

General Knowledge Today



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Indian Culture-1: National Insignia and Language

[Integrated IAS General Studies:2016-17](#)

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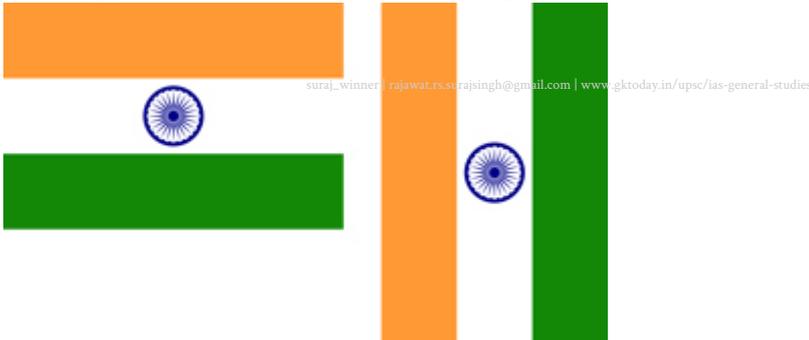
Prelims MCQ Topics

India's National Flag, Flag Code Of India, State Emblem, National Anthem, National Song, National Calendar, National Animal, National Bird, National Flower, Fruit and Tree, National Aquatic Animal, National Currency Symbol, National Heritage Animal, National Game, Languages Classification, Official Languages and Classical Languages.

India's National Insignia

India's National Flag

India's National flag is a horizontal tri-colour of deep saffron (Kesari) 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 2:3. In the centre of the white band is a navy blue wheel which has 24 spokes. Its diameter approximates the width of the white band. Its design is taken from that of the wheel which appears on the abacus of the Lion Capital of Ashoka at Sarnath.



Meaning of three colours of National Flag

The saffron stands for courage, sacrifice and the spirit of renunciation; the white stands for purity and truth and the green for faith and fertility.

Adoption of National Flag

Tricolor flag was first accepted by Indian National Congress in 1931. It had charkha in the center of the white band which was later replaced by Wheel taken from Sarnath Asoka pillar. The design of the national flag was adopted by the Constituent Assembly of India on 22 July 1947. In the constituent assembly, Dr. Rajendra Prasad was the head of the Ad hoc committee on National Flag. The flag was designed by Pingali Venkayya.

Flag Code of India

The Flag Code of India, 2002, has taken effect from 26 January 2002 and supersedes the 'Flag Code – as it existed. 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. As per current norms, there is 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.

Bureau of Indian Standards is in charge of enforcement of the standards of the Indian Tricolor as per the provisions of the “Flag Code of India”.

State Emblem

The state emblem depicts four lions, standing back to back. It is an adaptation from the Sarnath Lion Capital of Ashoka, near Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. Carved out of a single block of polished sandstone, the capital is crowned by the Wheel of the Law (Dharma Chakra).



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The Lion Capital was erected in the third century BC by Asoka to mark the spot where Buddha first delivered his sermon.

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 four lions symbolizing power, courage and confidence, rest on a circular abacus. The abacus is girdled by four smaller animals — guardians of the four directions: the lion of the north, the elephant of the east, bull of the west and horse of the south {you can remember this by analogy NEWS→LEBH}. The abacus rests on a lotus in full bloom, exemplifying the fountainhead of life and creative inspiration.

The words Satyameva Jayate (meaning ‘truth alone triumphs’) from Mundaka Upanishad are inscribed below the abacus in Devanagari script. The use of the state emblem of India, as the official seal of the Government of India, is regulated by the state of India (Prohibition of Improper Use) Act, 2005.

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 Tuesday, 24



January 1950.

Rabindranath Tagore wrote it at the request of his intimate friend Ashutosh Chaudhari, a judge of the Calcutta High Court, for singing at the 26th session of the Indian National Congress on 27 December 1911 at the Calcutta Session of the Indian National Congress.

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.

Apart from Indian national anthem Rabindranath Tagore has written national anthem of Bangladesh 'Amar Sonar Bangla' and also the lyrics of Sri Lanka's National Anthem (Sri Lanka Matha). Tagore had written the music and lyrics for Nama Nama Sri Lanka Mata in the Bengali language for his student Ananda Samarakoon.

National Song

The song Vande Mataram, composed in Sanskrit by Bankimchandra Chatterji, was incorporated in his famous novel Ananda Math (1882). It has an equal status with the National Anthem. Later the song was set to tune by Rabindranath Tagore and sung for the first time before the gathering at the 12th annual session of the Indian National Congress held in 1896 in Calcutta. It was declared as the National Song in 1937 through a resolution. The English translation of the stanza was rendered by Sri Aurobindo.

National Calendar

The National Calendar is based on the Saka Era with Chaitra being its first month. It consists of 365 days in a normal year. It was adopted from 22nd March 1957 along with the Gregorian calendar for the following official purposes: Gazette of India; news broadcast by All India Radio; calendars issued by Government of India; and, Government communications addressed to the members of the public. Dates of the National Calendar correspond with those of the Gregorian Calendar. Thus, the first day of Chaitra corresponds to 22nd March in a normal year and 21 March in leap year.

National Animal

The Tiger – *Panthera tigris* (linnaeus), is the national animal of India. It is a rich-colored well-striped animal with a short coat. The combination of grace, strength, power has earned the tiger great respect and high esteem. 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.

National Flower

Lotus, an aquatic plant of *Nymphaea* with broad floating leaves and bright fragrant flowers that grow only in shallow waters, is India's national flower. 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 Fruit

Mango (*Manifera 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. Mangoes have been cultivated in India from time immemorial. The poet Kalidasa sang of its praises. Alexander savoured its taste, as did the Chinese pilgrim Hieun Tsang. Akbar planted 100,000 mango trees in Darbhanga, known as Lakhi Bagh.

National Tree

Banyan Tree is India's National Tree. It's a member of mulberry family. The mulberry family is known as Moraceae and this plant grows in India, Bangladesh and some other countries.

The banyan Tree *begins its life as epiphyte on a host tree*, gathers nourishment and water from air (not the host). Despite being an epiphyte, the Ficus is an example of a **strangler fig**. Its roots grow down and around the stem of the host, their growth accelerating once the ground has been reached. After time, the roots coalesce to form a pseudo trunk, eventually strangling and killing the host.

National aquatic animal

The Gangetic Dolphin (*Platanista gangetica*) is the National aquatic animal of India. It is listed by the IUCN as endangered on their Red List of Threatened Species. The decision to declare the Ganges river dolphin India's national aquatic animal was taken Oct 5 2009 during the first meeting of the newly-constituted National Ganga River Basin Authority. Details about Ganges River Dolphin are located [here](#).

National Currency Symbol

The symbol is an amalgam of Devanagari "Ra" and the Roman Capital "R" with two parallel horizontal



stripes running at the top representing the national flag and also the “equal to” sign. The Indian Rupee sign was adopted by the Government of India on 15th July, 2010. The symbol of Indian Rupee signifies India’s international identity for money transactions and economic strength. The symbol, conceptualised and designed by Udaya Kumar, a post graduate in Design from Indian Institute of Technology Bombay, has been chosen from thousands of concept entries received by the Ministry of Finance through an open competition among resident Indian nationals.

National Heritage Animal

The Indian elephant (*Elephas maximus indicus*) has been declared as the national heritage animal by the government in order to conserve its dwindling population. 60% of the Asian elephants live in India. There are over 25,000 elephants in the country, including 3,500 in captivity in zoos and temples – particularly in southern and north-eastern parts of the country. Indian Elephant has been listed as endangered by IUCN as the population has declined by at least 50% over the last three generations

National Game

The Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports of India clarified that, officially, the country does not have a national game; no game, including hockey, has been notified as such. However, many sources, including the Indian government’s official portal, mention hockey as a “National Game”. India has won eight Olympic gold medals for hockey

Languages

There are 22 scheduled languages, 114 other languages, 216 mother tongues, 96 non specified languages and totally up to 10,000 languages spoken by the people in India.

Classification

Indian languages have evolved from different stocks and are closely associated with the different ethnic groups of India. Broadly the Indian languages can be put into six groups: 1) Indo-Aryan, 2) Dravidian, 3) Sino-Tibetan, 4) Negroid, 5) Austric and 6) Others. These languages have interacted on one another through the centuries and have produced the major linguistic divisions of modern India. The Indo-Aryan and the Dravidian are the dominant groups and together comprises all the major languages of India.

Indo-Aryan

- It is part of the Indo-European family of languages, which came to India with the Aryans.
- It is the biggest of the language groups in India and accounts for about 74% of the total Indian population.
- It comprises of all the principal languages of northern and western India such as Hindi,



Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Sindhi, Rajasthani, Assamese, Oriya, Pahari, Bihari, Kashmiri, Urdu and Sanskrit.

Dravidian

- This is the second most important group and comprises mainly of languages spoken in the Southern India. It covers about 25% of the Indian population.
- Proto-Dravidian gave rise to 21 Dravidian Languages. They can be broadly classified into three groups: Northern group, Central group, and Southern group of Dravidian languages.
- The Northern group consists of three languages i.e. Brahui, Malto and Kudukh. Brahui is spoken in Baluchistan, Malto spoken in Bengal and Orissa, while Kurukh is spoken in Bengal, Orissa, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.
- The Central group consists of eleven languages viz., Gondi, Khond, Kui, Manda, Parji, Gadaba, Kolami, Pengo, Naiki, Kuvi and Telugu. Out of these, only Telugu became a civilized language and the rest remained tribal languages.
- The southern group consists of seven languages viz., Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, Tulu, Kodagu, Toda and Kota.
- The major languages of the Dravidian group are: (i) Telugu (numerically the biggest of the Dravidian languages), (ii) Tamil (oldest and purest language of the Dravidian family), (iii) Kannada and (iv) Malayalam (smallest and the youngest of the Dravidian family).

Sino-Tibetan

The Sino-Tibetan or Mongoloid family stretches all over the sub-Himalayan tracts, covering North Bihar, North Bengal, Assam up to the north-eastern frontiers of the country. These languages are considered to be older than the Indo-Aryan languages and are referred to in the oldest Sanskrit literature as Kiratas. The Tibeto-Burman languages are divided into four broad groups:

- Tibetan: Sikkimese, Bhotia, Balti, Sherpa, Lahuli and Ladakhi
- Himalayan: Kanauri and Limbu
- North-Assam: Abor (Adi), Miri, Aka, Dafla and Mishmi
- Assam-Burmese: It is again sub-divided into four main sub-groups, viz. Kuki-Chin, Mikir, Bodo and Naga. Manipuri or Meithi is the most important language of the Kuki-Chin sub-group. The Bodo sub-group includes such dialects as Bodo, Rajbangsi, Koch, Mech, Rabha, Dimasa, Kachari, Chutiya, Garo, Hajjong and the Tipra (Tirupuri). Mikir has strong affinities to the Bodo and is spoken in the Mikir Hills and Parts of Sibsagar district in Assam. The principal languages of the Naga sub-group are Angami, Sema, Ao, Lotha, Mao, Konyak, Kabui and Lepcha.



Austric

The Austric languages of India belong to the Austro-Asiatic sub-family, which are represented by languages of the Munda or Kol Group, spoken in the central, eastern and north-eastern India and languages of the Mon-Khmer group like Khasi and Nicobarese. These are very ancient languages which have been in existence much before the advent of Aryans and were referred in ancient Sanskrit literature as Nisadas. The most important language of the Austric group is Santhali, which is spoken by over 5 million Santhals and is the largest spoken among the Adivasi languages. Mundari, spoken by about a million Mundas, is another important language of this group.

Others

This group includes several Dravidian adivasi languages like Gondi, Oraon or Kurukh, Mal-Pahariya, Khond and Parji which are very distinct and cannot be classified in other groups.

Pali and Prakrit

Pali and Prakrit are the languages that belong to the Middle Indo-Aryan period i.e. 600 BC-1000 AD. Prakrit was the Indo-Aryan speech which was in the form of uncultivated popular dialects. Prakrit came down to us in inscriptions dating back to 4-3 BC. Practically all over India, Prakrits were freely used for inscriptions almost up to the Gupta age.

In the course of time, the Prakrits were transformed into what are known as the Apabhramsa dialects, which were widely used in popular and folk literature. The various Prakrit dialects described by Prakrit grammarians are Maharastri, Sauraseni, Magadhi, Paisaci and Apabhramsa. Pali and Ardha-Magadhi are also Prakrits and were used in early Buddhist and Jain literature. The Satavahana rulers were great patrons of Prakrit.

The earliest of the Buddhist literature is in Pali. Some consider Pali as Magadhi Prakrit or Magadhi-bhasa, while others point to a close relationship of Pali with Paisaci Prakrit spoken at that time in the Vindhya region. The Tripitakas; Milindapanha; Petakopadesa and Visuddhimagga are some early works in Pali.

There is no consensus for a specific time where the modern north Indian languages such as Hindustani, Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Sindhi and Oriya emerged, but AD 1000 is commonly accepted.

The Dravidian languages of South India had a history independent of Sanskrit. Though Malayalam and Telugu are Dravidian in origin, over eighty percent of their lexicon is borrowed from Sanskrit. The Kannada and Tamil languages have lesser Sanskrit and Prakrit influence. The Austroasiatic and Tibeto-Burman languages of North-East India also have long independent histories.



Official Languages

English was the only language used for official purpose in the British India. In the independent India, it was declared in Article 343 (1) that Hindi will be the official Union language. It was also mentioned that over a period of fifteen years since the commencement of the Indian Constitution, Hindi will replace English as the official language. However, the Parliament can decide whether to use English as an official language or not.

The non-Hindi speaking communities across the country protested on the aspect of the change in official language from English to Hindi. This protest resulted in the enactment of the Official Language Act, 1963. According to the act, Hindi in Devanagari script has been declared the official language of the Union. However, English may also be used for official purposes even after 1965. English has been given the status of the 'subsidiary official language' of India. It was decided that either Hindi or English can be used for procedures of Parliament.

In the Constitution of India, there is a provision made for each of the Indian states to choose their own official language for communicating at the state level. The selected languages, which can be used for official purpose, have been listed in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution. Originally, there were 14 languages in the 8th schedule. The further languages were added as follows:

- Sindhi by 21st amendment, 1967
- Konkani, Manipuri and Nepali languages by 71st amendment, 1992
- Bodo, Dogri, Santhali and Maithali by 92nd Amendment, 2004.

The 22 official languages currently are:

- ASSAMESE – Assam
- BENGALI – Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Tripura, West Bengal
- BODO – Assam
- DOGRI – Jammu and Kashmir
- GUJARATI – Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Daman and Diu, Gujarat
- HINDI – Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Chandigarh, Chhattisgarh, the national capital territory of Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.
- KANNADA – Karnataka
- KASHMIRI – Jammu and Kashmir
- KONKANI – Goa, Karnataka, Maharashtra
- MAITHILI – Bihar
- MALAYALAM – Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Kerala



- MANIPURI (also MEITEI or MEITHEI) – Manipur
- MARATHI – Dadra & Nagar Haveli , Daman and Diu, Goa, Maharashtra
- NEPALI – Sikkim, West Bengal
- ODIYA – Odisha
- PUNJABI – Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, Punjab
- SANSKRIT – Only in scriptures. Not in usage.
- SANTHALI – Santhal tribals of the Chota Nagpur Plateau (comprising the states of Bihar, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa)
- SINDHI – Sindhi community
- TAMIL – Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu.
- TELUGU – Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Andhra Pradesh
- URDU – Andhra Pradesh, Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttar Pradesh

However the constitution does not specify the official languages to be used by the states for the conduct of their official functions, and leaves each state free to adopt any language used in its territory as its official language or languages. ***The language need not be one of those listed in the Eighth Schedule***, and several states have adopted official languages which are not so listed. Examples include Kokborok in Tripura, Mizo in Mizoram, Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia in Meghalaya, and French in Puducherry.

It should be noted that there is no national language of India. Hindi is not a national language. Neither the Constitution of India, nor any Indian law defines any national language.

Classical Language

In 2004, the Government of India declared that languages that met certain requirements could be accorded the status of a “Classical Language in India”.

The following criteria were laid down to determine the eligibility of languages to be considered for classification as a “Classical Language”:

- High antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500-2000 years
- A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers
- The literary tradition be original and not borrowed from another speech community
- The classical language and literature being distinct from modern, there may also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots.

Current Classical Languages

Tamil was the first Classical Language of India. The government declared Tamil (in 2004), Sanskrit



(in 2005). These two languages are undoubtedly parental sources for many languages belonging to the Indo-European family and the Dravidian family of linguistic groups. Later the government declared Kannada and Telugu (in 2008) as classical languages of India. In 2013, Malayalam was also given status of classical language. In 2014, Odiya was also given the status of Classical language.

With this the following six languages are included in the list of Classical Languages:

1. Tamil (since 2004)
2. Sanskrit (since 2005)
3. Telugu (since 2008)
4. Kannada (Since 2008)
5. Malayalam (since 2013)
6. Odiya (since 2014)



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