



# SIPA

*Bulletin*

For Circulation to Members only

Vol. 11 No. 4

July — August 1990

Bimonthly

## SOUTH INDIA PHILATELIST'S ASSOCIATION

( Founded 1956 )

( Affiliated to the Philatelic Congress of India )

### EDITORIAL

## Function of Philatelic Organisations and the need to organise at lower levels

World over there are hundreds and hundreds of Philatelic clubs to satisfy the needs of those philatelists belonging to different countries. Their activities have also become very extensive.

The Federation Internationale De Philatelic (F.I.P.) governs the philatelic activities of member countries at International level with regard to forming rules and regulations and for conducting International level exhibitions.

In the same manner at National level Philatelic bodies function to regulate such activities wherever possible, according to their requirements.

In India, Philatelic congress of India (PCI) issues guidelines to its member Associations and help in a limited way by providing jury members, issuing bulletins etc.,

The views contained in the articles published are the author's own and not necessarily those of the Association.

At state level there are many small and big associations; though only a few of which may be affiliated to the PCI, their activities are not binding on the National organisation. In fact there is no single authorised state level Association, as in the case of National level, for any particular State. As it exists there can be any number of associations in any one State which can function independently and need not await any sanction or permission from the national body. In fact only a few of the Associations are affiliated to the national body (PCI); still except for the membership affiliation fees there is no link between them in their activities.

Only when a philatelist applies for exhibiting at National or International level, the PCI insists that he/she should be a member of any one of the affiliated associations.

As such the associations or clubs spring up according to the interests of even a few philatelists and continue functioning till their resources lost or till the support of its members continue. There are cases where members of one Association joining as members

*(Cont. p. 31)*

All communications relating to Bulletin may please be addressed to Mr. M. T. Karunakaran, Hony. Editor, SIPA Bulletin, 3, III Cross Street, Jayanagar, Tambaram Sanatorium, Madras-600 047.

### SIPA MEETINGS

SECOND SUNDAY of every month - Regular meeting at the Philately Bureau, Anna Road, Post Office.

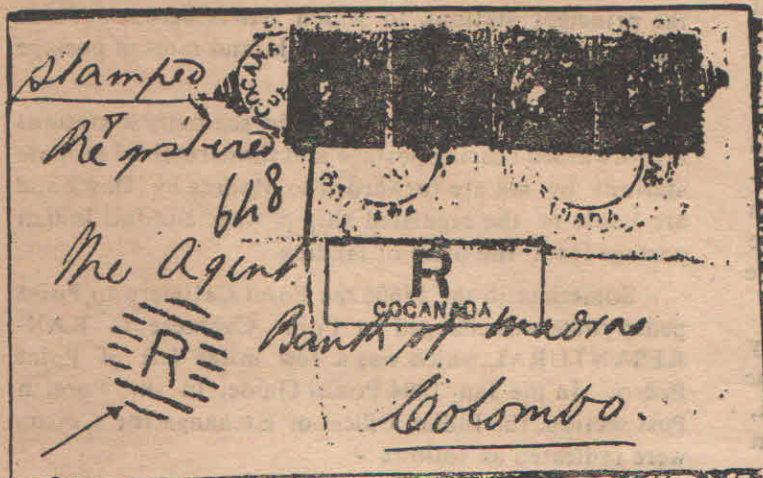
THIRD SUNDAY of every month - Auction meeting at our Library Hall at 6, Nannian Street, Madras-3.

(Timings : 10-45 a. m. to 1 p. m.)

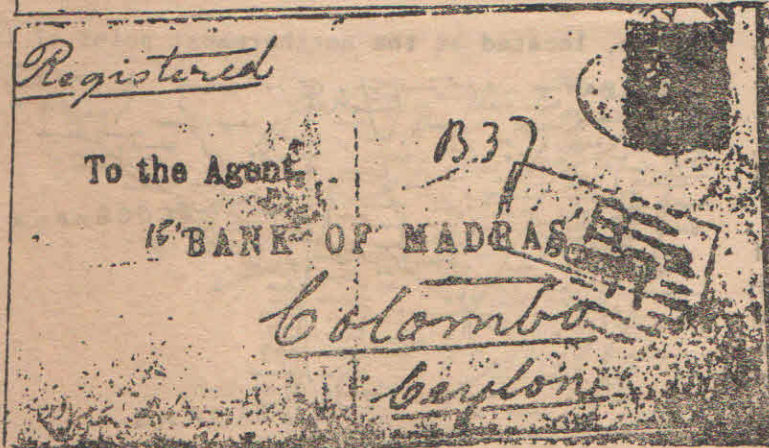
# INDIA-CEYLON SURF BOAT SERVICE, 1836 - 1902

By ERNEST G. OEHME

(We have known that Postal Communications were carried on from early days by Runners, Horses, Steamers, Bus, Camel, Ponys and Planes. But now comes to light that communications were also carried by CATAMARAN or SURF BOAT SERVICE, from records and documents. — G. MADAN MOHAN DAS)



COCONADA De.22 1838 - Pt.CALIMERE 7 Jan 1889  
- COLOMBO 12 Jan 1889.



BOMBAY 2 Feb 1889 - Pt.CALIMERE 27 Feb 89  
- COLOMBO 4 Mar 1889.

It was not unusual for the P.O. Department in India to use a postal stamp for a purpose other than that for which it was originally prescribed. The Postal History student who attempts to find out why, sooner or later stumbles upon some unusual and fascinating aspect of postal working that was not suspected to exist.

These two reduced-to-half-size Registered covers, one from Bombay and the other from Coconada to the same addressee in Colombo in 1889, have both been impressed on the face with the round 8-barred 'R'

obliterator. This designated postal stamp was introduced for use in the 'Railway Division', popularly known as the Railway Mail Service, for the sole purpose of defacing postage stamps on postal articles posted in the 'stationary' offices (Mail Offices of the R.M.S.), but from the method of stamping these obliterations were not used for that purpose but to indicate forward registration sorting by an Indian Office of Exchange which regularly exchanged mails with a Foreign country - in this case, Ceylon. Under the 1876 U.P.U. Rules, the

Contd. p. 29

special stamp for use by Indian offices of exchange for stamping registered articles for Foreign countries was a block type letter 'R' and not the round barred 'R' obliterator. The only reason why this particular round barred obliterator was used is because the postage rates for letters to and from India and Ceylon was based at the Indian rates of postage and so this was the only readily available 'R' stamp.

On the back of both these covers will be found the date-stamps of POINT CALIMERE dated 7 Jan 89 and 27 Feb. 89, which indicates that this P.O. was the route through which these Registered letters were exchanged with Colombo in Ceylon. Very little is known about this Indian Office of Exchange but going back in time to the year 1836, in the Madras ALMANAC of that year, this information emanated —

“The Mail from India to Ceylon is conveyed to and from that Island at the expense of the Madras Government from POINT CALIMERE to POINT PEDRO in Ceylone during nine months of the year, but during the Monsoon months from TUTICORIN to some place in that Island to the southward of the Bombay pass.”

“The Madras District unites with that of Bombay at three points, at HOSPET and HURRYHUR on the Toombudra River enroute from Madras to DHARWAR, and at DHARWAR itself enroute from HONORE on the Malabar Coast.”

Some information on the cost of transmitting the Mails from Point Calimere to Point Pedro was mentioned in a letter by the Postmaster General of Ft. St. George, Mr. A. F. Bruce, to Mr. J. V. Stonehouse, Acting Accountant General, Madras dated 28 July 1844 which reads as follows :-

“ I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter and transmit herewith a Memorandum exhibiting the number of Runners entertained from HURRYHUR to CALIMERE POINT for the conveyance of the Ceylon Expresses and Mails, with amount of salary paid to each per month, from which you will observe that the aggregate monthly amount paid to the Runners for the conveyance of the Ceylon Expresses and Mails is Rs 472 and if the bonus paid to the Runners for conveying the Expresses expeditiously is added to it, the total charges under this Presidency will amount to Rs. 500 per mensem, and as the sum of 500 rupees stipulated by the Ceylon Government to be paid to the Madras Presidency was in adjustment of all demands against it, the charge incurred under the Bombay Presidency, I presume be credited in the account of this office to the Bombay Presidency. On this subject I beg to be favoured with your further instructions for the guidance of this Department.”

From the above it will be learnt that the cost of transmitting the Mails between Point Calimere and Point Pedro was paid as a monthly subsidy by the Ceylon Government to the Madras Government and included the sea transit from Point Calimere in the Tanjore District of Madras to Point Pedro, located at the northernmost point of Ceylon (see map)

In the 1845-47 Madras Almanac amongst the P. Os listed under the Madras Presidency were included these Ceylon P.Os:

KANDY, COLOMBO (CALLE), NEWERAELIYA and TRINCOMALEE These places in Ceylon indicated the principal stations to which letters between Point Calimere and Ceylon the Indian Inland rates of postage were levied.

“ Letters received at Madras by sea to these stations are forwarded bearing postage and those received at these stations by sea are forwarded to Madras by Dawk and are liable to the regulated Ship postage and full Indian postage from the place of landing.”

Sometime in the 1860s the Point Calimere to Point Pedro route was changed to Point Calimere to KAN-KESANTURAI, which was a few miles left of Point Pedro. In the Jan. 1894 Postal Guide, in the Foreign Post section, the Indian Offices of Exchange for Ceylon were indicated as follows :-

Pedro, located at the northernmost point of Ceylon



“Ceylon, via Land Post via Point Calimere through Kankasanturai daily. By INDIAN PACKET via Tuticorin through Colombo bi-weekly. Indian Inland rates of postage are applicable if sent by Land Post or by Indian Packet.”

The ‘Land Post’ via Point Calimere through Kankasanturai hides the fact that the Indo-Ceylon mails in both directions involved a 40-mile sea journey, and who would have suspected this to be the case until it was first mentioned when the service was in the process of being closed down and was mentioned by the Director General of the P. O. in India in his Annual Report to the Government in the financial year 1900-01, thus:-

“It may be mentioned that what is perhaps the most interesting Boat Service maintained by the Department has been temporarily suspended owing to the Plague. This is the CATAMARAN or SURF BOAT SERVICE between Point Calimere in the Tanjore District and Kankasanturai, the most northern point of Ceylon. Mails have been sent daily by this route, a distance of 40 miles, for more than half a century, though the service has lost its original importance since the establishment of a daily steamer communication between Tuticorin and Colombo.”

A description of sorts was recorded in the 1851 Madras ‘Almanac’ about this surf Boat or Catamaran, as under:—

“The Catamaran is a species of raft consisting of one, two or three logs of wood knit together with coir rope, astride or upon this primitive vessel sits a single individual, urging his little craft with one paddle. The Catamarans generally accompany the Musoola Boats for the purpose of rescuing the passengers and crew if the boat should accidentally upset. The Catamaran Boatmen are very useful as messengers, wearing conical caps; they carry letters and small parcels from ship to shore and vice versa. They are bold and expert seamen, not fearing to face any amount of surf and easily regaining their places on the raft if cast off by the force of a wave.”

I do not think that the Madras P.O. Dept would have used the type of Catamaran or Surf Boat as described above, and moreover, the mails for transmission in an open craft over a distance of 40 miles would have to be protected with Wax Cloth. Some idea of the craft used by the Madras P.O. Dept will be realized from this Tender which was advertised in the Ft. St. George Madras Gazette dated 7 Dec 1841 by Mr. A. R. Brayson, Acting Secy. Madras Marine Board, which reads:-

**Tenders.** Notice is hereby given that the Marine Board are prepared to receive tenders for the supply of 27 new Catamarans of Malavumboo wood. To be built upon the same principle and of the same size and make as the specimen which can be seen on application at the Master Attendants Office. The Catamaran must be of adequate capacity to support two Runners, a Ferryman and a boy in addition to the Mail of from 60 to 90 lbs. The Tender must specify the price at which the whole or each Catamaran would be supplied. The Government reserve to themselves the right of rejection of any Tender without assigning the reason for so doing.”

The Postal establishment per each Catamaran or Surf Boat, according to the above information, was One Ferryman, Two Runners and a Boy.

In the Ft. St. George Madras Gazette dated 1 Jan 1846, the PMG Madras Mr. A. F. Bruce recorded the number of letters received (R) and despatched (D) between Point Calimere and Point Pedro from 1 Jan 1845 to 31 Dec 1845, as under:—

**January:** R—47, D—34; **February:** R—86, D—79; **March:** R—116, D—88; **April:** R—134, D—142; **May:** R—170, D—178; **June & July** R—1091, 1241, D—912; **August:** R—167, D—101; **Sept:** R—124, D—85; **November & December:** No details shown, which may be due to the fact that during this part of the year the wind and surf in the Palk Strait is both strong and high.

The writer, not being a P. H. material collector, has no illustrations to show of covers transmitted from India to Ceylon or Ceylon to India covering the 1836—1902 period and his interest in producing this tentative P.H. article was motivated by the enquiries put to him by Drs. S. Contractor and A.B. Jagtap and Max Smith, sending him photocopies of Registered letters from Bombay and Coconada to Colombo in Ceylon, asking for information as to why the ‘R’ round 8-barred obliterator was used.

In attempting to find out, I found that as the purpose of the ‘R’ or Railway division was that it was the Service which was responsible for the Sorting and Distribution arrangements in Post Offices Mail Offices and Sections under the Indian Inland and Foreign Post system, the only purpose that the ‘R’ obliterator could have served was in connection with a transit sorting office responsible for dealing with Registered letters to Ceylon and that office turned out to be Point Calimere. So, after some research, enough information has been produced for a future P.H. student to improve on this information on a hitherto unknown P.H. subject.

*Courtesy: ‘INDIA POST’ July - Sep. 90*

in other Associations also, and cases where just one or two residual members simply continue just to keep the name of their Association alive.

However there are a few Associations which function adhering to all norms and regulations and to the normal expectations and satisfaction of its members.

We are proud to say that the South India Philatelists Association (SIPA) is one of such successful associations as it has succeeded in satisfying most of the following requirements that are essential to be a successful and an useful Association:

- i) Availability of a place for frequent gathering of members,
- ii) Regular attendance of members at the meetings,
- iii) Conducting meetings for auction and exchange of stamps and views,
- iv) Displaying members collections at the meeting hall, which shall be explained to others during or at the end of the meeting,
- v) Intimation of important meetings through engagement columns of important news papers to draw the attention of all those interested in the hobby,
- vi) Affiliation of local school clubs with the Association,
- vii) Keeping up-to-date list of members with particulars of their interest and issue of such a list to all members,
- viii) Keeping the membership roll up to date by duly cancelling the membership of those who have failed to pay the subscription within the specified period after a reminder,
- ix) Finding means to revive the interests of such of those members who have stayed away from regular meetings,
- x) Providing new members with a catalogue of Indian stamps, a membership card, a book on, 'Stamp Collecting' (Member should bear the cost) and the particulars regarding the meetings held and the facilities available to buy philatelic items and literature through the Association,

- xi) Keeping available, a world Stamps' catalogue at all meeting places for members' reference,
- xii) Keeping a library of Philatelic books, magazines etc., for members use, in a centralised place and keeping it open atleast once a week on a fixed day of the week and timings,
- xiii) Propagating the hobby, by conducting workshops on Philately at various schools regularly,
- xiv) Depending on the number of outstation members available in a particular locality, deputing a senior member to organise a meeting of such members of possible with the assistance of the local clubs to access and serve their needs (This may be taken note of by the P C I also),
- xv) Conducting Exhibitions once a year or two regularly utilizing the help of one of the affiliated schools,
- xvi) Issuing a bulletin of its own to inform all its members about its activities as well publishing articles of interest from members and others,
- xvii) Organising and introducing contacts of foreign philatelists to members for exchanging philatelic knowledge and material,
- xviii) Owning a building of its own with funds gathered from members, philanthropists and through the advertisements published in the exhibition Souvenirs,
- xix) Conducting regular general body meetings and elections of office bearers; and keeping upto date accounts of all transactions,
- xx) Finally if not the least, the willing and active participation and co-operation of all members in all activities of the Association.

In the interest of hobby one would always wish the functioning of as many associations as possible in every nook and corner. Unless they are organised in a specified units like, 'State level', 'District level', 'City' or 'town' level, with only one Association or club at each level (each such being governed by the immediate higher level one) with due assistance from the top level bodies, the growth of this hobby will remain at the bottom as ever and for ever.

M. T. K.