo that incorporates the Coat of Arms of the House of Mewar.

The bespoke Coat of Arms commissioned especially for the House of Mewar was officially registered at The College of Arms in London in 1877. Its detailed composition exemplifies the four abiding values of the House of Mewar: self-respect, self-reliance, service to the community and respect for all mankind. The declaration beneath the crest is the enduring motto of Mewar.

This emblematic Coat of Arms is exclusive only to the House of Mewar. Its usage is authorized and no individual is permitted to use its sign or symbol.

The story begins its life within the Coat of Arms, and the Coat of Arms comes alive within the story.



The State Crest of the Maharanas of Mewar

Present Mewar Coat of Arms