

National Flag

The national flag was adopted by the constituent assembly of India on 22nd July 1947, and presented to the nation at the midnight session of the Assembly on 14 August 1947, on behalf of the women of India. The flag was unfurled on Parliament House.

BACKGROUND

The tricolour flag was first born in the All India Congress Committee (AICC) meeting at Bezwada in 1912, when a flag was shown by an Andhra youth and improved by Mahatma Gandhi with the addition of a white band and chakra.

DIMENSION

The ratio of the width (proportion) of the flag to its length is 2:3. All the three bands are of equal width with deep saffron at the top, white in the middle and dark green at the bottom.

WHEEL (CHAKRA)

In the centre of the white band is a wheel in navy blue colour. The design of the wheel is that of the abacus of the Srinath Lion Capitol. Its diameter approximates the width of the white band and it has 24 spokes.

Significance of Colours

- (i) Saffron : Signifies courage and sacrifice
- (ii) White : Signifies truth and peace
- (iii) Green : Signifies faith and chivalry

The wheel symbolizes India's ancient culture, dynamism and peaceful change, and is adopted from the Dharma Chakra of Emperor Ashoka. Even an unusable national flag cannot be destroyed. There is a code as to how to put

aside the unusable national flag prescribed by the government.

National Emblem

The national emblem and seal of the Government of India is a replica of the Capitol of Ashoka's Pillar at Sarnath. In the original capitol of the stone pillar four lions are carved outstanding back to back. In the emblem, however, only three lions are visible as it appears in print, the fourth one remains hidden from the view. The capitol is mounted on an abacus (base plate). There is a dharma chakra in the centre of the base plate, on the right of which is a figure of a bull and on the left that of a horse. There is an inscription in Devanagari script, a quotation from the Mundak Upanishad below the base plate which reads 'Satya Meva Jayate', which means 'Truth alone triumphs'.

BACKGROUND

The original Lioned Capital of the Ashoka Pillars was designed between 242 and 232 BC to hallow the spot where Buddha first initiated his disciples into the eightfold salvation. The national emblem was adopted by the Government of India on 26 January 1950.

National Anthem (Jana Gana Mana)

Composer	: Rabindranath Tagore in 1911
First Sung	: 27 December 1911, during the Indian National Congress Session at Kolkata
When Adopted	: 24 January 1950, by the constituent assembly of India.
English Translation	: Rendered by Tagore himself in 1919, under the title 'Morning Song of India'.

BACKGROUND

It was originally composed in Bengali language and first published in January 1912, under the title 'Bharat Vidhata' in Tatva-Bodhini Patrika edited by Tagore himself. The complete song consists of five stanzas. However, the first stanza has been adopted by the defence forces of India to be sung on all ceremonial occasions and it constitutes the full version of the national anthem.

PLAYING TIME

About 52 seconds for the full version. However, a shorter version comprising the first and the last lines of the stanza has a playing time of 20 seconds and is played on ceremonial occasions.

National Song (Vande Mataram)

COMPOSER

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee First sung: 1896 session of Indian National Congress.

WHEN ADOPTED 24 January 1950, along with the national anthem. English Translation: Rendered by Sri Aurobindo.

BACKGROUND

Both the national song and the national anthem were adopted together and have equal status. It has been taken from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's novel Ananda Math published in 1882. It had been a source of inspiration to the people in their struggle for freedom.

National Calendar (Saka)

At the time of independence, the Government of India followed the Gregorian calendar based on the Christian Era. From 22 March 1957 (Saka 1879) a unified Indian national calendar to be used for official purposes

was introduced based on the Saka era which began with vernal equinox of AD 78. Chaitra is the first month and Phalgun is the last month of the Saka year. The normal Saka year has 365 days and the dates of the Saka year have permanent correspondence with the dates of the Gregorian calendar. Chaitra 1 falls on 22 March in a normal year and on 21 March in a leap year.

USE OF NATIONAL CALENDAR

The national calendar is used for the following official purposes of the Government of India, they are listed hereunder.

- (i) Gazette of India
- (ii) News broadcasts Akashvani
- (iii) Communications addressed to the public by the Government of India

It is issued by the Government of India.

COMMENCEMENT OF NATIONAL CALENDAR

Chaitra 1, Saka 1879 corresponding to 22 March 1957.

TABLE 1.1 Days in National Calendar

Saka Months	No. of Days	Corresponding Gregorian Dates
1 Chaitra	30 (31 in leap year)	22 March (21 in year)
1 Vaishaka	31	21 April
1 Jyaistha	31	22 May
1 Asadha	31	22 June
1 Sravana	31	23 July
1 Bhadra	31	23 August
1 Asvina	30	23 September
1 Kartika	30	23 October

1 Agrahayana	30	22 November
1 Pausa	30	22 December
1 Maha	30	21 January
1 Phaguna	30	20 February

National Animal

Since November 1972 the tiger (*Panthera Tigris*) has been adopted as the national animal.

Project Tiger: To check the dwindling tiger population in India. 'Project Tiger' was launched in April 1973. At the moment, there are 27 tiger reserves in India spread in an area of 3776 km².

National Bird

Peacock (*Pavo cristatus*): It is fully protected under the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Adopted as the national bird in 1964, its hunting has since then been banned.

National Flower, National Tree and National Fruit

NATIONAL FLOWER

Lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*). It has been an auspicious symbol of Indian culture since time immemorial

NATIONAL TREE

The banyan tree (*Ficus benghalensis*). It has the widest reaching roots of all known trees, easily covering several acres.

NATIONAL FRUIT

Mango (*Manigifera indica*). It is cultivated throughout India (with exception of hilly areas) since time immemorial.

National Language

Hindi is the official language of the Government of India.

Besides Hindi, 17 other regional languages have also been recognized in the Constitution of India.

National Day

National Day	Date and Month	Remarks
Independence Day	15 August	India achieved Independence on this day in 1947
Republic Day	26 January	India became a Republic on this day in 1950
Martyr's Day	30 January	Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated on this day in 1948
Teachers' Day	5 September	Birthday of Dr S. Radhakrishnan, first Vice-President of India
Children's Day	14 November	Birthday of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru
Gandhi Jayanti	2 October	Birthday of Mahatma Gandhi

Other Important Days

Day	Date and Month
National youth	12th January
Army Day	15th January
National Science Day	28th February
National Maritime Day	5th April
Quit India Day	9th August
Air Force Day	8th October
National Rededication Day	31th October
National Integration Day	9th November
Flag Day	7th December
Navy Day 4	4th December

The People

ANCESTRY

India's people belong to a variety of ethnic groups. The two largest groups are the Dravidians and the Indo-Aryans. Most Dravidians live in the south and most Indo-Aryans live in the north. The Dravidians descended from some of the earliest inhabitants of India. In about 2500 BC, these early people are believed to have established an advanced civilization that spread through the Indus Valley (in what are now Pakistan and western India). The Indo-Aryans trace their ancestry to the central Asian people called the Aryans. Around 1500 BC, the Aryan invaded India. They gradually conquered the Dravidians and drove them south. From about the 400 AD to the late 1400s, central Asian people settled in northern India. Many of their descendants live in the area now occupied by the states of Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Some groups which live in the far north and northeast are closely related to people of East and South-east Asia. A number of smaller groups of peoples live in remote forests and hills throughout India. Often referred to as tribes or tribal groups, these people include the Bhils, Gonds, Khasis, Mizos, Mundas, Oraons and Santhals.

LANGUAGES

People in India speak over 1000 languages and dialects—more than in any other part of the world. Most Indian languages belong to two main language groups: Indo-Aryan, which is a branch of the Indo-European family of languages and Dravidian. Modern Indo-Aryan languages are based on an ancient language called Sanskrit. About three-fourth of the Indian population, mainly in north and central India, speak one or more of the main Indo-Aryan languages. These languages include Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi and Sindhi. The four principal languages of southern India—Kannada,

Malayalam, Tamil and Telugu— belong to the Dravidian family of languages. About one-fifth of the population speaks these languages. In the Himalayan region of the north-east and along the border with Myanmar, many people speak Kuki, Manipuri, Naga and other Sino-Tibetan languages. Some groups in the north-east and certain central areas use Mundari and Santhali, which belong to the Mon-Khmer, or Austro-Asiatic, family of languages. India's national language is Hindi, one of the Indo-Aryan languages. More than two-fifth of the people speak one or more dialects of this language, and at least some Hindi is understood by as many as two-thirds of the population. The study of Hindi is required in elementary and secondary schools in India. English has an official status as an associate national language.

It is the common language among educated people across India, and much of the nations' official business is conducted in English. Through the years, the Indian government has at times sought to introduce Hindi in non-Hindi-speaking areas. Immediately after independence, the Indian government argued that national unity would be best promoted by encouraging the spread of Hindi, the most widely spoken Indian language. But non-Hindi speakers feared that they would face discrimination in their search for jobs. They also wanted recognition for their own languages. They urged that Indian states be reorganized according to language groups. After much pressure on the Indian government, the first of such states, Andhra (now Andhra Pradesh), was established for Telugu speakers in 1953.

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