

Symbolical Significance of the Elephant in Post Independent Political Context of Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

In the post independent Sri Lanka, the symbol of the 'elephant' more accurately the 'Tusker', has been directly associated with Sri Lankan political party system. Scientifically known as *Elephas maximus maximus*, Sri Lankan elephant had stood as a symbol of power and sovereignty for millenniums. In the post independent era, the elephant was chosen as the political party symbol of "United National Party" (UNP). Against the onset of Soulbury Commission reforms which proposed a parliamentary system based on political parties, UNP was initiated in 1946, with its name and principles defined in the inaugural meeting. Yet a symbol to represent the party was not chosen as it was not concerned mandatory by the prevailing election law. Emergence of the symbol of elephant as the UNP party symbol occurs in 1956, with the recognition in the law of a political party system. Since then the symbol of the elephant was used widely in UNP propagandas, gradually becoming a synonym for UNP in Sri Lankan culture. Thus this research aims to identify the historical development of the elephant as the UNP party symbol and the psychological factors that contributed to the selection of the elephant as the party symbol.

Keywords: *Elephant, Political Party Symbol, United National Party, Historical development, symbolical significance*

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