

Our Emblem

Commence the class with the Opening Prayer. Take attendance. For the Memory Time, children will learn to chant the verses given in the Prayers section.

TOPIC OF THE DAY

The topic of the day consists of:

- ◆ Our Flag
- ◆ Our Emblem
- ◆ Our National Flower
- ◆ Our National Bird
- ◆ Our National Animal
- ◆ Our National Fruit
- ◆ Our National Tree
- ◆ Our Message
- ◆ Our Awards

Our emblems have deep-rooted meaning and connection to our scriptures, and are symbolic representations of our tradition, culture, and values.

Our Flag

Flag is a symbolic representation of a country and what the country stands for. India's national flag is a horizontal tricolor. Deep saffron (*Kesari*) or the ochre at the top represents sacrifice (fire); white, a symbol of nobility is in the middle; and dark green, for prosperity, is at the bottom. Saints wear ochre-colored robes.



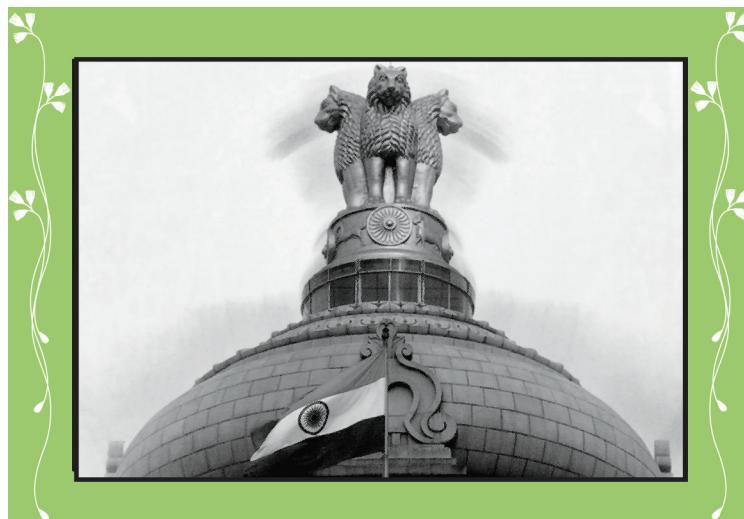
Ochre color represents renunciation and is the color of fire. Anything we throw in fire becomes pure.

In the center of the white band is a navy blue wheel (*cakra*) with 24 spokes—the wheel of *Dharma*, which is on the abacus of the Sāranāth Lion Capital of Ashoka. The Constituent Assembly of India, which adopted the design of the national flag on July 22, 1947, mandated the ratio of the width and length of the flag as 2:3. The wheel's diameter approximates to the width of the white band.

The Indian National Flag is only hand spun and hand woven. Karnataka *Khādi* Grāmodyog Sangha is the only center that produces our national flag.

Our Emblem

Ashoka, the son of *Samrāṭ* Bindusāra, was known as “*Caṇḍa* (Terrible, *bhayānak*).” People were afraid of Ashoka as he was very cruel and angry-natured. When Bindusāra died, his cabinet waited for four years before they placed Ashoka on the throne as they were aware of his unkind nature.



King Ashoka, for twelve years after his *rājyābhiseka*, ruled with cruelty and conquered many kings. The last war was Kaliṅga. Many brave warriors of Kaliṅga died during the war; the battlefield was full of dead bodies. The horrific scene changed King Ashoka’s heart. In spite of being close to winning the war, he stopped the war.

He threw his weapons in the battlefield and realized that the kingdom of the hearts of people is greater than the kingdom of material world. His heart was filled with empathy. The “*Caṇḍa* Ashoka” became “*Devapriya* (beloved of gods) and *Priyadarśī* (even the vision of one is so pleasing, and so dear) Ashoka.”

Ashoka tried his best to turn people to the path of *satya*, *tyāga*, and *tapas*. The symbol of his kingdom was a *Dharma-Cakra* on four lions (representing four directions north, south, east, and west; lions representing fearlessness) which has become the emblem of India.

The national emblem is an adaptation from Sāranāth, the lion capital of Ashoka. In the original, there are four lions, standing back to back, mounted on an abacus with a frieze carrying sculptures 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 Cakra*.

In the state emblem adopted by the Government of India on January 26, 1950, only three lions are visible, the fourth is hidden from view. The wheel appears as a relief in the center of the abacus with a bull on the right and a horse on the left, and the outlines of the other wheels on the extreme right and left.

It inspires us to march along the path of *Dharma* slogging like a bull yet remaining swift as a horse. The bell-shaped lotus has been omitted. The words *Satyameva Jayate* from Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, meaning “Truth Alone Triumphs” are inscribed below the abacus in the Devanāgarī script.

Our National Flower

Lotus is India's national flower. Lotus or water lily is an aquatic plant of *Nymphaea* species with broad floating leaves and bight fragrant flowers.



Lotus is a symbol of truth, auspiciousness, and beauty. Our scriptures and ancient literature extol the beauty of the lotus. Art and literature also portray the lotus in various decorative motifs and paintings. Many people have names of or related to the lotus: Padmā, Paṅkaja, Aravinda, Kumuda, Kamalā, Kamalākṣī (lotus-eyed), etc.

The goddess of wealth, Lakṣmī, sits on a lotus and carries one in Her hand. Lotus stands for purity and beauty.

The lotus blooms with the rising Sun and closes at night. Similarly, our minds open up and expand with the light of knowledge. The lotus grows even in

slushy areas. It remains beautiful and untainted despite its surroundings, reminding us that we too can and should strive to remain pure and beautiful within, under all circumstances.

Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the Chapter V of *Gītā*: A lotus plant grows in a pond. It is rooted in the water; it draws nutrients from the water; but the leaves and flowers remain dry.

ब्रह्मण्याधाय कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा करोति यः ।
लिप्यते न स पापेन पद्मपत्रमिवाम्भसा ॥ १० ॥
*brahmaṇyādhāya karmāṇi saṅgamं tyaktvā karoti yah,
lipyate na sa pāpēna padmapatram-ivāmbhasā. 10.*

V. 10 He who performs actions, offering them to *Brahman*, abandoning attachment, is not tainted by sin, just as a lotus leaf remains unaffected by the water it inhabits.

“Resigning to *Brahman*,” he who performs all actions totally detached is the one who has surrendered his ego. Having surrendered the ego, he who pursues his duties does not get shackled by new *vāsanās* even in the midst of actions; just as a lotus leaf remains detached from the water in which it lives.

In this verse, a prescription for living the life of intelligent detachment is explained. Total detachment is impossible for the human mind; mind has to attach itself to something. Hence the verse says, resigning to *Brahman* (ब्रह्मणि आधाय *brahmaṇi ādhāya*). Detachment from the false can be successful only when we attach ourselves to the Real. This psychological fact is enunciated in this verse, wherein Lord Kṛṣṇa advises us to surrender all attachments to *Brahman* and continue striving. To constantly remember an ideal is to become increasingly attuned to the perfections of the ideal. When the frequency of our thoughts upon the Lord becomes as high as the frequency with which we now identify with ego, we shall come to realize the *Brahman*-ideal as intimately as we now know our ego. To surrender all our sense of agency in our actions to *Brahman*, we have to remember this concept of Truth as often as we remember our limited ego.

Presently we are ego-realized souls; the *Gītā*'s message to us is to become Soul-realized egos.

Having realized the Self, to remain in the matter envelopments and their world of objects, is to remain always perfectly detached as the lotus leaf in the water. Though the lotus leaf exists only in water, draws its nourishment from the water, and dies away in the water, yet, during its life as a leaf, it does not allow itself to be moistened by water. Similarly, a saint, as a matter entity, draws nourishment for his existence from the world-of-objects, but always remains perfectly detached from his merits and demerits, from his concepts of beauty and ugliness, and from his likes and dislikes in the outside world.

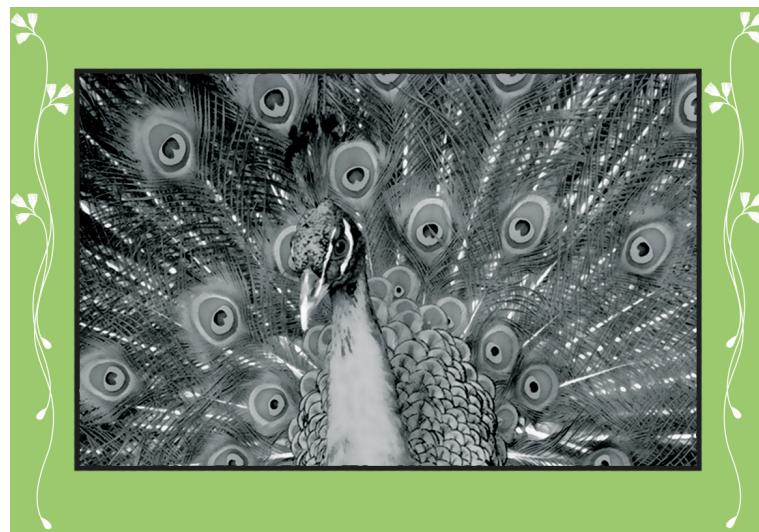
A doctor's attachment to his wife makes him incapacitated to perform surgery on her, although the same doctor may perform the same surgery on another patient towards whom he has no self-deluding attachment.

If an individual were to act not as his ego-self but as a representative of the Infinite and the Eternal, he would discover in himself mightier possibilities that are otherwise wasted by his misconception of the finite ego as himself.

Hindu *Purānas* talk about a lotus emerging from the naval of Lord Viṣṇu. Brahmājī originated from it to create the world. Hence, the lotus also symbolizes the link between the creator and the Supreme Cause.

Our National Bird

The peacock, *Pavo cistatus* (*Linnaeus*), the national bird of India, is a colorful, swan-sized bird with a fan-shaped crest of feathers on its head, a white patch under the eye, and a long, slender neck. The male of the species is more colorful than the



female with a glistening blue breast and neck. It has a spectacular bronze-green tail with at least 200 elongated feathers. The female is brownish, slightly smaller than the male, and lacks the tail. The elaborate courtship dance of the male by fanning out its tail and quivering its feathers is a gorgeous sight.

Kṛṣṇa always wore a peacock feather with His crown! The peacock represents a colorful life.

Our National Animal

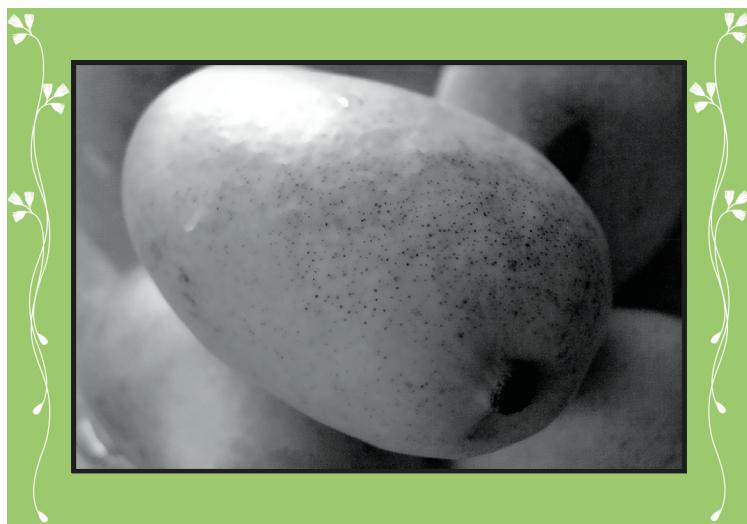
Tiger, a magnificent animal, scientifically known as *Panthera tigris* (*Linnaeus*), is the national animal of India. It is a itch-colored, well-striped animal with a short fur. The combination of grace, strength, agility, and enormous power has earned the tiger great respect and high esteem. Out of the eight races of the species known, the Indian race - the Royal Bengal Tiger, is found throughout the country (except the northwestern region) besides the neighboring counties of Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh.

The tiger needs to be emulated to remain alert and swift while working toward our goals in life. A tiger also represents fearlessness and royal grace.



Our National Fruit

Mango, a fleshy fruit, eaten ripe or raw, from the tree *Magnifera indica*, is one of the most important and widely cultivated fruits of the tropical world. This juicy fruit is a rich source of Vitamins A, C, and D. In India there are over 100 varieties of mangoes, in different sizes, shapes, and colors. Mangoes have been cultivated in India from time immemorial.



Our National Tree

Commanding a central presence in the timeless setting of India's countryside is the mighty Banyan, a tree endemic to the Indian subcontinent. It provides shelter and

is a point where the village community gathers to transact much of its affairs.

The Banyan tree is a veritable microhabitat for countless creatures. It releases maximum ozone into the atmosphere. Like the Banyan, India shelters all races, castes, creed, and religion, and gives wisdom to all.



Our Message

Our emblems convey to us to:

- ◆ Speak the truth to be successful and happy.
- ◆ Live like a lotus and be unattached.
- ◆ Fearlessly roar in the world like a tiger.
- ◆ Make our personality colorful and beautiful like a peacock by living a noble life.

Our Awards

India is a land of excellence. The country bestows a number of awards to honor great citizens, both men and women, whose actions and deeds have made the country proud and happy.

The president of India gives away the Bharat Ratna Awards, the highest civilian honor for exceptional service towards advancement of art, literature, and science, and in recognition of public service of the highest order.

Padma Vibhushan and Padmashree awards are given for exceptional and



distinguished service of high order in any field. These Awards are announced on the eve of Republic Day.

Our Own

“*Hariḥ Om!* Welcome to CORD!” These are words that everyone who visits CORD (Chinmaya Organization for Rural Development) hear from Kshamadidi whether they are young or old. There is an instantaneous smile on her face and often times a big hug follows as she asks you about your journey to Siddhbari at the foothills of the Himalayas. Dr. Didi, as she is known by the local people is a simple person who works tirelessly to uplift the poor villagers in rural India. Dr. Didi was so inspired when she met *Pūjya Gurudeva* that she gave up her practice as a successful pediatrician in Delhi and moved to Siddhbari 27 years ago to start a rural health clinic.



Soon she realized that in order to help the poor she needed to do more than treat them physically. They needed to be educated and empowered so they can stand on their own with confidence. She formed women's groups called *Mahilā Mandalas* in the villages. These groups meet once a month to discuss issues that affect their lives and find solutions. Many of them are trained to develop skills to earn like sewing, knitting, weaving and painting and are even taught banking and getting loans in order to start small businesses. They have also formed a co-op called *Guru Dhārā* where they come and sell their products. She has farmers groups to teach them about new and more productive farming technics, and works with handicapped children and adults to rehabilitate their lives. Initially Didi faced a lot

of resistance from the villagers, but with hard work and love she won them over. So empowered are the villagers that some of them are now standing for elections at the village level!

She truly believed and put into practice the Chinmaya Mission pledge:

“We believe that the service of our country is the service of the Lord of Lords and devotion to the people is the devotion to the Supreme Self.”

She has never looked back or given up in spite of facing many challenges. Today, she and her team work hard to uplift 500 plus villages in rural India. Dr. Didi, our own, received a Padmashree award in 2008 for her work from the President of India. She is an inspiration to all.

CLOSING

In this lesson, we discussed that:

- ◆ Our emblems convey to us to:
 - Speak the truth to be successful and happy.
 - Live like a lotus and be unattached.
 - Fearlessly roar in the world like a tiger.
 - Make our personality colorful and beautiful like a peacock by living a noble life.

Conclude the class with the following:

- ◆ Quiet Time: Follow one of the techniques given in the Appendix to make children's mind quiet.
- ◆ Closing Prayer: Chant the Closing Prayer given in the Prayers section.