

National Emblem of India

[UPSC Notes]

What is our National Emblem?

"A heraldic instrument or symbolic artefact as a unique insignia of a nation, organisation, or family" is how the dictionary defines an emblem. A nation's national emblem is a seal designated for official use that commands the utmost respect and allegiance. It stands for a nation's foundational constitutional values and is a demonstration of power. On January 26, 1950, Madhav Sawhney approved the Indian National Emblem.

The State Emblem of India (Prohibition of Improper Use) Act-2005 stipulates that the National Emblem of India may only be used in accordance with certain laws, and any illegal use is penalised by law.

Historical Background of the National Emblem

The Sarnath Lion Capital of Ashoka, which is located in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, served as the inspiration for the state's emblem.

- The original depicts four lions standing shoulder to shoulder on an abacus with a border holding high relief figures of an elephant, a charging horse, a bull, and a lion over a bell-shaped lotus.
- The Wheel of the Law is the crown of the capital, which was carved from a single piece of polished sandstone (Dharma Chakra).
- Only three of the four lions are visible in the state emblem, which was chosen by the Government of India on January 26, 1950; the fourth is hidden.
- With a bull on the right, a horse on the left, and the outlines of other wheels on the far right and left, the wheel appears in relief in the centre of the abacus.
- There is no bell-shaped lotus present

Important Facts about the National Emblem of India

Some important facts about the National Emblem of India according to the UPSC perspective have been listed below;

- Emperor Ashoka constructed the Ashoka pillar, which has four lions seated back to back, symbolising strength, bravery, confidence, and pride.
- Horses, bulls, elephants, and lions are among the other animals engraved on the pillar. Each animal represents a specific meaning
- Craftsmen from the same region used stone from Chunar and Mathura to sculpt all of the Ashoka Pillars.
- Each pillar, which is between 40 and 50 feet tall and can weigh up to 50 tonnes, was pulled to the site where it was raised.
- Nineteen pillars with inscriptions and six pillars with animal capitals are still standing.
- The statements about morals that were portrayed in the engravings on the pillars were based on Buddhist principles.

- Under the national anthem, the phrase "Satyameva Jayate"—"The Truth Alone Triumphs"—is etched.
- The phrase "Satyameva Jayate" is taken from the Mundaka Upanishad, which is the final section of the revered Hindu Vedas.
- The National Emblem is inextricably linked to the official letterhead of the Government of India and serves as the President of India's, Central, and State Governments' official seal.
- The National Passport of the Republic of India and all the Indian currency feature the national anthem.
- The fourth lion was missing from the emblem's two-dimensional portrayal on the first copy of the Indian Constitution.
- The Indian Police Service (IPS) personnel sport a state insignia on their headgear.
- The state insignia may also be used by Members of Parliament (MPs) on their business cards and letterhead.
- If someone violates the regulations on using the national anthem, they could face a fine of up to INR 2000 or a sentence of up to two years in prison.
- Before he paints the lion on paper, Dinanath Bhargava is said to have visited the Alipore Zoo in Kolkata.

Salient features of the National Emblem of India

The State emblem of India is the official seal of the Government of India.

- Four animals are shown representing four directions:
 1. A Galloping Horse: West
 - The horse is a representation of Kanthaka, the horse that Buddha is claimed to have ridden out of his life as a prince.
 2. An Elephant: East
 - The presence of the elephant is based on Queen Maya's dream in which a white elephant crawls inside her womb.
 3. A Bull: South
 - The Bull represents the Taurus zodiac sign, which represents the month of Buddha's birth.
 4. A Lion: North
 - The lion represents achieving enlightenment.
- The animals appear to be following one another as they continue to circle the wheel of existence eternally.
- Below the abacus, the Devanagari script is used to inscribe the words Satyameva Jayate, which are taken from the Mundaka Upanishad and signify "Truth Alone Triumphs."
- The Wheel of the Law (Dharma Chakra), which is perched atop the nation's capital, represents Buddha's dissemination of the Dharma in all directions.
 - It was constructed to commemorate the Dharmachakrapravartna, or first sermon, of the Buddha.
- Legal Provisions:
 - State Emblem of India (Prohibition of Improper Use) Act 2005 and the State Emblem of India (Regulation of Use) Rules 2007:

- These regulations state that the Indian National Emblem must only be used in accordance with the State Emblem of India (Prohibition of Improper Use) Act 2005 and that any unauthorised use is unlawful and punishable.
- If someone breaks the legislation, they could receive a fine of up to Rs 5000 or a sentence of up to 2 years in prison.
- Usage:
 - The Ashoka Chakra in the National Flag is taken from the National Emblem
 - The letterheads of Central Government, State Government and other government agencies.
 - Currency of India
 - Passports of India
 - In the following Buildings:
 - Rashtrapati Bhawan
 - Parliament House
 - Supreme Court
 - High Courts
 - Central Secretariat
 - Secretariat Buildings of States and Union Territories
 - Raj Bhawan/Raj Niwas
 - State Legislature
 - Premises of India's Diplomatic Mission abroad
 - Residences of Heads of Missions in the countries
 - At the entrances of buildings used by Indian Consulates abroad

The Mauryan Pillars

The Mauryan pillars were carved out of rock, showcasing the artistry of the carver.

- Ashoka constructed the stone pillars with the inscriptions that were discovered in the north Indian region of the Mauryan Empire.
- Capital figures like the bull, the lion, the elephant, etc. were carved onto the top of the pillar.
- Each of the capital figures is carved standing on a square or circular abacus and are all ebullient.
- Visually striking lotuses are used to embellish abacuses.
- A few examples of the Mauryan Pillar include:
 - The Ashoka Pillar (Sanchi, Madhya Pradesh)
 - The Lauria Nandangarh Pillar (West Champaran, Bihar)
 - The Lion Capital of Ashoka (Sarnath, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh)

National Emblem of India: Important Facts for UPSC

Some important factoids about the National Emblem of India for the UPSC exams have been listed in the table below;

The National Emblem of India's Name	India's national emblem is called the National Emblem of India only. It is referred to as the "State Emblem" interchangeably.
Where has the National Emblem of India been adapted from?	The Emblem draws its inspiration from the Sarnath Lion Capital of Ashoka. It was adopted on 26th January 1950, the same day Indian Constitution came into force.
How many animals are featured on the national emblem of India?	Four different animals have been featured, namely– the Asiatic Lion, Elephant, Bull, and Horse There are four Asiatic Lions and one each Elephant, Horse, and Bull
How many national emblems are there in India?	India has only one National Emblem – The National Emblem of India.
Who designed the national emblem of India?	Dinanath Bhargava was the man behind the sketching and illumination of India's National Emblem
How many lions are there in Ashoka Pillar?	There are four Asiatic Lions present in our National Emblem
What does Ashoka Chakra signify?	The Ashoka Chakra symbolises the Buddhist Dharmachakra, with 24 spokes.