



SIPA

Bulletin

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Editorial

FUNCTIONAL INNOVATION

It is a known fact that India Post issues commemorative stamps alongwith first day covers, miniature sheets and information sheets / brochures, on the days of issue. Of course, it is a different matter that nowadays all these items are not available together on the day of issue. Information sheet is really informative most of the time to the collectors and philatelists except times like Rampur Raza Library issue when India-Post assumed that all Indians are graphically knowledgeable about Rampur's location on the India map.

As generally many collectors ignore the importance of information sheet, by not buying it, SIPA regularly gives a concise version of the information sheet through stamp news. But to our surprise during the commemorative issue of Louis Braille, India-Post got an ingenious idea to have an innovative information sheet in Braille. Simply fantastic or 'fun'tastic. We are all enjoying the information sheet by feeling it with our fingers all the time. But at the same time, every body is hoping till this day to get an English version as per the promises of India-Post but I don't think we will be getting one, in the near future.

At least if India Post launched the 'Louis Braille' Stamp at functions organised with visually challenged people at different cities and towns, the Braille sheets would have seen some use. Thus the efforts and energies put to bring the information sheet in an unknown script are sheer waste as those sheets has to lie unattended whether it is with India - Post or with some unfortunate collector who bought or forced to buy by their friends at the philatelic Bureau. Innovation should be useful to the mankind.

So, SIPA spared some energy and deciphered the Braille information sheet and gives the details in this issue for the happiness of our members.

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What are 'Sunday Labels'?

In July 1893, Belgium introduced postage stamps which had a small perforated section at the base containing the words 'DO NOT DELIVER ON SUNDAY' in French and Flemish! The label was introduced to enable the postmen to have fewer letters to deliver on the Sabbath (Sunday). If it was important that the letter was to be delivered on a Sunday, the label was detached; otherwise, the sender stuck the stamp and its label to the cover. The scheme operated for 22 years until it was finally discontinued in 1915.



Second Sunday Monthly Meetings

With President

Mr. G. Balakrishna Das on the Chair, 21 members attended the meeting on 08.02.2009. at the Recreation Hall, CPMG office building. Mr. D. H. Rao Spoke on his experiences of making enchanting "Maxim cards".

STAMP NEWS

LOUIS BRAILLE

21.01.09

500

0.4 mill

Louis Braille is the harbinger of knowledge and empowerment for the blind. You must have come across several times over TV and the press stories of persons who

cannot see achieving great distinctions at school and university examinations as also in many professions. You would no doubt have wondered how these persons manage to read, write and gain knowledge. Let us then spare a little time and find out.



Blind persons, correctly addressed as visually impaired or visually challenged, use an embossed script for reading and writing named after its inventor Louis Braille. It is known as the 'Braille script'. Louis Braille, a French man was born in Coduray near Paris on Jan 4th, 1809. We in India and the entire world are thus celebrating the 200th birth anniversary of this great inventor these days. But let us return to Louis Braille.

Louis' Father Simon Braille was a harness and saddle maker. While playing in his father's workshop Louis injured his left eye with a stitching awl at age of three. The resultant infection spread to his other eye as well and the child lost his eyesight in both the eyes by the age of 4. Louis was first sent to a local village school, but was unable to cope with his studies. He was sent to an institution for the blind in Paris, the first school for the blind in the world, at the age of twelve.

Here Louis found it extremely cumbersome to read with the then prevailing methods of carving out print letter on card board or wax tables. Wanting to discover an alternative he met one Charles Barbier, a captain in the French Artillery, who was working on one method of reading at night for soldiers. Barbier's method was based on twelve raised dots and Louis found that more unsatisfied to be perceived through the limited tactile span. He then worked diligently and consistently for hours and hours and came up with a new system. It was based on six dots and knot twelve. The toil and tribulations took their toll and Louis was plagued by ill health and died in Paris due to tuberculosis on 6th Jan 1852.

By 1868 his raised six dots system became the worldwide standard. Though he was ignored during his life time, in 1952 on 100th anniversary of his death the French govt honoured his memory by moving his remains to the Pantheon in Paris, the resting place of all great French heroes. Louis Braille's system has remained almost unchanged during the last about 150 years despite the onset of various technologies bearing testimony to his far

sightedness and ingenuity.

Louis Braille paved the way to knowledge and empowerment of millions of blind persons throughout the world. Braille which is a script and not a language for the visually impaired as erroneously stated at times consists of six embossed dots placed in two vertical rows and it can be used for any language in the world and is written with the help of a pointed object known as 'stylus'. These days technological devices and software are also available for the writing of Braille and producing books in that system. On his 200th Birth anniversary the visually impaired and all their well wishers salute this great international personality who belongs not just to one country or continent but for the entire world and all languages.

Theme : Personality, Pioneers, Inventors

VAIKOM MUHAMMAD BASHEER

21.01.09

500

0.4 mill

Vaikom Muhammad Basheer was born in the village of Thalayolapprampu in northern Travancore, in Vaikom on 21 January 1918, he was the eldest child. After beginning his education at the local Malayalam medium school, he was sent to the English medium Scholl in Vaikom, five miles away. While at school he fell under the spell of Mahatma Gandhi. He started wearing Khadder, inspired by the swadesi ideals.

He resolved to join the fight for an Independent India, leaving school to do so while he was in the fifth form. He went to Kozhikode to take part in the Salt Satyagraha in 1930. He was arrested and sent to Kannur. When he was freed from prison, he organized an anti-British movement and edited a revolutionary journal, Ujjivanam (Uprising) A warrant was issued for his arrest and he left Kerala.



After leaving Kerala, he embarked upon a long journey that took him across the length and breadth of India and to many places in Asia and Africa, a journey which spanned seven years.

After the journey he returned to Kerala (1936-1937) and he found that his family had gone bankrupt. He tried to make a living and wandered searching for a new job. He walked into the office of a newspaper 'Jayakesari' whose editor was also its sole employee. He did not have a position to offer, but offered to pay money if Basheer wrote a story for the paper. Basheer wrote his first story 'Ente Thankam' based on a woman he saw everyday coming to draw water at a public water pipe in front of his residence.

Following this, he became a full time writer. During this period, he was near starvation most of the time.

Basheer's short book Hathabhaagyayaaya ente naadu (My ill-fated motherland) and one act play Pattahinte Pekkinaavu (The terrible nightmare of Pattam) were banned in Travancore and a warrant issued for his arrest if entered Travancore. He met Shri M.P. Paul, who offered lodging at Paul's tutorial colleges, shifted to Kottayam, Basheer also went to Kottayam. It was during a meeting of writers Sahitheesakhyam at Kottayam that Basheer read his draft of Baayakaalaskhi. At Kottayam (1941-42), he was arrested and put in a police station lock-up. He spent a long time in lock-up awaiting trial and after trial was sentenced to two years and six months imprisonment. He wrote Premalekhanam (1943) while serving his term and published in 1944 after further revision, with an introduction by Paul.

He then made a career as a writer, initially publishing the works himself and carrying them to homes in order to sell them. He ran two bookstalls in Ernakulam, Circle Book house and Basheer's bookstall.

He suffered from mental illness and was twice admitted to mental sanitoriums. He wrote one of his most famous works, Paathummaayude aadu (Pathumma's Goat), while undergoing treatment in a mental hospital in Thrissur. The second spell of paranoia occurred after his marriage when he had settled down at Beypore. He recovered both times, and continued his writings.

The government recognized his contributions by awarding him prestigious Padma Sri in 1982.

He passed away in Beypore, on 5 July 1994.

Theme : Personality, Freedom Fighter, Writer, Literature

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH

25.01.09 500 0.4 mill

The imposing gothic structure of St. Paul's Church, Chennai stands as a tribute to 150 years of its glorious existence. It has seen many tumults of time and has seen history unfold itself in all its hues.

St. Paul's Church, Chennai was constructed and dedicated to the service of the people on 19th September 1858, over a piece of land purchased and donated by a benevolent lady Mrs. Anne Hill. It was designed by Rev. S. Percival. It took about 3 years to construct this beautiful monument with a brief interruption in 1856 due to severe storms in the area.



Rev. Joseph Gnanaolivu took charge of the Church in April 1893 and he dedicated himself whole heartedly to reform the congregation. He worked closely with the families in both their spiritual and social well being and finally laid his life as a martyr in 1897.

In the early years of 20th Century, major renovations to the Church and reformation of the services it offered, were carried out. In 1927 Vestries and portico were added and in 1933 electricity was brought in illuminating the church in all its glories. In 1935 an altar, a verandah and rooms were added to parish hall.

Extension and renovation have been forever going on to the Church premises carried out by dynamic individuals who held charge of the Church administration. Major renovations were carried out in 1959, 1972, 1980, 1982 and 1993. The new lighting system was installed in the Centenary year of the laying the foundation stone in 1955. A children altar was built showcasing boyhood of Jesus mounted over the alter.

The sesquicentennial celebration of 150 years was celebrated on 19th September 2007 in a grand manner. St. Paul's Church's gothic building stands as a testimony to the contribution the Church has made in the life of people in the area.

Theme: Building, Architecture, Churches, Christianity

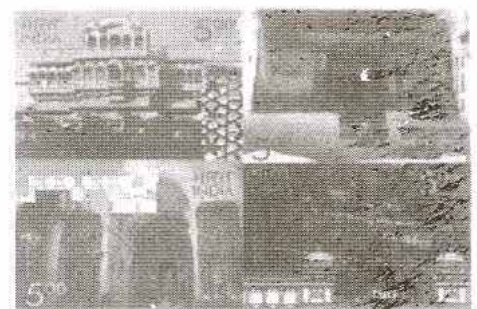
HERITAGE BUILDINGS PRESERVATION INTACH

28.01.09 500,2000 0.8 mill each

India's glorious history of more than 5000 years enumerates several civilizations that have been a constant reminder of the country's rich multicultural extravaganza and world renowned heritage which includes India's art, handicrafts, dance forms, musical styles and architectural monuments.

Mangyu Monastery

Mangyu, a small village in Leh derives its name from Mangyu river. It has Buddhist monasteries and Nag-IDan Chortern (Stupa) more than 1000 years old and these are believed to be built by Lhotsava Rhin Chen bZang-PO(956-1042AD), a legendary figure associated with the proliferation and advancement of Buddhism in Ladakh. The Monastery comprises of four temples. These are Nangbarngza, Chenrezig, Lhakhang, Chamba Lhakhang (Maiterya) and Chamba Lhakhang (jambeyang). The monastery has a simple exterior supplemented with rich interior. It is believed that Lhotsava, who built the monastery, had 32 Kashmiri craftsmen along with him, who had worked on the interior embellishments. Hence, the art forms of the monastery bear a distinct Kashmiri as well as Western Tibetan influences. Characteristic art forms include 2 giant stucco images of Chamba (nearly 4.5 meters high), mandalas within Nangbarngzad and Chenrezig Lhakhang and 1000 miniature Buddhas drawn neatly in rows and columns.



Saint Annie's Church, Goa

The massive Church was built in 1681-95 in the village of Talaulim located approximately 10-12 kms. from Panaji. The origins of the church date back to 1577 when the property was originally bought and a chapel constructed by priests attached to St. Paul's College of Old Goa of the Jesuit order. The church to its present form was taken up for reconstruction in 1681 under Msgr. Francisco de Rego and completed in 1695 by his successor Fr. Antonio Francisco Da Cunha

Jaisalmer Fort

In the midst of the Thar desert, the medieval fortress town of Jaisalmer rises like a city at the very end of the world. In this remote land palaces, havelis, temples and bazaars create a magical, almost surreal city. It is a desert city dominated by the golden sandstone fortification, its ninety-nine bastions silhouetted against the sky. Jaisalmer Fort, built entirely of stone in the 12th century, is an awe-inspiring architectural feat. It's is perhaps the world's only living fort where the traditional patterns of life have continued over the centuries.

Qila Mubarak

Patiala is one of the youngest cities of Punjab. It was founded by Baba Ala in the middle of the eighteenth century as a military stronghold. In the heart of the city of Patiala lies the 10 acre Qila Mubarak Complex. Qila Mubarak is said to be the only Sikh fort of its kind in this side of the Punjab. Almost all other forts which exist in the state are either of Mughal or pre-Mughal origin. It is a planned, symmetrical building built in a synthesis of late Mughal and Rajasthani styles. The roof of the complex, suggested a colonial afterthought in its architecture. Though the Androon is a single interconnected building, it was spoken of as a series of palaces. Each set of rooms clustered around a country-yard and a name the Sheesh Mahal, the Rang Mahal, the Toshkhana, the Jail Khana and the Chand Mahal.

Theme : Heritage, Buildings, History, Architecture Religion.

BISHNU PRASED RABHA

31.01.09

500

0.4 mill

Bishnu Prasad Rabha, the doyen of Assamese culture, endearingly called as 'Kala Guru' was the son of Gopal Rabha, whose ancestral home was in South Kamrup district of Assam. He was born on 31st January, 1909 at Dhaka, where his father served as Subedar Major in the British Army.



Bishnu Prasad Rabha had his primary education at Dhaka and passed Matriculation from Tezpur High School in 1926 in first division. He did I.S.C from St. Paul's College, Kolkata in 1928, could not complete his B.Sc., though he studied in Rippon College, Kolkata; and Victoria College, Rangpur. As the Indian freedom movement caught momentum Bishnu Prasad had to bear the repressive measures by the British Govt. to crush the movement. As a consequence, his academic career suffered and ended in 1931.

The philosophy of the life of Bishnu Prasad Rabha finds its clear expression in his multifarious activities and his writings transcend his significance as the foremost cultural rebel-thinker of his times. He is, above all, an epitome whose artistic and literary bend of mind rightly focused in the contemporary Assamese culture.

Bishnu Prasad Rabha was a versatile genius. He touched all the media of communication like painting, dance, drama and music, cinema, gramophone records, news papers et al and proved his ability in all the fields. His dancing prowess mesmerized the audience. He was bestowed the title Kalaguru by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan at Varanasi following a recital of the Tandava dance. His poems are valued as revolutionary contributions that have brought new spirit to the youth of Assam. His musical tunes, and their lyrical contents were basically of Assamese tradition brilliantly used in art form.

Bishnu Prasad Rabha made valuable literary contribution to the Assamese literature. His numerous writings on Assamese culture are scientifically based on historical and anthropological factors. He was in favour of education of the masses through artistic and cultural activities.

In 1967, Bishnu Prasad Rabha was elected as Member of Assam Legislative Assembly from the Tezpur constituency.

He passed away on 20th June 1969.

Theme : Personality, Literature, Dancer, Poet.

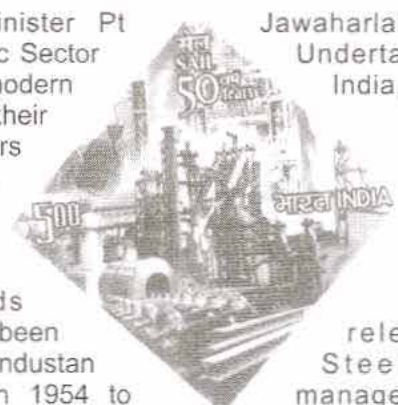
STEEL AUTHORITY OF INDIA LIMITED

3.02.09

500

1.5 mill

Our first Prime Minister Pt Jawaharlal Nehru referred to Public Sector Underta India, kings as 'temples of modern an analogy keeping their chosen role as propellers of industrial growth. SAIL is one such temple, an enterprise whose contribution and commitment towards building the nation has been ntless and significant. Hindustan Steel Limited was set up in 1954 to manage the one million tonne steel plant being set up at Rourkela. Similar steel plants coming up at Bhilai and



Durgapur were brought under its ambit the next year. On 3rd and 4th February, 1959 the then president of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, had dedicated the blast furnaces of Rourkela and Bhilai Steel Plants to the nation. These events marked the beginning of steel plant operations in the public sector in independent India.

When Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) was incorporated by the Government in 1973 as a holding company of all steel and steel related industries under its umbrella, all assets of Hindustan Steel limited were transferred to it. The newly commissioned Bokaro Steel Plant, India's first swadeshi steel plant, became not only the newest member of the SAIL family but also the poster child of the firm resolve to build a self reliant India.

As the country's largest steel producer, SAIL understood the responsibilities that came with it. Its vision to be a respected world class corporation and the leader in Indian steel business in quality, productivity, profitability and customer satisfaction has acted as a beacon, guiding the SAIL family to higher levels of achievement. With an eye on the future, SAIL went through a major modernization drive at its Durgapur and Rourkela plants in the 1980s.

In the 1990s we overcame two of our severest tests. Economic liberalization in the early 90s exposed us to global competition which required a massive reorganisation drive coupled with new business strategies to maintain our position of strength.

We became stronger by overcoming adversities and championing sustainable development. Today, with a turnover in excess of Rs. 45,500 crore, SAIL is at the epicenter of the nation's infrastructure development, including key sectors like defense, railways, oil & gas, construction, power, shipping and heavy engineering.

SAIL was founded with well articulated socio economic objectives towards the people of India. SAIL has taken effective measures in the field of environment conservation, health and medical care, education, women's enlistment, providing potable drinking water and ancillary development. By partnering creatively with small, local entrepreneurs, NGOs, state government and the Centre, SAIL has ensured that the benefits arising out of its activities actually reach the grassroots. SAIL is committed to linking business opportunity and corporate responsibility in ways that fulfill one of SAIL's core purposes making meaningful in people's lives.

Theme : Industry, Steel, Economy.

24 JANUARY NATIONAL GIRL CHILD DAY

5.02.09

500

0.8 mill

The life chart of a disadvantaged girl child reflects strong elements of discrimination at every step of her life first being her very survival, on account of high incidence of feticide. If she survives, she is given little or no access to education, nutrition, health or other essential services. She is highly vulnerable to abuse particularly sexual abuse,

domestic labour, trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation, child marriage, early motherhood, frequent pregnancy and delivery etc.

The poor status of the girl child is evident from the fact that adverse human development indicators such as Child Sex ratio is 927 girls per 1000 boys in 2001 from 945 girls per 1000 boys in 1991. Child marriage (before age of 18 years) is estimated at 44.5%, drop in gross enrolment ratio for girls in higher classes (57% for classes 6th to 8th and 34% in classes 9th to 12th) Drop out rates for girls from school, especially in secondary school is estimated at 65%.



The planning process in the country has emphasized the need for welfare development and protection of girl child.

A number of legislation specifically aimed to protect the Girl Child such as Immoral Traffic Prevention Act, 1956 Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, Pre conception and Pre Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act 1994 (PC and PNDA Act) have been enacted.

The National Policy for Children 1947 commits that the State will assume responsibility for the well being of children both before and after birth. The National Charter for Children 2003 makes special mention of the importance of protecting the rights and dignity of girl children. The National Common Minimum Programme specifically states that the government will protect the rights of children, and extend special care to the girl child. The National Plan of Action for Children 2005 accords specific priority to the girl child. Educated and healthy girls play a very important role in improving the over all indicators of the development,

A number of schemes and programmes has been launched by the government like Dhanalakshmi Conditional Cash Transfer Scheme for Girl Child with Insurance cover was launched by the Ministry of women and child development on 4th December, 2007.

To Highlight the plight of the country's Girl Child, and in a bid to create awareness about welfare and empowerment of Girl Child, 24th January has been declared as National Girl Child Day. It was on 24th January when Late Smt. Indira Gandhi was sworn in as the first woman Prime Minister of India, the triumph of the girl Child.

The aim is to sensitize for woman empowerment and welfare of children at grassroots level.

Theme : Children, Girls.

SANT SANTAJI MAHARAJ

9.02.09

500

0.7 mill

Sant Santaji Jagnade Maharaj was born in 1625 in Chakan village, near Debu, in Khed tehsil of Pune District, Maharashtra.

He was born to a pious, dutiful and God fearing couple Shri Vithoba and Pant Mathabai.

Chakan was a famous market place. Santaji's father Vithobapant Jagnade was engaged in the avocation of producing edible oil. Santaji grew up in a serene and blessed rural atmosphere. He also continued his ancestral business. As per the prevalent social custom of the times, he was married at the age of twelve to Yamuna and continued his business. But after marriage, he became disinterested in family life and materialistic pursuits and turned to spiritual solace through religious discourses. He took to Kirtans and Bhajans and decided to renounce all worldly pleasures to attain the sublime. Finally he left home abandoning his parents and wife.



In the company of Tukaram Maharaj, he began to write psalms. Santaji became a shadow of Tukaram Maharaj, a true spiritual companion in his religious voyage. Through his writing, he awakened the spiritual consciousness of his contemporaries. Santaji's Abhangs are glorified verses which illustrate his literary skills and talents.

Efflorescence of his poetic skills are evident in his poems "Shankar Deepika, "Yogachi Wat", Nirgunachya Lavnya, "Tel Sindhu" etc. During this period arose a religious upheaval against Tukaram's "Gatha" from the orthodox class. Some antisocial destroyed the manuscripts of Tukaram's "Gatja" by throwing them into the Indrayani River. Santaji was greatly pained by this boorish act and resolved to rewrite the Abhange from his and other's memories and restore their original glory. He made people recite the Abhangs, they had memorized and wrote them down. Santaji being the original writer of the Manuscript of Tukaram's Gatha, it was easier for him to recapitulate the Abhangs from his memory. Thus by undertaking the laborious duty of putting bits together, he recreated Tukaram's Gatha as recited by Tukaram and gave it a rebirth. Tukaram's "Gatha" lost under the waves of Indrayani, rose its rightful place in the hearts of the sea of masses due to the painstaking efforts and boundless devotion and endeavour of Santaji.

In the ultimate analysis the philosophy and preaching of Sant Tukaram and Sant Jagnade were one and the same. Therefore, at this juncture of spiritual crisis, which has enveloped the whole world, it is befitting to remember and honour the great soul Santaji Jagnade, whose thoughts and philosophy remain immortal.

Theme : sages & saints, religion.

MAHA KAVI MAGH

9.02.09

500

0.4 mill

Maha Kavi 'Magh' was born around 675 A.D. at Bhinmal in Rajasthan. He was the son of 'Dattak' and grandson of 'Superabhadeva' a minister of king, 'Varmalata' of Gujarat.

'Magh' was a perfectionist. Nothing would satisfy him except the very best. Therefore, he wrote only one epic named, 'Shishupal Vadha', but such a masterpiece of literature that his name is taken alongside 'Kalidas; and 'Bharvi'.



'Shishupal vadha' contains 1650 stanzas and is in 20 canto. It is based on an episode of 'Mahabharat'. During 'Rajasuya yagna' performed by king Yudhisthir, there was an altercation between Shishupal on the one hand, and Bhishma, Yudhisthir and Krishna on the other. Shishupal abused Krishna in a fifty language. The verbal

duel acquired such a dimension that Lord Krishna was constrained to halt 'Shishupal'. It was but a small incident in the great story of Maharabharat. Magh's greatness lies in weaving a great epic covering all aspects of life around this small episode. He invested in this great work all his rich vocabulary, pure grammar, all encompassing erudition and knowledge, command over the language, and ornate elegant style. For this great single work of his, he is remembered even today with greatest respect.

His vocabulary was vast and limitless, So much so, that, it is said that there is no word in Sanskrit dictionary which has not been used in the 'Shishupal Vadha'. In other words the 'Shisupal Vadha' is a living dictionary of Sanskrit language, paying tribute to his prolific use of words.

It has been acknowledged by scholars that he combined in his persona, Kalidas's mastery over simile, Bharvi's flair for drawing word - pictures and Dandi's elegant style of writing.

He has used forty one metre in his classic where as Bharvi used only twenty four metre. Thus his metrical profusion is wonderful.

The 'Shishupal Vadha' shows that Magh's knowledge was encyclopedic. He was well versed in Shastras, was a master of polity and political science, was sensitive to understand the human frailties and human virtues and their impact on social interaction, had an eye for beauty, understood the effects of seasonal changes in climate and weather on human life and environment, had fair acquaintance with painting and sculpture, knew different philosophies and religions and was not unaware of human craving for eroticism.

Magh was not only a great poet but also a great human being. He received unaccountable wealth from his patron King Bhoj. At the same time he had also inherited substantial fortune from his father and grandfather, yet he died in poverty because he was very generous in helping the poor.

Theme : Poetry, Poets, Literature, Personality

POSTAL LIFE INSURANCE

11.02.09 500 0.8 mill

In the early seventies of the nineteenth century, a postmaster died in Bengal under tragic circumstances leaving his family destitute. The pitiable plight of his dependents moved the postal authorities to render assistance to his family. However, this could be done only in isolated cases as financial conditions precluded it. The plight of small officials families was pitiable. The Government felt it incumbent on it to look after these families and the only way it could be done was by undertaking to insure the postal officials. Mr. F. R. Hogg, Director General of Post Offices in India, had taken preliminary steps to introduce the scheme of State Life Insurance in the Postal Department through his circular No. 120 dated 17th Dec. 1883. He also emphasized thorough the same circular that every endeavour should be made to make these schemes known to all members of the Department. This is the story of the birth of Postal Life Insurance.



Postal Life Insurance (PLI) which was formally introduced on 1st February, 1884 with the express approval of the Secretary of State (for India) to Majesty the Queen Empress of India was essentially a welfare scheme for the benefit of postal employees in 1884 and later extended to the employees of Telegraph department in 1888. In 1894, PLI extended insurance cover to female employees of P & T Department.

Today there are over 35 lakh PLI policies with 31,469 crores and over 61 Lakh RPLI policies with Rs. 41,486 crores sum assured. The total PLI corpus as on 31.03.2008 is Rs. 12,081.71 crores while the RPLI corpus as on 31.03.2008 is 3003.78 Crores.

PLI offers five types of plans; Whole life Assurance (SURAKSHA) Convertible Whole Life Assurance (SANTOSH), (Grama Suraksha), Convertible Whole Life Assurance (Grama suvidha), Endowment Assurance (Grama Sumanga), Grama Priyas.

D.G.(Posts) is the Administrator of both PLI and RPLI Funds. PLI & RPLI also pay a Flat Rate of Remuneration to the Department of Posts for using its infrastructure and staff. Both the schemes PLI as well as RPLI are entirely managed by the employees of the Department of Posts.

From its inception the fund took no undue risks. It insured only first class lives which could not be insured at normal rates. But once a policy was issued, it covered all risks to life including that of war, accident, suicide, etc. without any extra charge.

Insuring lives and ensuring smiles is what Postal Life Insurance has been striving to do since the past 125 years. Its greatest forte has been charging low premium and giving high bonus to customers which is possible due to the fact that it banks on the vast postal network.

Theme : Insurance, Security, Family, Umbrella

JAINACHARYA VALLABH SURI

21.02.09 500 1.0 mill

Jainacharya Vallabh Suri Ji Maharaj is an example par excellence of humanism and spiritualism. Chhagan (childhood name) was born at Vadodara in November 1870 AD to worthy parents Deepchhand and Icchabai. In search of peace he studied under his holiness Jain Acharya shree Vijayanand Suri Ji Maharaj (popularly known as Guru Atmaramji), then a highly venerated Saint and a profound scholar of Jainism. Chhagan entered monkhood renouncing worldly life in AD 1887 at Radhanpur (Gujarat) at the tender age of 17 years. He was christened Muni Vallabh Vijay.



Guru Atmaramji taught Muni Vallabh the Jaina philosophy propounded by Lord Mahavir viz Ahimsa (non violence), Anekant (non-absolutism), Aparigraha (non-possessiveness). Vallabha also mastered study of contemporary religions.

True to his Master, Muni Vallabh worked for the welfare of the society irrespective of caste, class and creed. He initiated various programmes to eradicate Ignorance, Superstition and Illiteracy. His humane approach, scientific out look and practical life endeared him to the masses. He was bestowed with Acharyaship in 1924 at Lahore (now in Pakistan).

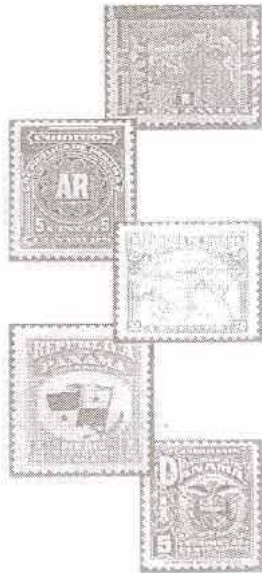
This visionary Saint, realizing the prime needs of the society emphasized on giving moral and righteous education, to improve standard of life. Opening of Shri Mahavira Jaina Vidyalyay at Mumbai as far back as 1915 and its subsequent branches, Shri Atmanad Jain Gurukul at Gujranwala and Shri Atmanand Jain college at Ambala are just but a few of the glorious examples.

Acharyashree became instrumental in collecting and preserving thousands of volumes of priceless hand written manuscripts and published works on Indology at Shri Mahavira Jaina Vidyalyaya, Mumbai and Jain Gurukul Gujranwala and other libraries as valuable storehouse of knowledge and cultural heritage.

Colombia part of Colombia when independence was declared in 1821. In 1841, however, Panama briefly seceded from Colombia but under the constitution of the Grenadine Confederation (which gave states the right to secede) Panama again broke away in 1853. It returned to the fold in 1856 but thereafter exhibited strong separatist tendencies and, significantly, had its own stamps from 1878 onwards, first as a state and then (from 1887) as a department (Province) of Colombia. The stamps from 1887 onwards bore only the country name 'COLOMBIA' and the value but showed a map of the isthmus.

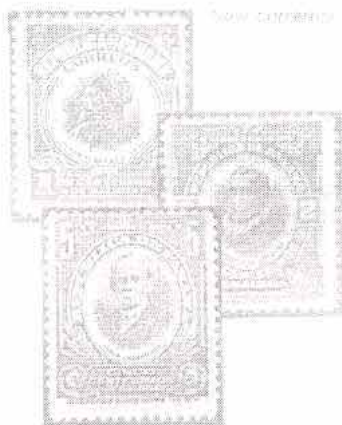
Malaria-infested swamps

An area of malaria-infested swamps, it was only important for offering the shortest overland route between the Pacific and the Atlantic, and the riches of Peru and Bolivia were transported from Panama on the west to Nombre de Dios and Porto Bello on the Atlantic coast. A paved causeway, the first road in the New World, facilitated this transport. Various schemes from 1523 onwards were proposed to cut a canal across the isthmus although it was not until 1879 that an international consortium was formed to realize this project but it went bankrupt in 1889 and Ferdinand de Lesseps (who had previously built the Suez Canal) was virtually destroyed by it.



A second company was floated in 1894 with mainly European backing, but the USA began entertaining an alternative route through Nicaragua. The Nicaraguan lobby in Congress was defeated by postage stamps. When the 1900 definitive series depicted the volcano of Momotombo with smoke belching from it, the Panama lobbyists ensured that every Senator and Congressman was given specimens. The Hepburn Bill, then before Congress, was altered in January 1902 to route the canal through Panama and ditch the Nicaraguan scheme.

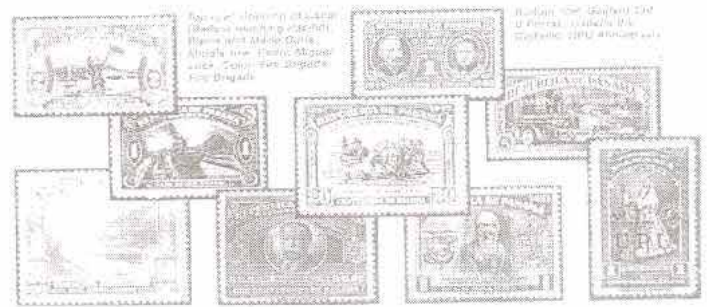
The Hay-Herran Treaty with Colombia was signed in January 1903 and ratified by congress in March, but in August Colombia unilaterally repudiated the deal. This provoked anger in Panama itself and an insurrection broke out on 3 November when independence was proclaimed in Panama City. When Colombia landed troops at Colon to quell the revolt, they were blocked by US Marines from the cruiser Nashville. Ten day later a Panamanian representative was



received in Washington and the USA formally recognized the independence of Panama. On 18 November President Theodore Roosevelt signed a treaty with the new republic which granted the USA a canal zone ten miles wide in perpetuity for 10 million down and an annual rent of \$250,000. The Panama Canal Zone was under US administration from the until the end of September 1979, and during that period issued its own stamps.

First stamps

The Republic of Panama's first stamps, which appeared on 10 November 1903, consisted of the 1892-6 definitive series overprinted 'REPUBLICA DE PANAMA'. The stamps were overprinted in Panama City, by hand in carmine or blue-black. Examples in various other colours



are known but these were unauthorised. These hand-struck overprints may be found in different positions, inverted, sideways, double or vertical. they were followed in December 1903 by a machine overprint on the 2c., 5c., 10c. and 20c. stamps. This consisted merely of the word 'PANAMA' with a horizontal bar across the top to obliterate the word 'COLOMBIA'. These overprints contained numerous varieties including misplaced letters, obliterating bar omitted and different colours.

A third overprint consisting of the word 'PANAMA' alone, appeared in January 1904. It was applied in carmine to all denominations whereas the overprints on the previous series had been in the original colour of the stamps. A fourth overprint appeared in February 1904. Similar overprints were also made between November 1903 and January 1907 at Colon and Bocas del Toro.

Belated celebration

The birth of the republic was belatedly celebrated in February 1905 by 1c. and 2c. stamps showing a map of Panama with the date of the declaration of independence. The stamps were recess-printed by the American Bank Note Company. Further provisional overprints were made in 1906 while a distinctive definitive series, recess - printed by the Hamilton Bank Note Company of New York, was in preparation.



The definitive stamps, released between 1906 and 1908, were the first to be inscribed in Panama's new

currency, the balboa of 100 centavos, which superseded the peso of 100 centavos. The ½c. featured the Panama flag while the 2½c. showed the national arms. The remaining designs, from 1c. to 50c., portrayed historical figures ranging from Vasco Nunez de Balboa, the first man to cross the Panama isthmus, to the 19th century politicians who had engineered the country's independence. The stamps were printed in colour with black portraits and most denominations have been recorded with the portraits inverted.

The American Bank note company recess-printed a new series in 1909 in denominations ranging from 1c. to 10c. the stamps featured portraits and the coat of arms. Higher denominations, from 12c. to 1 balboa, were released between 1918 and 1920 in designs showing various views of the Panama Canal which had finally opened in 1915.

The national coat of arms was featured on a definitive series introduced in May 1924. These stamps, which ranged in value from ½c. to 1b., were recess-printed by the American Bank Note company. A shortage of 2c. stamps in July 1937 was met by surcharging various obsolete commemorative stamps from the 1921-6 period. A shortage of 2c. and 10c. stamps in February 1942 was remedied by overprinting telegraph stamps 'CORREOS' (postage).

Large pictorial designs were used for a new definitive series released between 1942 and 1957. The stamps ranged in denomination from ½c. to 1b. and featured the people, scenery, landmarks and wildlife of the country. The 5c. denomination showed Balboa reaching the Pacific. De La Rue lithographed a definitive series featuring landmarks and scenery (1969-70) while the Argentine Mint produced the series of 1973 showing Famous Panamanians. That was the last definitive series in the traditional sense; in subsequent years lengthy commemorative or purely thematic sets fulfilled the same function.



Airmails

In common with other Latin American countries, Panama has had a long and colorful history of aviation and airmails. The aviator Colonel Charles Lindbergh paid a goodwill visit to Panama in January 1928 and 2c. and 5c. stamps featuring the Spirit of St Louis monoplane over Panama were issued to mark the occasion. A 10c. express stamp was



overprinted 'CORREOAEREO' (airmail postage) in February 1929 and surcharged 25c. for use on mail carried on the Panama-Miami route which had been pioneered by Charles Lindbergh.

An airmail definitive series was introduced in January 1930. These stamps were in map design with the inscription modified and showing an aero plane in flight over the Caribbean. Initially 15c. 20c. and 25c. values were issued and these were followed in 1941 by 5c., 7c. and 8c. denominations. The colour of the 5c. was changed from blue to orange in 1949. Since then numerous stamps for airmail postage have been produced either by overprinting and surcharging definitive stamps 'CORREOAEREO' or as part of a commemorative series of stamps.

Separate airmail definitive showing a biplane over Panama appeared in August 1930. these stamps were recess-printed by Waterlow and sons. A long series of airmail stamps featuring scenery and landmarks of Panama appeared between 1942 and 1957 while a lithographed series featuring a Boeing 707 was released in 1960. The most recent addition to the theme was a set of 1997 for the 50th Anniversary of the Panamanian Aviation Company, showing various aircraft from the Dakota to the Boeing 737-200 Advanced.

Commemoratives

Apart from the stamps issued in 1905 for the declaration of independence, Panama issued no commemorative stamps until 1913 when it released a 2½c. value to celebrate the Quatercentenary of Balboa's discovery of the Pacific Ocean. Two years later Panama released a set of eight stamps featuring scenery to mark the Panama Exhibition held that year. The 2c. featured Balboa reaching the Pacific while the 3c. showed the Palace of Arts at the national exhibition. The Quartercentenary of Panama Cathedral was celebrated in August 1919 by overprinting the 2½c. stamp of the Exhibition series with the dates 1519-1919 and surcharging it for use as a 2c. stamp. The Centenary of Independence was marked in November 1921 by a set 12 stamps showing the national arms with portraits of Panamanian patriots and local landmarks.



From December 1936 onwards, Panama issued a considerable number of ordinary and airmail commemorative sets, often reissuing them with overprints. Long sets marked the Jubilee of the Panama Fire Brigade in 1937, the 150th Anniversary of the US Constitution in 1938 and the 25th Anniversary of the Opening of the Panama Canal in 1939.

Four 1c. stamps portraying Pierre and Marie Curie were released to raise funds for cancer research and the set was reissued with the dates 1940, 1942, 1943 or 1945 substituted. Various obsolete stamps were surcharged 1c. and overprinted for cancer research between 1946 and 1947.

There was something of a lull during world war II, with only a few short sets, but long sets incorporating both postage and airmail stamps appeared in honour of the 75th Anniversary of Universal Postal Union in 1949, the Centenary of General San Martin in 1952, and the Republic's Golden Jubilee in 1953. The Tenth Anniversary of the Organisation of American States was commemorated in 1985, the Third Pan-American Games in 1959 and the 75th Anniversary of Panama fire Brigade in 1963. The Pan American Congress was marked in July 1956 by a series of 24 stamps, each of which portrayed a different US president, The presidential reunion held in Costa Rica in 1963 was marked by seven stamps showing presidents of Central American republics and US president John F Kennedy.

A hint of things to come

Panama issued an increasing number of short sets in the 1950s and 1960s in honour of famous people and historical events. Many of these consisted of over prints on previous issues. A hint of things to come was provided by the stamps honouring the Ecumenical Council; a series of 22 featuring cathedrals in different countries of the world, and a further issue of six of these stamps overprinted with the date 1964. Thereafter, Panama clambered aboard every philatelic bandwagon with long sets for every international event, from the World Fairs in Brussels and New York (1958 and 1964 respectively) to the summer and winter Olympic Games and American space achievements. A set of five stamps in honour of the late Franklin D Roosevelt appeared in 1948, to be followed by sets portraying Pope Pius XII in 1959, Dag Hammarskjöld in 1961 and 1964, Pope John XXIII in 1964, and John F Kennedy from 1965 to 1966.

Purely thematic sets began to supplement the definitive series in 1962. The first of these consisted of ordinary and airmail stamps with the theme of Freedom of Worship. The designs showed churches and temples of the various religious sects represented in Panama. Subsequent issues were birds and marine life, flowers, domestic and wild animals, paintings and butterflies. Many of Panama's issues from 1965 to 1969 were regarded by the standard catalogues as excessive in relation to postal needs, and either relegated to an appendix or ignored altogether.

Back to respectability

In 1970, however, Panama began the long, slow, painful climb back to philatelic respectability with a new issue policy that is generally modest by today's tendency to stick to subjects that are of specific relevance to the country. Certainly there have been occasional lapses, such as the unduly prolific Olympic and world Cup issues of 1980 with the subsequent medal winner's overprints, but since then

commendable restraint has been the order of the day.

Apart from ordinary stamps, Panama was notable for its 'back of the book' issues, particularly stamps for registration, acknowledgement of receipt, express letters, later mail and postal insurance, a tradition that goes all the way back to the period of the stamps as a department of Colombia. Mint or used are not hard to obtain, but they are very elusive on commercial covers.

(Courtesy : Gibbon's Stamp monthly 2003).

THE STORY OF GANDHI STAMPS T.N. Mehta

T.N.Mehta worked for the Indian Postal Administration from the birth of Indian independence. (1947) until he retired. (1965) His job involved the production of all Indian Stamps, and other philatelic matters. In 1967-1968 he served in Nigeria as Expert Philatelic (UPU) and reorgnied the philatelic service of that country.

On January 21, 1948, when Jawaharlal Nehru was Prime Minister of India and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai held the Communications Office, the Director General, Posts and Telegraphs (P & T), sent a letter to Security Printing at Nasik Road calling for specimen designs for Gandhi Stamps.

The idea was to issue a set of three or four stamps on Gandhiji's eightieth birthday (October 2, 1949) depicting memorable events in his life, such as the fast for communal unity in 1924, the Dandi march of 1930, and the fast the communal peace in Delhi a few days earlier.

It did not take the Master of the India Security Press more than six days to suggest a compact set of four denominations. 1 ½ annas, 3 ½ annas, 8 annas, and 1 rupee. He proposed that the first three values be printed in a single colour in the existing anna size, and the fourth value in two colours in rupee size.

A line portrait of Gandhiji prepared earlier was available at the Nasik Security Press. Two trial copies, one in the anna and the other in the rupee size, showing Gandhi's characteristic pose, were submitted for consideration, alternatively, it was suggested that a photograph approved by the Mahatma be adopted for the proposed stamps.

While these preparations were afoot, however, tragedy struck, Gandhiji was assassinated on January 30.



The picture had changed entirely and government switched over to designing "mourning" stamps.

Accordingly, on February 6, the Security Press was asked to furnish quickly fresh designs based on an approved sketch drawn by C. Biswas, an Indian artist. Two denominations were proposed, a 2 ½ -anna for inland air mail and a 12-anna for air mail to the United Kingdom. Proofs of the designs, in somber shades of grey and olive green, were sent by the Security Press on February 17.

Jawaharlal Nehru suggested that the world "Bapu" be included in the proposed stamp designs both in Hindi and Urdu. This was a welcome suggestion in view of Gandhiji's life-long struggle to maintain peace and communal harmony. The inclusion of Hindi and Urdu inscriptions was a special significance both politically and philatelically. On no other Indian stamp does Urdu find a place; the script used is Hindi (Devanagiri) and English.

Asked on March 12 to send revised proofs, and to include a 10-rupee denomination in the proposed set of the mourning stamps, the Security Press promptly submitted these on March 16. Although this correspondence apparently was at the final stage, the authorities in New Delhi, in a typical bureaucratic manner, carried on negotiations behind the back of the Nasik Press with the Austrian State Printing Press, Vienna, as well as with the well-known Swiss printers Helio Courvoisier, S.A., La Claux De Fonds.

The print order finally was placed with the Swiss firm which was known for its works of art, naturally, this led to bad feelings, The Nasik Press felt it had been deprived of its legitimate right to offer indigenously produced Gandhi Stamps. The Master of the Nasik Security Press, R.C.G. Chapman, an Englishman, wanted to quit, but Rafi Ahmed Kidwai saved the situation.

It was argued that India did not have the photogravure printing which the Swiss printers could offer to produce the best results in stamp printing. If Gandhi had been alive to see his own stamps produced as originally envisaged, there was no doubt in anyone's mind that he would have put his foot down on "Videshi" printing. Coarse or not, the stamps would have been acceptable everywhere.

An extensive search also was on at this time to obtain suitable photographs of Gandhiji to be used on the stamps. After a wide, wild hunt, those entrusted with the task stumbled upon two photographs one from the now-defunct Life magazine, and the other lent by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, but which belonged

to Kanu Gandhi grandson of the Mahatma. The Photograph from Life showed the Mahatma unclothed above the waist, perhaps taken at his Ashram in Wardha during the summer months. Officials thought that would be derogatory to portray the "father of the nation" in such a manner, and so they asked the Swiss printers to adequately cover the naked portion of his body. This they did but the sketched-in clothing in no way approximated Indian garb, or the way Gandhiji used to put on Khadi (as could be seen in his portrait adorning the Central Hall of the Parliament, and in several of his photographs in official and private collections).



The Swiss firm secured orders for printing thirty-two million stamps in four denominations; 1 ½ annas, 3 ½ annas, 12 annas, and 10 rupees the first three in a single color, and the fourth in two colours.

Why a 10 rupee Gandhi Stamp? Commemorative stamps invariably are issued in popular postage denominations; the 10-rupee variety in the Gandhi series is probably the solitary example of its kind. The step deprived a large number of collectors of possessing the full set because they could not afford the 10-rupee stamp. To other philatelists, however, this was a boon, because the value of the set has been steadily mounting year after year.

Philatelists the world over were agitated by this inclusion of a high denomination in the Gandhi set, Margaret Bourke-White of Time/Life, who knew the Mahatma well, met Sir Benegal Rama Rau, the Indian Ambassador to Washington, and later sent a long cable strongly protesting this move, and stating that it was highly improper for the government of India to issue a 10-rupee stamp in the name of Gandhiji who always used the cheapest means of communication a postcard.

Bureaucracy could not have done a greater disservice to Gandhi! Yet another move that inflated the value of the Gandhi stamp occurred when the sale of these stamps (initially) was restricted to three months. This meant that the unsold stocks had to be withdrawn and destroyed in substantial quantities, resulting in great loss in terms of foreign exchange involved in the printing of stamps. As soon as the stocks were reduced, prices shot up.

It was on August 15, 1948 the first anniversary of India independence that the Gandhi stamps were released. They had been printed by the heliogravure process on coated paper made of pulp and silk fibers, but the gum on the back of the stamp sheets did not suit the Indian climate, particularly during the season when the stamps were released, when the humidity was high.

As soon as the sheets were taken out of the packing and exposed to the atmosphere, they became



stuck to the thin paper inter-leaving, thus, from the philatelic standpoint, ruining the stamps. It is possible that the Swiss printers were not familiar with climatic conditions in India, or with properties of the gum applied to the stamps.

Later the same year, some high-ranking officials proposed that an extremely limited quantity of the Gandhi Stamps be overprinted with the word "Service". These were to be used on official mails emanating from the Secretariat of the Governor-General C. RajaGopalachari, The P&T Department believed that because the stamps were commemorative, it would be against philatelic ethics to overprint them. But these observations were overruled, and the required quantities were overprinted. There never has been a case such as this when the philatelic code was ignored and the will of the bureaucrat prevail.

A few "used" copies of these "Service" Stamps are known to exist, but I am not aware of even one copy of the 10-rupee denomination surfacing. These stamps thus turned out to be the rarest gems of the independence issues.

The limited supplies have led to forgery, a common evil in philately. However, these are crude forgeries, restricted to the anna values.

The Indian officials who went berserk probably did not understand that Philately has its own norms, and that any breach of these would affect the entire stamp collecting fraternity, to which Gandhi himself belonged. With all his social and political preoccupations, he still found time to collect stamps. He wrote that in 1896 he was faced with the task of circulating what came to be known as the "green pamphlet," and this is how he solved the "manpower" problem:

But I hit upon a much simpler plan. I gathered together all the children in my locality and asked them to volunteer two or three hours labour of a morning, when they had no school. This they willingly agreed to do, I promised to bless them and give them, as a reward, used postage stamps which I had collected.

The P & T Department should have realized that taking too many philatelic liberties would cause bad feelings. It still is rumored that the Swiss printers supplied a small number of Gandhi stamps imprinted with the word "specimen" to the Indian legation in Berne, which in turn presented them to certain dignitaries.



The Berne legation had only given the P&T Department a few sheets of the 10-rupee Gandhi issue containing a printing flaw - a dot between the words "India" and "Postage" occurring on the first stamp of the third horizontal row. These are on view in the New Delhi Philatelic Museum (Figure 5).

But no "Specimen" stamp actually was received by the P & T Department and none was printed or circulated

according to records. It is possible that the Gandhi stamp series - a many splendored thing in its own right caused much more than a ripple in the sea of stamp collecting. The "Specimen" stamp could be a forgery, a stunt, or at best, a philatelic fantasy, but one never knows.



The P & T Department also brought out a set of four Gandhi picture postcards (Figure 6) with the introduction of Inland Postcards printed for the first time in Hindi (Devanagiri Script) and released for use, effective October 2, 1951, which coincided with Mahatma Gandhi's eighty-second birthday. The picture postcards, imprinted with the face value of 9-pies each the then prevailing postcard rate were sold at double the face value i.e., 1 1/2 annas per postcard - a rather unusual and extraordinary measure adopted in this instance. The pictures reproduced on these postcards were obtained from the collection of Kanu Gandhi who demanded a royalty payment of 12 1/2 percent on the sale of such cards.

Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, then Minister of Communications, persuaded him to accept a token royalty of 2,500 rupees. The job of printing the picture postcards was entrusted to the India Security Press, most likely to placate it for what had happened over the printing of the Gandhi memorial stamps.

The story of Gandhi stamps would not be complete without saying a word about all other Gandhi stamps those issued in commemoration of the Gandhi centenary (1969), and others which formed part of a series dedicated to



"Workers for peace" (for example, Martin Luther King). Forty-one countries of the world, including the United States and Britain, issued such stamps. However, on the Asian continent, only India (which had sponsored the Gandhi centenary commemoratives.), the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, the Syrian Arab Republic, and Southern Yemen issued such stamps. Burma, as a token of its participation in this great event authorized the use of a special postmark on October 2, 1969, to frank mails at the Rangoon General Post Office. The postmark bore the inscription. "Gandhi Centenary 1869 - 1969."

A critical view of all these Gandhi stamps shows that the British version of the Gandhi stamp is the most outstanding and a classic example of philatelic art and printing. This stamp could well be acclaimed the world's best Gandhi stamp, Designed by Biman Mullick, an Indian artist living in Britain, the Stamp, released in 1 shilling 6-pence denomination, bears Gandhi's characteristic smiling pose against a background of the Indian tri-color. The stamp was printed by the photogravure process at the world renowned Harrison and Sons Limited (England), one of the oldest security printers in Britain.

The unique feature of this stamp is that it is the only one in the whole of the British stamp series devoted to a non-British personality a rate honor indeed. This was an extraordinary gesture on the part of the British government; the stamp is an everlasting. Symbol of goodwill and friendship the first country other than India that honored Mahatma Gandhi on



its stamp was the United States. Two stamps (4- and 8-cent denominations) were issued on India's Republic Day for the U.S. Champion of Liberty Series of 1961, with printings of 120 and forty million, respectively. The quantities of the 4-cent stamp are the largest of any single Gandhiji commemorative stamp issued thus far (Figure 8). The portrait of Gandhi adopted on these two stamps was obtained from R.L.Lekhi, Official Photographer of the government of India's Photo Division. The U.S. Post Office Department organized a special ceremony for the release of these stamps at which Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Indian Ambassador Mahamedali Currim Chagle were present.

I will conclude by quoting from the review of book by Haskell Frankel:

"If one brash American heart can break through one Englishman's starched reserve, what is not possible between people in this tortured world? And what is loneliness but an illusion of private affliction which people are waiting to dispel at the other end of a postage stamp?"

(Courtesy : American Philatelist, 1980)

STORY OF A POSTAGE STAMP THAT PUT THE CANAL THROUGH PANAMA

Dr. P.V. Ramachandra

Had it not been for a young and clever Frenchman and a tell tale 1 centavo postage stamp issued by Nicaragua, the Panama Canal would not have been existing today. Instead the great canal would have been in Nicaragua.

The logical site for a Trans - isthmus canal was through Nicaragua. In fact, when the United States and Spain went to war in 1898, much of the U.S. fleet was in the Pacific Ocean, at a time when it was needed in the Atlantic Ocean. Had there been a canal at the time, Cuba would have earned its independence much earlier.

International trade was booming during the closing years of the nineteenth century. The need to have a waterway through Central America linking the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans was felt. The canal would reduce 12800km of sailing aground Cape Horn. The first to act were the

French. Ferdinand de Lesseps, builder of the Suez Canal signed a limited time contract in 1878 with Colombia to build a waterway across the isthmus of Panama.

At that time Panama was a part of Colombia. Ferdinand headed a French company and the digging operations began in 1889. Fortune was not on the side of Ferdinand and he had to abandon the project on the face of increasing problems. A brilliant and young French engineer named Philippe Jean Bunau Varilla became the Chief Engineer of the company. He had dreamt of building a canal across the Isthmus of Panama. He was not prepared to give up his dream; if the French could not build the canal, the Americans would build it. The French company had raised millions of francs through sale of stock and now the enterprise was almost a failure. Bunau - varilla came to Washington to promote the sale of the assets of he company to the United States at a price of 40 million dollars. He used every publicity method, met the President of the USA; and talked to the Congressmen. But the Americans were not interested in the Panama Canal. The US favored the canal through Nicaragua, the little Central American country, just to the north of the Isthmus of Panama. Though this route would be longer, it would be easier to build and maintain. Bunau Varilla advanced the argument that the Nicaraguan route is constantly endangered by volcanic eruptions.

In the spring of 1902, when the Congress of the United States met to hear the final arguments on the route, which the American built canal would take, it was widely acknowledged that the Nicaraguan route would be endorsed. And Nicaragua might have been selected, without any opposition, were not holders of the worthless Panama bonds determined that the only way in M/s. Ship thro' Panama canal to be built in Panama. Then, one of the history's dramatic ironies took place. Newspapers reported a volcanic eruption from Mount Momotombo and the proposed route of Nicaraguan Canal was very close to the volcanic mountain. The Nicaraguan officials denied the eruption and the senator declared there were no active volcanoes in Nicaragua. Bunau - Varilla almost lost his bid.



A stamp collector presented Bunau - Varilla, with a Nicaraguan postage stamp pictured above (same design and of denomination one centavo). This stamp bore a picture of Mt. Momotombo with a plume of smoke at its summit. Nicaragua, had claimed that the volcano was extinct - yet the stamp showed the mountain crowned with a tall plume of smoke - an official acceptance of active volcano.



The energetic engineer was excited. He scurried around Washington and managed to obtain 90 of these Stamps, one for each of the senators who were about to vote for the route. Just before the final vote was taken, every senator received a copy of this postage stamp and a simple note in Bunau - Varilla's hand writing: "Would you build a canal through a country with active volcanoes? Here is proof that Nicaragua has active volcanoes. There are no volcanoes in Panama." By a margin of 8 votes, The Nicaraguan route was defeated. The Senate decided to renew the unexpired contract and build the canal across Panama instead of Nicaragua.

A POSTAGE STAMP HAD MOVED THE CANAL!

This is not the end of the story. Bunau - Varilla faced a new problem from Colombia. since many countries were interested in building the passage across the Isthmus, it would be to the advantage of Colombia to stall for times. Bunau - Varilla decided to bypass Colombia, he encouraged a revolution! Panama had a bloodless revolution and the liberation leader Manuel Amadore became a political hero of Panama. Bunau - Varilla organized the new government, drew up its constitution. He made himself the first Panamanian Minister to the United States, drew up the famous treaty giving the US the right to own and operate a canal through Panama in perpetuity. It was signed on November 18, 1903. And overnight, the holders of something like \$40,000,000 in once worthless bonds, found that they were fortunate. The United States bought the bonds and the new canal was built. All but for a postage stamp!

Philippe Bunau Varilla, true father of Panama and the great Canal of Panama, died in 1940. Perhaps this great effort of Bunau Varilla made some one to make a famous palindrome:

A MAN, A PLAN, A CANAL, PANAMA

(A palindrome is a word, line, verse, etc., reading the same backward as forward. The above sentence reads the same backward.)

Panama canal is 82 km long and 150 metres wide in most places. It was built by the US Corps of Engineers (1904 - 1914). Panama has guaranteed the neutrality of the waterway when it had taken over the operational control of the canal in 2000.

Republic of Panama, Capital: Panama City, Currency: Balboa, First Stamp 1878
 Republic of Nicaragua, Capital: Managua, Currency: Cordoba, First Stamp 1862
 Republic of Colombia, Capital: Bogota, Currency: Peso, First stamp 1859

(Courtesy : Dr. P. V. Ramachandra, Member, Karnataka Philatelic Society Karnapex, 2003)

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