

2. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE (INDIA)

2.9 NATIONAL SYMBOLS (I)

National Animal of India - The Tiger

The tiger is the symbol of India's wealth of wildlife. The magnificent tiger, *Panthera tigris* (Linnaeus), is a striped animal. It has a thick yellow coat of fur with dark stripes. The combination of grace, strength, agility 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 Anthem of India - Jana-gana-mana..

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 Calcutta Session of the Indian National Congress. The complete song consists of five stanzas. Playing time of the full version of the national anthem is approximately 52 seconds.

National Bird of India - The Peacock

The Peacock, *Pavo cristatus* (Linnaeus), the national bird of India. It is symbolic of qualities like beauty, grace, pride and mysticism. It is fully protected under the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

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.

National Flag of India

The National flag is a horizontal tricolor of deep saffron (kesari) at the top, white in the middle and dark green at the bottom in equal proportion. The saffron color indicates the strength and courage of the country. The white middle band, indicates peace and truth with Dharma Chakra. The last band is green in colour shows the fertility, growth and auspiciousness of the land.

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. The chakra intends to show that there is life in movement and death in stagnation. 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.

National Flower of India - Lotus

Lotus scientifically known as *Nelumbo Nucifera* 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. The Lotus symbolises divinity, fertility, wealth, knowledge and not to forget enlightenment.

National Fruit of India - Mango

The Mango is the national fruit. It has been cultivated in India since time immemorial. There are over 100 varieties of mangos in India, in a range of colors, sizes, and shapes.

National Song of India - Vande Mataram

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 at the 1896 session of the Indian National Congress.

National Tree of India - The Banyan Tree

The National Tree of India is The Banyan Tree. This huge tree towers over its neighbors 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. The banyan tree regenerates and lives for an incredible length of time--thus it is thought of as the immortal tree.

National Emblem of India

The national emblem of India is an adaptation of the Buddhist Lion Capital of Asoka at Sarnath, near Banaras in the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. The Lion Capital was erected in the third century BC by Emperor Ashoka to mark the spot where the Buddha first proclaimed his gospel of peace and emancipation. The national emblem is thus symbolic of contemporary India's reaffirmation of its ancient commitment to world peace and goodwill.

It has four lions, resting on a circular abacus. The fourth lion is on the rear and hence hidden from view. The emblem symbolizes power, courage and confidence. The abacus is girded by four smaller animals - guardians of the four directions: the lion of the north, the elephant of the east, the horse of the south and the bull of the west. The abacus rests on a nelumbo nucifera in full bloom, exemplifying the fountainhead of life. Usually inscribed below the abacus in Devanagari script is the motto Satyameva Jayate ("Truth Alone Triumphs"). This is a quote from Mundaka Upanishad, the concluding part of the sacred Hindu Vedas. The emblem forms a part of the official letterhead of the Government of India, and appears on all Indian currency as well. It also sometimes functions as the national emblem of India in many places and appears prominently on the diplomatic and national Passport of the Republic of India.

National Sport of India - Hockey

Hockey, in which India has an impressive record with eight Olympic gold medals, is officially the national sport. The Golden Era of hockey in India was the period from 1928 - 1956 when India won 6 consecutive gold medals in the Olympics. During the Golden Era, India played 24 Olympic matches, won all 24, scored 178 goals (at an average of 7.43 goals per match) and conceded only 7 goals. The two other gold medals for India came in the 1964 Tokyo Olympics and the 1980 Moscow Olympics.
