

2 National Symbols

NATIONAL FLAG

THE National flag is a horizontal tricolour of deep saffron (*kesaria*) at the top, white in the middle and dark green at the bottom in equal proportion. The ratio of width of the flag to its length is two to three. In the centre of the white band is a navy-blue wheel which represents the *chakra*. Its design is that of the wheel which appears on the abacus of the Sarnath Lion Capital of Ashoka. Its diameter approximates to the width of the white band and it has 24 spokes. The design of the National Flag was adopted by the Constituent Assembly of India on 22 July 1947.

Apart from non-statutory instructions issued by the Government from time to time, display of the National Flag is governed by the provisions of the Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950 (No. 12 of 1950) and the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 (No. 69 of 1971). The Flag Code of India, 2002 is an attempt to bring together all such laws, conventions, practices and instructions for the guidance and benefit of all concerned.

The Flag Code of India, 2002, has taken effect from 26 January 2002 and supercedes the 'Flag Code—Indias' as it existed. As per the provisions of the Flag Code of India, 2002, there shall be no restriction on the display of the National Flag by members of general public, private organisations, educational institutions, etc., except to the extent provided in the Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950 and the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971 and any other law enacted on the subject.

STATE EMBLEM

The state emblem is an adaptation from the Sarnath Lion Capital of Ashoka. In the original, there are four lions, standing back to back, mounted on an abacus with a frieze carrying sculptures in high relief of an elephant, a galloping horse, a bull and a lion separated by intervening wheels over a bell-shaped lotus. Carved out of a single block of polished sandstone, the Capital is crowned by the Wheel of the Law (*Dharma Chakra*).

In the state emblem, adopted by the Government of India on 26 January 1950, only three lions are visible, the fourth being hidden from view. The wheel appears in relief in the centre of the abacus with a bull on right and a horse on left and the outlines of other wheels on extreme right and left. The bell-shaped lotus has been omitted. The words *Satyameva Jayate* from *Mundaka Upanishad*, meaning 'Truth Alone Triumphs', are inscribed below the abacus in *Devanagari* script.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

The song *Jana-gana-mana*, composed originally in Bengali by Rabindranath Tagore, was adopted in its Hindi version by the Constituent Assembly as the National Anthem of India on 24 January 1950. It was first sung on 27 December 1911 at the Kolkata Session of the Indian National Congress. The complete song consists of five stanzas. The first stanza contains the full version of the National Anthem :

*Jana-gana-mana-adhinayaka, jaya he
 Bharata-bhagya-vidhata.
 Punjab-Sindh-Gujarat-Maratha
 Dravida-Utkala-Banga
 Vindhya-Himachala-Yamuna-Ganga
 Uchchala-Jaladhi-taranga.
 Tava shubha name jage,
 Tava shubha asisa mange,
 Gahe tava jaya gatha,
 Jana-gana-mangala-dayaka jaya he
 Bharata-bhagya-vidhata.
 Jaya he, jaya he, jaya he,
 Jaya jaya jaya, jaya he!*

Playing time of the full version of the national anthem is approximately 52 seconds. A short version consisting of the first and last lines of the stanza (playing time approximately 20 seconds) is also played on certain occasions. The following is Tagore's English rendering of the anthem :

Thou art the ruler of the minds of all people,
 Dispenser of India's destiny.
 Thy name rouses the hearts of Punjab, Sind,
 Gujarat and Maratha,
 Of the Dravida and Orissa and Bengal;
 It echoes in the hills of the Vindhyas and Himalayas,
 mingles in the music of Jamuna and Ganges and is
 chanted by the waves of the Indian Sea.
 They pray for thy blessings and sing thy praise.
 The saving of all people waits in thy hand,
 Thou dispenser of India's destiny.
 Victory, victory, victory to thee.

NATIONAL SONG

The song *Vande Mataram*, composed in sanskrit by Bankimchandra Chatterji, was a source of inspiration to the people in their struggle for freedom. It has an equal status with *Jana-gana-mana*. The first political occasion when it was sung was the 1896 session of the Indian National Congress. The following is the text of its first stanza :

Vande Mataram!

*Sujalam, suphalam, malayaja shitalam,
 Shasyashyamalam, Mataram!
 Shubhrajyotsna pulakitayaminim,
 Phullakusumita drumadala shobhinim,
 Suhasinim sumadhura bhashininim,
 Sukhadam varadam, Mataram!*

1 As published in Volume Eight of Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, Popular Edition 1972

The English translation of the stanza rendered by Sri Aurobindo in prose¹ is :

I bow to thee, Mother,
richly-watered, richly-fruited,
cool with the winds of the south,
dark with the crops of the harvests,
The Mother!
Her nights rejoicing in the glory of the moonlight,
her lands clothed beautifully with her trees in flowering bloom,
sweet of laughter, sweet of speech,
The Mother, giver of boons, giver of bliss.

NATIONAL CALENDAR

The national calendar based on the *Saka Era*, with *Chaitra* as its first month and a normal year of 365 days was adopted from 22 March 1957 along with the Gregorian calendar for the following official purposes: (i) Gazette of India, (ii) news broadcast by All India Radio, (iii) calendars issued by the Government of India and (iv) Government communications addressed to the members of the public.

Dates of the national calendar have a permanent correspondence with dates of the Gregorian calendar, 1 *Chaitra* falling on 22 March normally and on 21 March in leap year.

NATIONAL ANIMAL

The magnificent tiger, *Panthera tigris*, a striped animal is the national animal of India, it has a thick yellow coat of fur with dark stripes. The combination of grace, strength, ability and enormous power has earned the tiger its pride of place as the national animal of India. Out of eight races of the species known, the Indian race, the Royal Bengal Tiger, is found throughout the country except in the north-western region and also in the neighbouring countries, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh.

NATIONAL BIRD

The Indian peacock, *Pavo cristatus*, the national bird of India, is a colourful, swan-sized bird, with a fan-shaped crest of feathers, a white patch under the eye and a long, slender neck. The male of the species is more colourful than the female, with a glistening blue breast and neck and a spectacular bronze-green trail of around 200 elongated feathers. The female is brownish, slightly smaller than the male and lacks the trail. The elaborate courtship dance of the male, fanning out the tail and preening its feathers is a gorgeous sight.

NATIONAL FLOWER

Lotus (*Nelumbo Nucifera Gaertn*) is the National Flower of India. It is a sacred flower and occupies a unique position in the art and mythology of ancient India and has been an auspicious symbol of Indian culture since time immemorial.

NATIONAL TREE

The Banyan Tree (*Ficus benghalensis*) is the National Tree of India. This huge tree towers over its neighbours and has the widest reaching roots of all known trees, easily covering several acres. It sends off new shoots from its roots, so that one tree is really a tangle of branches, roots, and trunks.

NATIONAL FRUIT

Mango (*Manigifera indica*) is the National fruit of India. Mango is one of the most widely grown fruits of the tropical countries. In India, mango is cultivated almost in all parts, with the exception of hilly areas. Mango is a rich source of Vitamins A, C and D. In India, we have hundreds of varieties of mangoes. They are of different sizes, shapes and colours. Mangoes have been cultivated in India since time immemorial.