

INDIAN SCHOOL MUSCAT
SENIOR SECTION - FINE ARTS DEPT
HISTORY OF INDIAN ART – BUDDHIST, JAIN & HINDU ART
CLASS XI – WORKSHEET No. 4
LION CAPITAL OF ASHOKA



The Lion Capital of Asoka adorns the second stamp produced in independent India and was the first stamp meant for domestic use.

The **Lion Capital of Ashoka** is a sculpture of four 'Indian Lions' standing back to back. It was originally placed atop the Aśoka pillar at Sarnath, in the state of Uttar Pradesh, India by the Emperor Ashoka, circa 250 BC. The pillar, sometimes called the Aśoka Column, is still in its original location, but the Lion Capital is now in the Sarnath Museum. This Lion capital of Ashoka from Saranath has been adopted as the National Emblem of India and the wheel 'Ashoka Chakra' from its base was placed onto the center of the National Flag of India.

The capital contains four (Indian/Asiatic Lions), standing back to back, mounted on an abacus with a frieze carrying sculptures in high relief of an elephant, a galloping horse, a bull, and a lion, separated by intervening spoked chariot-wheels over a bell-shaped lotus. Carved out of a single block of polished sandstone, the capital was believed to be crowned by a 'Wheel of Dharma' (Dharmachakra popularly known in India as the "Ashoka Chakra"), which has now been lost. There is a similar intact Ashoka pillar in Thailand with a similar four lion capital intact and crowned with Ashoka Chakra/Dharmachakra.



This is the famous original sandstone sculpted Lion Capital of Ashoka preserved at Saranath Museum which was originally erected around 250 BCE atop an Ashoka Pillar at Saranath.

The original Lion Capital. The angle from which this picture has been taken, minus the inverted bell-shaped lotus flower, has been adopted as the National Emblem of India showing the Horse on the left and the Bull on the right of the Ashoka Chakra in the circular base on which the four Indian lions are seated back to back. On the far side there is an Elephant and a Lion. The wheel "Ashoka Chakra" from its base has been placed onto the centre of the National Flag of India.