

India: The 1948 Gandhi Memorial Issue (Part 1)

By Pradip Jain

Pradip Jain begins a two-part, in-depth study of the most popular Indian stamps of George VI era—the Gandhi Memorial issue of 1948. In this first instalment, Pradip examines the development of the issue, from the initial essays and colour trials, to the issued stamps and the highly desirable philatelic products related with them.

In 1948 the Government of India issued a set of four commemorative stamps on the first anniversary of independence dedicated to the father (*Bapu*) of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi. These were the first commemorative stamps of independent India and the only set of stamps printed outside India after independence; it was ironic that the memorial stamps of Gandhi, the exponent of *swadeshi* (self-sufficiency), were printed by a *videshi* (foreign) press. This issue stands as the most popular issue of post independent India among the philatelic fraternity throughout the world.

From celebration plans to mourning issue

The government of India was preparing to issue a set of stamps on Gandhi's 80th birthday on 2 October 1949 as a mark of respect for his contribution towards the nation's struggle for independence. In January 1948 the India Security Press (ISP) at Nasik was asked to prepare designs depicting memorable events in Gandhi's life. The Master of the ISP, Mr R C G Chapman, sent his suggestions for a compact set of four stamps in the denomination of 1½a., 3½a., 8a. and 1r. He also submitted two trial copies, one in the anna and the other in the rupee size, showing Gandhi's characteristic pose. It was also suggested to seek Mahatma's approval for the design for the proposed stamps.

The tragic assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on 30 January 1948 changed the whole scenario for the stamp issue. Now it was decided to issue two mourning stamps in memory of Gandhi. On 6 February 1948 the ISP was asked to furnish fresh designs based on an approved sketch by Mr C Biswas, an Indian artist and the manager of the Commerce Ministry Press, New Delhi. The proposed denominations were 2½a. for inland airmail and 12a. for airmail to the UK.

The ISP sent proofs of the design on 17 February 1948. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru suggested including the word '*Bapu*' in the proposed stamp design in both Hindi and Urdu in view of Gandhi's life-long struggle to maintain peace and communal harmony. This was the only occasion that Urdu appeared on an Indian stamp. On 12 March 1948 the ISP was asked to send revised proofs and to include a 10r. denomination in the proposed set of mourning stamps. The Press submitted the new designs on 16 March (Fig 1).

Negotiations were, however, also running with the Austrian State Printing Press in Vienna, and the Swiss printers Helio Courvoisier in La Chaux-de-Fonds, with a view to have the memorial stamps printed by the up-to-date printing process of photogravure, an option which was not available with the ISP at that time. The print order was finally placed with Courvoisier, depriving India's ISP of its legitimate right to offer indigenously produced Gandhi stamps. The lack of photogravure technology with the ISP and the design prowess of Courvoisier were the reasons behind the decision, as stated by the government's bureaucrats.

Two photographs were selected for the design the stamps—one came from *Life* magazine, the other was submitted by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, but came from the private collection of Kanu Gandhi, the grandson of Mahatma.

Key agencies

The history of the printing with Courvoisier involves three organisations with the following key members: Mr V H Coelho, first secretary at the Legation of India, Berne; Mr Guido Essig, Head of administration at Courvoisier; and Dr Fritz Hess, Director General of the Swiss Postal Telegraph and Telephone agency (PTT) in Berne. Dr Hess was there to ensure the printing work was carried out under the proper security conditions.

It is worth noting that a major part of the correspondence related to the selection of the final design, as well as the various tests, and the final printing and dispatching, were carried out amongst the above mentioned individuals representing these three important organisations.

Though talks had progressed with Courvoisier at the beginning of May 1948, a formal print order for the Gandhi Memorial stamps was handed over to the printers by Mr Coelho of the Legation on 26 May 1948.

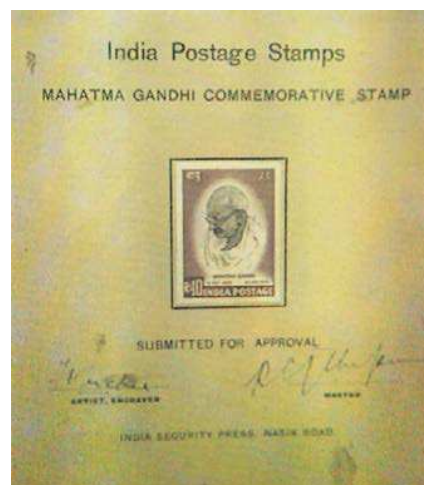


Fig 1 An unadopted design produced by the ISP for the Gandhi Memorial issue. Image courtesy of the National Philatelic Museum, New Delhi

Base photo credits: american_rugbier. Gandhi statue in Washington DC. Thierry Ehrmann. Mahatma Gandhi painted portrait



Fig 2 A selection of the colour printing test for the 1½a. made on 30 April and 5 May 1948

In a letter to the Legation following the order, Courvoisier requested to keep in its possession 1000 stamps of each value for Courvoisier to keep in its possession 1000 stamps of each value for publicity. In a similar letter sent from the PTT on 2 June 1948, a request was made for 100 stamps of each value for its foreign collection and an additional 500 stamps of each value for its archive.

Printing tests

Tests of the engravings were carried out by Courvoisier on various cylinders on 30 April, 5 May, 24 May, 1 June and 7 June. The results obtained were then sent to the PTT and the Indian Legation for approval. The printers carried out 22 essays for the 1½a. in various colour schemes on 30 April and 5 May (Fig 2).

A single design was approved for the first three values of the Memorial Issues: 1½a., 3½a. and 12a., but with a variation in colour schemes. Fresh colour trial submissions were made on 19 May 1948 and submitted with the PTT and Mr Coelho. The first tests of complete sheets of the 1½a., 3½a. and 12a. were carried out on 1 June 1948 and forwarded to the PTT.



Fig 3 A photographic proof of the first three Memorial stamps, including the unadopted design for the 12a. value

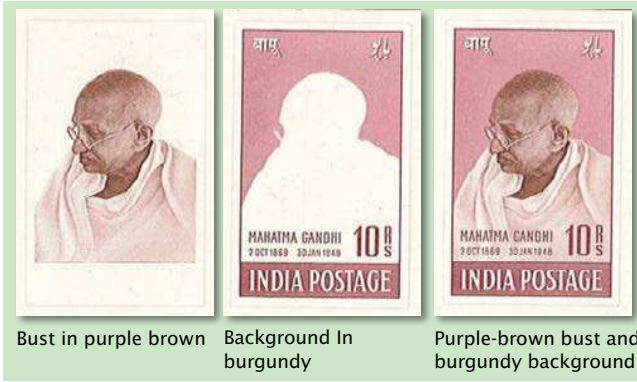
Table 1:

1.5 annas	3.5 annas	12 annas
2 sheets no. 72595–96 cyl no. 1	2 sheets of 50 stamps each no.57726–27	2 sheets nos. 57889–90
2 sheets no. 95295–96 cyl. no. 2		
2 sheets no. 58366–67 cyl. no. 4		

(Courvoisier Archives)

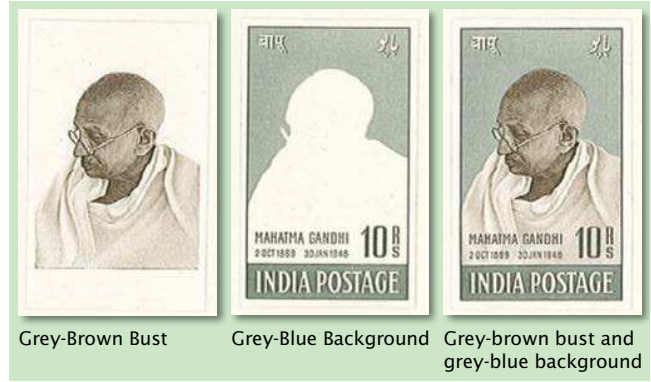
Additionally, two sheets each of the 3½a. and 12a. were submitted to the Legation for single colour approval. Mr Coelho approved the final proofs of the 3½a. and 12a. in purple-blue and green on 4 June, after the printing of 1½a. stamp was completed with satisfaction.

Fig 4 Test 22



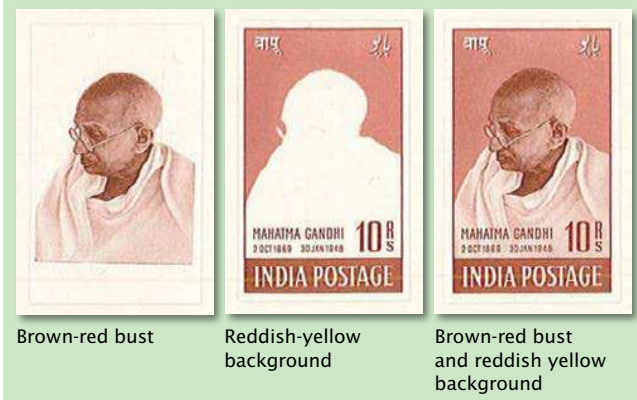
Bust in purple brown Background In burgundy Purple-brown bust and burgundy background

Fig 4 Test 23



Grey-Brown Bust Grey-Blue Background Grey-brown bust and grey-blue background

Fig 4 Test 24



Brown-red bust Reddish-yellow background Brown-red bust and reddish yellow background

Fig 5 Test 25



Grey-brown bust Light blue background Grey brown bust and light blue background

Fig 5 Test 26



Grey-brown bust Grey-blue background Grey-brown bust and grey-blue background

Fig 5 Test 27



Grey-blue deep background Grey-brown bust and grey-blue deep background

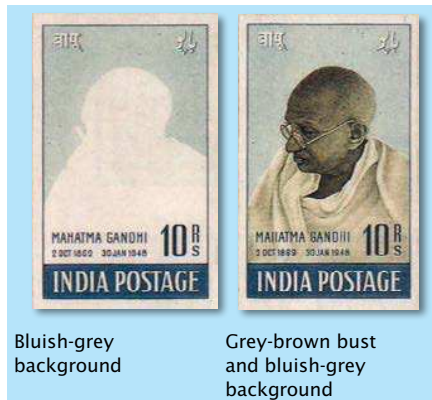
Colour trials of the 10r.

The first colour trials for the 10r. stamp (test Nos. 22, 23 and 24) were submitted with the Legation and the PTT on 24 May 1948 (Fig 4).

The tests were returned over to Courvoisier after evaluation with suggestion to lighten the background giving prominence to the bust. Further tests (Nos. 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29) were done on 1 June 1948 and were forwarded to the PTT and the Legation (Fig 5).

Fresh essays numbering 30–32 (Fig 6 and Fig 7) were submitted to the PTT and the Legation on 9 June 1948. These featured Gandhi's portrait in grey-black with three variations in the background: pink, red and red-brown. The tests numbering 33–35 used the same three colour variants of the background but with Gandhi's portrait in grey-black with a tint of red. A total of 12 trials of the 10r. value were submitted to the Legation as well as the PTT.

Fig 5 Test 28



Bluish-grey background Grey-brown bust and bluish-grey background

Fig 5 Test 29



Greece olive shade background Grey-brown bust and Greece olive shade background

In a letter from Courvoisier to the PTT on 2 June 1948, it mentions that a total of 594 gummed sheets were used to print essays for the 1½a., 3½a., and 12a. Out of that number, 425 were waste sheets and the remaining 169 were used to cut out 169 essays i.e. one essay per

Fig 6 10r. colour test numbers 30–32



Fig 7 10r. colour test numbers 33–35



sheet. A further 173 gummed sheets were used to print essays for the 10r., out of which 119 were wasted and the remaining 54 used for single cut-outs.

Printing and promotions

The Memorial stamps were due for printing by 10 June 1948. Mr Coelho, on behalf of the Legation, requested Courvoisier to supply 400 photographs for promotional purposes (Fig 8). An additional quantity of 100 photographs was requested on 21 June 1948.

The publicity was carried out at no additional cost and the photographs along with details of the stamps were sent to five publications namely: *New York Herald Tribune*, *Stamps New York*, *Newark Evening News*, *Svensk Filatelistisk Tidskrift*, Stockholm, *Zumstein & Cie - Journal Philatelique de Berne*, and E Muller S A Bale *Die Basler Taube*.

On 30 June 1948, four sheets of the 10r. value were sent to the PTT as print trials to meet final approval. Another four sheets were sent to the Legation for final inspection and approval. On 2 July 1948 an additional six sheets were sent to New Delhi and forwarded to Mr Coelho of the Legation.

G.S.M. November 2014

On 6 July 1948, formal requests from the Legation were made to transfer the following quantities to the Washington and London Embassies (Table 2), to arrive before 31 July 1948 for a joint release with India on 15 August 1948. Due to a shortage of the 3½a. stamp, as it was still under production, the Courvoisier could only supply a lower quantity to the embassies.

Table 2:

Denomination	LONDON	WASHINGTON
1½a.	400000	400000
3½a.	400000 (250000 sent)	400000 (250000 sent)
12a.	400000	400000
10r.	25000	25000

(Courvoisier Archives)

A first consignment of 200,000 10r. stamps was flown to India on 14 June 1948, with the remaining lots transferred to London and Washington. The stamps were posted in lots by the Courvoisier to the ISP through various shipments during June and July. The stamps



Fig 8 Promotional photographs used to advertise the launch of the issue in the press

were sent from Geneva to Bombay by Air India International and subsequently sent to the ISP for distribution.

The issue

The Memorial stamps were finally released in India, the Indian Embassy in Washington DC, High Commission London, the Indian Embassy Post Office Nepal, and Pondicherry (then a French colony) on 15 August 1948, the first anniversary of India's independence, as a fitting tribute to the memory of Mahatma Gandhi.

The commemorative stamps were made available from philatelic bureaux set up in the principle post offices in the town of Calcutta, Cuttuck, Lucknow, Madras, Nagpur, New Delhi, Patna, Simla and Shillong and Bombay (where the bureau was working since 1946), all head post offices and selected sub post offices. As the 15 August 1948 was a Sunday, a nationwide Postal Notice No. 32 dated 7 August 1948 was circulated through all Philatelic Bureaus and Head Post Offices announcing that special arrangements had been made to keep the offices open for the release of the stamps (Fig 10). The quantity printed, colours and control plate numbers are shown in Table 3.

The specimen issue and special folders

On request of the Legation, Courvoisier also undertook the task of printing a very limited quantity of the Memorial stamps overprinted 'SPECIMEN' which were to be presented to the dignitaries and high officials of various countries.

The first correspondence related to the Specimen overprints took place on 13 July 1948, where in Courvoisier suggested that the word to be overprinted on the top of the stamps and special booklets be prepared bearing the inscription 'Indian Posts and Telegraphs department - Mahatma Gandhi memorial stamps - 15th august 1948'.

Courvoisier offered to print 100 such specimen booklets and requested the Legation for suggestions as to the placement of the overprint. Finally, after the position was decided upon, the overprint was added to all four values which were then affixed to a golden card and presented in a black velvet folder (Fig 11).

On the request of the Legation, Courvoisier also produced a number of folders which were used for publicity purposes (Fig 12). Courvoisier also produced a few Minister folders which featured blocks of four of each value and were prepared to be presented to various dignitaries, mainly in Europe and America. Few of these folders have surfaced recently and are considered rare given the popularity of the stamps (Fig 13).

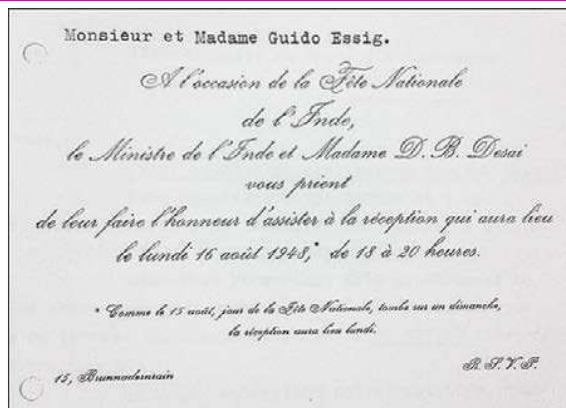


Fig 9: An invitation card sent from the Indian Legation in Berne to Mr and Mrs Essig on 16 August 1948 to celebrate the first anniversary of independence and the release of the stamps by the then Minister Mr D B Desai

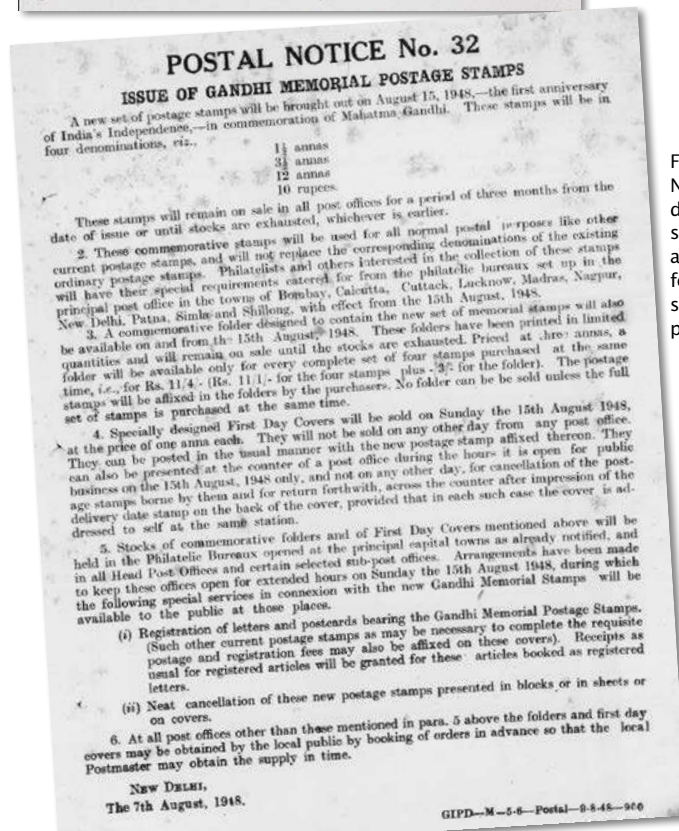


Fig 10 The Postal Notice No. 32 detailing the special issuing arrangements made for the memorial stamps and related philatelic products



Fig 11 Specimen overprints in the limited edition booklet designed by Courvoisier

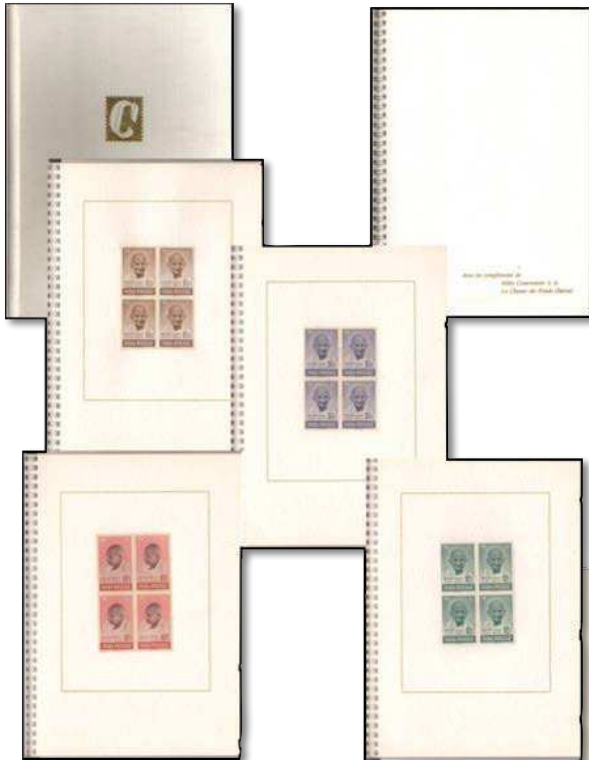
Table 3:

Denomination	Colour	Quantity Printed	Plate/Control Number
1½a.	Sepia brown	25,000,000	A, A3, A4, A5, A6, B1, B3, B4, B5, B6, 12, 22
3½a. 10Rs	Bluish purple	2,500,000	A1, A2, B1, B2
12a.	Dark green	3,750,000	A1, A2, B1, B2
10r.	Reddish brown	250,000	A1 1, B1 1

(Courvoisier Archives)



Fig 12: The publicity folders designed and prepared by Courvoisier



Left: Fig 13: The Ministers' booklet which contained a block of four of each value



Above: Fig 14 An official first day cover with full set of the memorial issue affixed and tied with special first day pictorial cachet (Reduced)

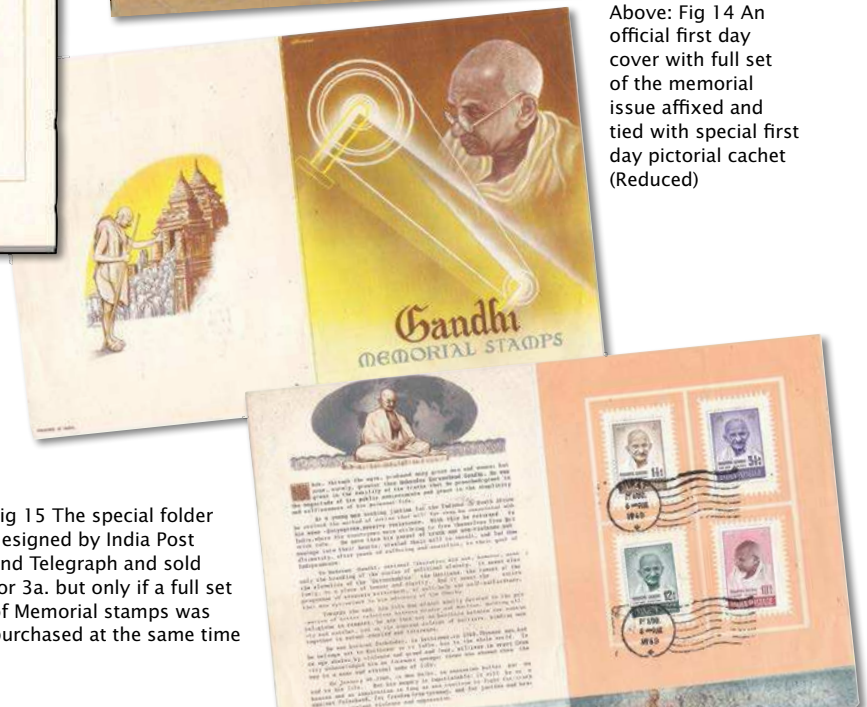


Fig 15 The special folder designed by India Post and Telegraph and sold for 3a. but only if a full set of Memorial stamps was purchased at the same time

Especially designed first day covers (Fig 14) and folders (Fig 15) were sold for 1a. and 3a. respectively. However, in order to be able to purchase a folder the full set of stamps needed to be purchased at the same time.

A special commemorative postmark was prepared for the day but as these were prepared locally differs in shape and size (Fig 16). Table 4 and Table 5 show the offices where the special cancellation was applied. Normal date cancellation was also provided at selected post offices and sub post offices.

In part two of this article, Pradip reveals the recorded varieties and noteworthy uses of the 1948 Gandhi Memorial issue, and also details the background to the famous 'Service' overprints.

Table 4:

Notified Places of Special Cancellation	
Bombay	Nagpur
Calcutta	New Delhi / Delhi
Cuttack	Patna
Lucknow	Shimla
Madras	Shillong

(Courvoisier Archives)

Table 5:

Additional Places Recorded with Special Cancellation				
Allahabad	Banaras	Hyderabad	Madurai	Trivandrum
Agra	Bangalore	Jaipur	Ootacamund	
Ahmedabad	Bhopal	Jammu	Pondicherry	
Ambala	Bhubaneswar	Jubbulpore	Poona	
Amritsar	Dehradun	Kanpur	Srinagar	

(Courvoisier Archives)



Fig 16 A Type 2 cancellation with 'AUG' instead of 'AUGUST', which is found only with MADRAS

India: The 1948 Gandhi Memorial Issue (Part 2)

By Pradip Jain

In last month's article Pradip Jain detailed the various agencies, printing processes and logistics that came together to produce and distribute the 1948 Gandhi Memorial stamps. In this second instalment Pradip discusses the recorded varieties and noteworthy uses surrounding this important and very popular issue.

As detailed in last month's article, the 1948 Gandhi Memorial stamps were issued on 15 August 1948, the first anniversary of India's Independence. They were printed by Heliogravure process on coated paper made of pulp and silk fibres (used for security and control). However, soon after issue several complaints regarding gumming problems surfaced. Unfortunately, the gums applied to the stamps were not Indian climate friendly and stuck to the thin interleaving when exposed to atmosphere. Mr Guido Essig, Head of administration at Courvoisier, later on admitted that the gum used was a regular, all-purpose one and Courvoisier were unaware of the threat Indian climatic conditions would pose to it. Thus, stamps in unmounted condition are scarcer today and command a high premium.

Initially the sale of these stamps was restricted to the three months ending on 15 November 1948. However, in view of the 55th session of the Indian National Congress, taking place at Jaipur in December, this was extended until 31 December 1948 (Fig 1). The sale of the Gandhi Memorial stamps was closed on the evening of 31 December 1948 and remaining quantities were withdrawn from sale and destroyed. Table 1 shows the total number of stamps that were printed, sold and destroyed.

Recorded varieties

The issue produced several recorded varieties. These included an interesting 'dot' variety which surfaced on the 10r. stamp located between the words 'India' and 'Postage' (Fig 2). In a letter to India Post dated 6 February 1951, Courvoisier clarified that the error was confined to the essays and was not found in any sheets up for final sale. The letter further clarifies that the error only exists in six proof sheets, out of which five are with India Post. The sheets are now preserved in the National Postal Museum, New Delhi.

An interesting variety, where the upper part of the stamp is not printed, has been recorded on the 1½a. (Fig 3). Known as the Head-cut variety it has been certified by the Royal Philatelic Society London as an example of 'printer's waste'. Naturally, only a few examples of this interesting

Fig 1 A registered cover bearing a complete set of the Gandhi stamps sent from Jaipur during the 55th session of the Indian National Congress (Reduced)



Fig 2 The dot variety found between the words 'India' and 'Postage' on the 10r. value

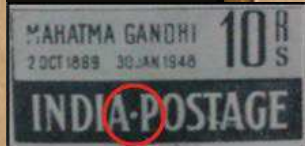


Fig 3 A pair of the 1½a. value featuring the Head-cut variety



Fig 4 A constant Pearl variety can be found below the Hindi text 'Bapu' of the 1½a. value



Table 1:

Denomination	Qty. Printed	Qty. Sold	Qty. Destroyed
1½ annas	25,000,000	24,680,924	319,076
3½ annas	2,500,000	2,226,324	273,676
12 annas	3,750,000	3,096,824	653,176
Rs. 10	250,000	229,974	20,026
Total	31,500,000	30,234,046	1,265,954

(C.N. Chandra)

Base photo credit: Soham Banerjee. Gandhi Statue

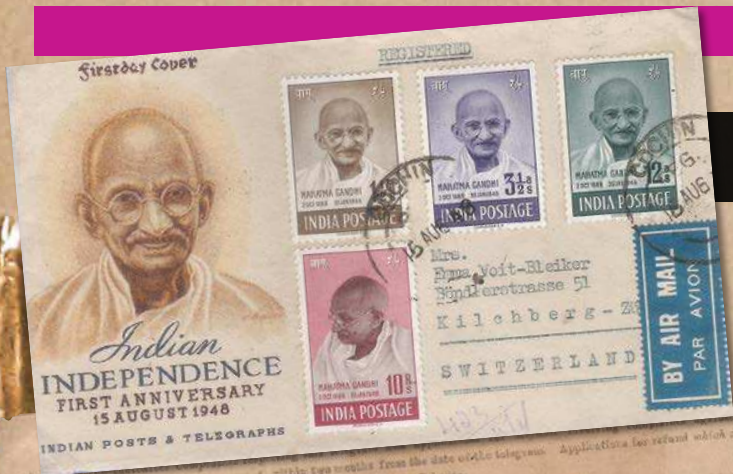


Fig 5 A pictorial f.d.c. sent registered airmail from Cochin to Switzerland. The full set of Memorial stamps paid well in excess of the going postal rate (Reduced)



Above: Fig 6 A registered airmail cover with a 'FIRST DAY COVER' handstamp sent from Porbandar (the birth place of Gandhi) to Bermuda, on 15 August 1948 (Reduced)



Left: Fig 7 A pair of 10r. Memorial stamps used on a telegram from Bombay to Karachi (Reduced)



Fig 8 Multiples of 12a. used on a telegram to Pakistan (Reduced)



Fig 9 A remarkable use of 10r. Memorial stamp for the payment of a license fee

error have surfaced. A small white dot, known as the Pearl variety, is recorded below the Hindi text 'Bapu' on the 1/2a. value (Fig 4). This variety was possibly due to some a tiny bulge on the cylinders used to print the stamps. It is a constant variety found in row 5 and pos 5 of plate No A4.

Noteworthy uses
The various uses of the Gandhi memorial issue have an important place in post-independent India's postal history. Elaborate arrangements were made all across the country for the sale of the stamps and various rulings of the Post and Telegraph department were amended to facilitate the mass use of these stamps on the first day of issue. As a result, a number of used covers can be found with a full set of Gandhi stamps paying well in excess of the postal rates. The amended rules also meant that registration was allowed on a Sunday (the day of issue) for the first time in the history of the Indian postal administration (Fig 5). The most desirable uses of the issue to collect are not those from the principal philatelic bureaux of the four major cities

of New Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, complete with the special pictorial cachet, but belong to the other, smaller areas where a limited supply of the Memorial stamps was sent and no pictorial cachet was prepared. Here an ordinary date cancellation was used, often with a First Day Cover handstamp (Fig 6). As stated in the Post Office circular No 41 dated 7 August 1948, the use of Memorial stamps was permitted to pay telegram fees. The high denomination of 10r. and the high telegram charges made it an appropriate arrangement (Fig 7 and Fig 8). Other non-postal uses have also been recorded, such as this example of the high value 10r. being used to pay a license fee (Fig 9).



Left and below: Fig 10 The obverse and reverse of a George VI Indian embossed registration envelope sent from Pondicherry to Ethiopia with a 3½a. Gandhi stamp used to help make up the 4r. registered airmail rate (Reduced)



Fig 11 An f.d.c. sent from the Indian Embassy in Nepal to the Prime Minister of Nepal (Reduced)



Fig 12 A registered cover from Nepal to Sweden with six examples of the 1½a. value (Reduced)



The Memorial stamps were simultaneously issued in the French territory of Pondicherry and at the Indian Embassy in Nepal. Genuine examples from these regions are extremely rare on cover. Shown here is a George VI Indian embossed registration envelope sent from Pondicherry with a 3½a. Memorial stamp added to help make up registered airmail rate to Ethiopia (Fig 10). The letter was returned to sender by surface mail. Also shown is a cover carrying a complete set of Memorial stamps sent from the Indian Embassy in Nepal to the then Prime Minister of Nepal on the first day of issue. Although Nepal had had an internal Postal Service since 1879, all foreign correspondence was channelled through the British India Post Office (later renamed 'The British Legation') in Kathmandu. The Kathmandu exchange PO was set up in 1919 to coordinate between them. After Independence, the British legation was taken over by the Indian Embassy PO which was closed on 12 April 1965. Fig 12 shows a registered cover sent from Nepal to Sweden with six examples of the 1½a. value on the reverse. The obverse of the cover

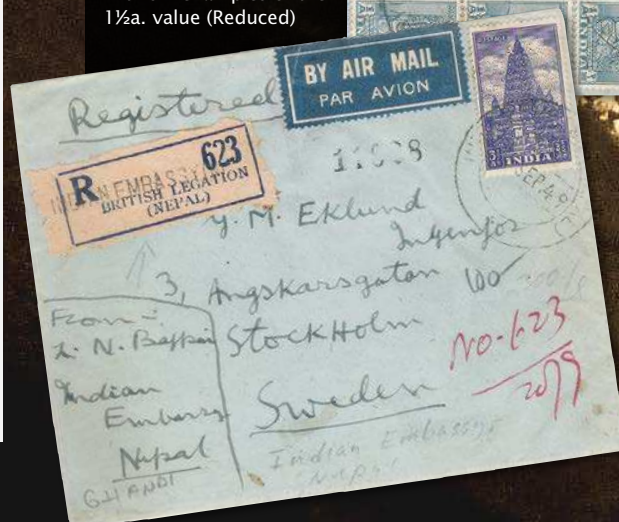




Fig 13 A 1 1/2a. Memorial stamp used on a letter from Tibet to Nepal (Reduced)



Fig 14 Gandhi Memorial stamps used to pay the airmail rate from Tibet to the United States (Reduced)



Fig 15 Memorial stamps used on a censored letter sent from Field Post Office 684 to Vienna, Austria (Reduced)

Fig 16 A 1 1/2a. Memorial stamp with the perfin 'MC' for the Madras Corporation, used on an official crested envelope for the Mayor of Madras



bears a British Legation registration label. Examples are also found later used from Tibet and Saigon, as well as combination uses in a few Indian states and field post offices, all of which are extremely rare on cover. Fig 13 shows a 1 1/2a. used with a 1/2a. George VI definitive on a letter from Gyantse (Tibet) to Kathmandu, Nepal. The cover from Tibet to the United States shown at Fig 14 features three Memorial values. As Tibet was not part of the UPU the Indian stamps were used to send the cover to the United States. Fig 15 shows an example of the 1 1/2a., 3 1/2a. and 12a. values used from field post office 684 on a censored letter to Vienna, Austria.

Perfins

Although perfins were not a common practice during the period of the Gandhi Memorials, examples are recorded from the following establishments: All India Reporter (perfin: AIR); Local Fund Service (LFS); Madras Corporation (MC) and the East Asiatic Company India Ltd (EAC). To date only three perfinned Memorial stamps used on cover have come to light (Fig 16).

Other notable uses

It is worthwhile to mention about some peculiar uses of the Memorial issue. Various private mourning covers exist. Those with complete sets of the stamps to overseas destination are scarce (Fig 17). Fig 18 shows a 12a. value used on official stationery of the Swiss Legation in India addressed to the Department of Commerce in Berne. As detailed in last month's article, the Swiss legation played an important role in the issue of Memorial stamps. Fig 19 shows a 1½a. the Memorial stamp used on a newspaper wrapper for the Delhi edition of *The Statesman*, posted to Cambridge, England.

On the first death anniversary of Gandhi on 30 January 1949 a supplementary slogan postmark 'Sabko Sanmati De Bhagwan' was applied for one day on incoming and outgoing mail from some selected post offices. Interestingly, on the same day the Inland Night Airmail Service was inaugurated in India and a special cachet was issued to mark the occasion. The cover sent from Nagpur shown at Fig 20, features a 1½a. Memorial stamp, as well as a scarce use of both the slogan postmark and the Night Airmail cachet.

That's all we have space for this issue but please join us next time when Pradip presents a detailed report on the rare Service overprints, created for exclusive use on the official mails of the Secretariat of the Governor General.



Fig 17 Private mourning cover with a complete set of Mourning stamps sent to the United States (Reduced)



Fig 18: A 12a. value used on official stationery of the Swiss Legation in India (Reduced)

Fig 19 1½a. used on a newspaper wrapper for the Delhi edition of *The Statesman* sent to Cambridge, England (Reduced)

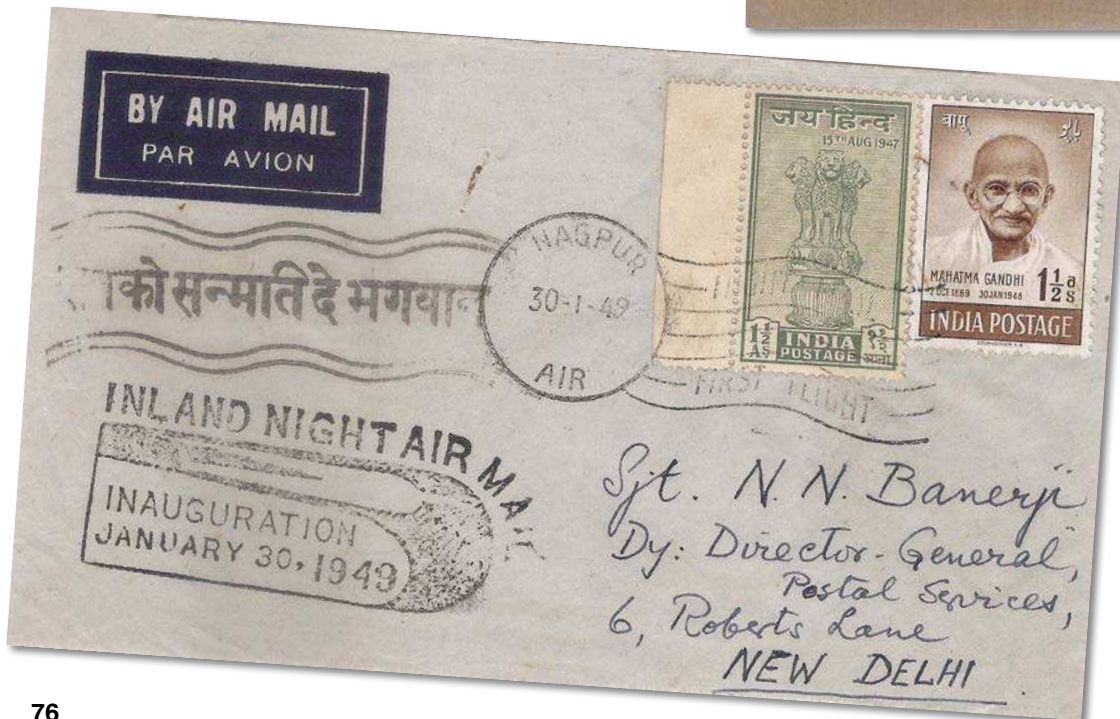
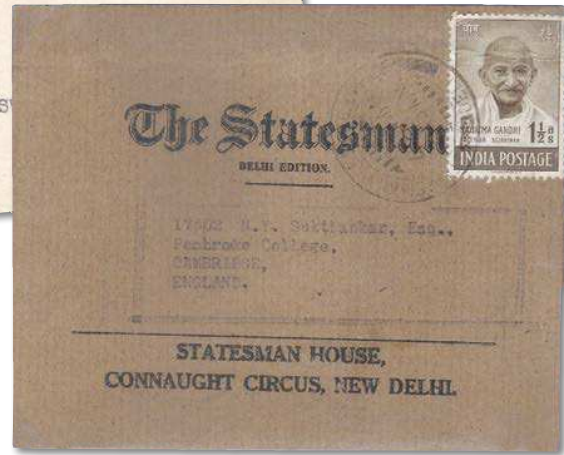


Fig 20 A cover from Nagpur to New Delhi with the slogan postmark marking the first anniversary of Gandhi's death on 1 January 1949. The cover also features the special cachet celebrating the Inland Night Airmail Service which was inaugurated in India on the same day

The 'SERVICE' Overprints of the 1948 Gandhi Memorial Stamps

By Pradip Jain

In the concluding part of his mini-series looking at India's 1948 Gandhi Memorial stamps, Pradip Jain examines the famous 'SERVICE' overprints, produced exclusively for the office of the Governor General of India. He discusses the reasons for the overprints, highlights examples of rare use and presents new research into the subtle variations to be found in the overprints themselves.

India's 1948 stamps issued to mark the first anniversary of independence also served as a fitting memorial to the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, who was assassinated in New Delhi several months earlier. The issue proved to be immensely popular in India and around the world (and still is today). Even the then Governor General of India himself, Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, expressed an interest in using these stamps from his office. This led to limited numbers of the set being overprinted 'SERVICE' and in doing so created some of the most coveted stamps of post-independence India. These overprints are now keenly sought after by collectors, both mint and postally used. Due to their scarcity they command exceedingly high prices at auction (Fig 1).

The 1948 Memorial issue became the first post-independence Indian stamps to be overprinted 'SERVICE'. The overprinting took place at Nasik Security Printing Press and the results were for exclusive use on the official mail of the Secretariat of the Governor General. The earliest information provided by veteran philatelist, C N Chandra, ICS, published in the July 1951 issue of the *Philatelic Journal of India*, incorrectly stated that the overprints were brought into use on 13 August 1949 and remained available until 31 January 1950. In a later issue of the magazine the date of issue was revised from 13 August to 15 August and the year to 1948. I have an example of one such cover dated 17 August 1948.

According to the noted Indian stamp expert, Jal Cooper, the following quantities of each denomination were overprinted 'SERVICE' (Table 1).

The Director General Post and Telegraph, India was supplied with one full sheet and a strip of five of each denomination of the overprinted stamps for display in the National Philatelic Museum (Fig 2). A corner block of four of each value was also supplied to the Royal Philatelic Collection, confirmed by John Marriot, the then Keeper, in September 1986.

As Table 1 shows, only 100 examples (two sheets of 50 stamps) of the 10r. value received the overprint. A full sheet, numbered 033404 from Plate A11, is in the National Philatelic Museum. The other sheet, printed from plate B11, was broken up and used. A single fine mint example of the 10r. 'SERVICE'

overprint, which is in private hands, reveals the sheet number as 033403 (Fig 3). These two sheet numbers confirm that only 100 stamps of the 10r. were overprinted 'SERVICE'.

The values of the overprinted stamps have greatly appreciated in recent years. The 10r. Gandhi 'SERVICE' is extremely difficult to find. It is thought that less than 15 stamps are known within the philatelic fraternity, which keep on changing hands.

Most of the Gandhi 'SERVICE' set is found in mint-hinged condition. An unmounted mint full set of the four values is the rarest of all.

Multiple mint examples are known to exist for the 1½a. and 12a. values only. Multiple mint examples of the 3½a. have not been seen. These multiples naturally carry a high premium.

'SERVICE' overprints on the lower values

A number of differences can be identified in the 'SERVICE' overprints on the parameters of font size, placement, inking, etc. The writer has examined three mint sheets of the 1½a. (sheet nos 086683, 001312 and 086649), as well as mint and used examples of the 3½a. and 12a., and I am now able to present my observations.

Shifting positions:

During the study of the overprints by the writer, an interesting discovery was made on sheets bearing the 'SERVICE' overprint. Here the placement of the overprint shifts depending on the row and column it occupies on the sheet. The magnitude of this movement was measured only in the case of the 1½a. value as its sheets were available to

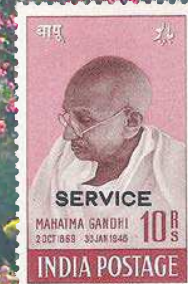
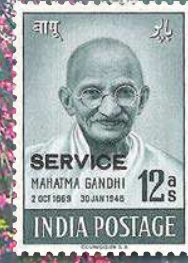
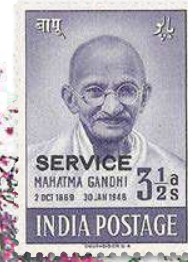
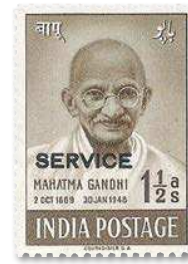


Fig 1 A full set of the rare Gandhi 'SERVICE' overprints

Table 1:

Denomination	Quantity Printed	Plate/Control Number, Imprinted in each sheet
1½a.	15,950 stamps or 319 sheets (50 stamps in a sheet)	A4, A6, B6
3½a.	1350 stamps or 27 sheets (50 stamps in a sheet)	A2, B2
12a.	250 stamps or 5 sheets (50 stamps in a sheet)	A1
10r.	100 stamps or 2 sheets (50 stamps in a sheet)	A11-1 sheet, B11-1 sheet

Base photo credit: Dennis Jarvis. Concrete footprints trace the last steps from his room to the prayer ground where Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated

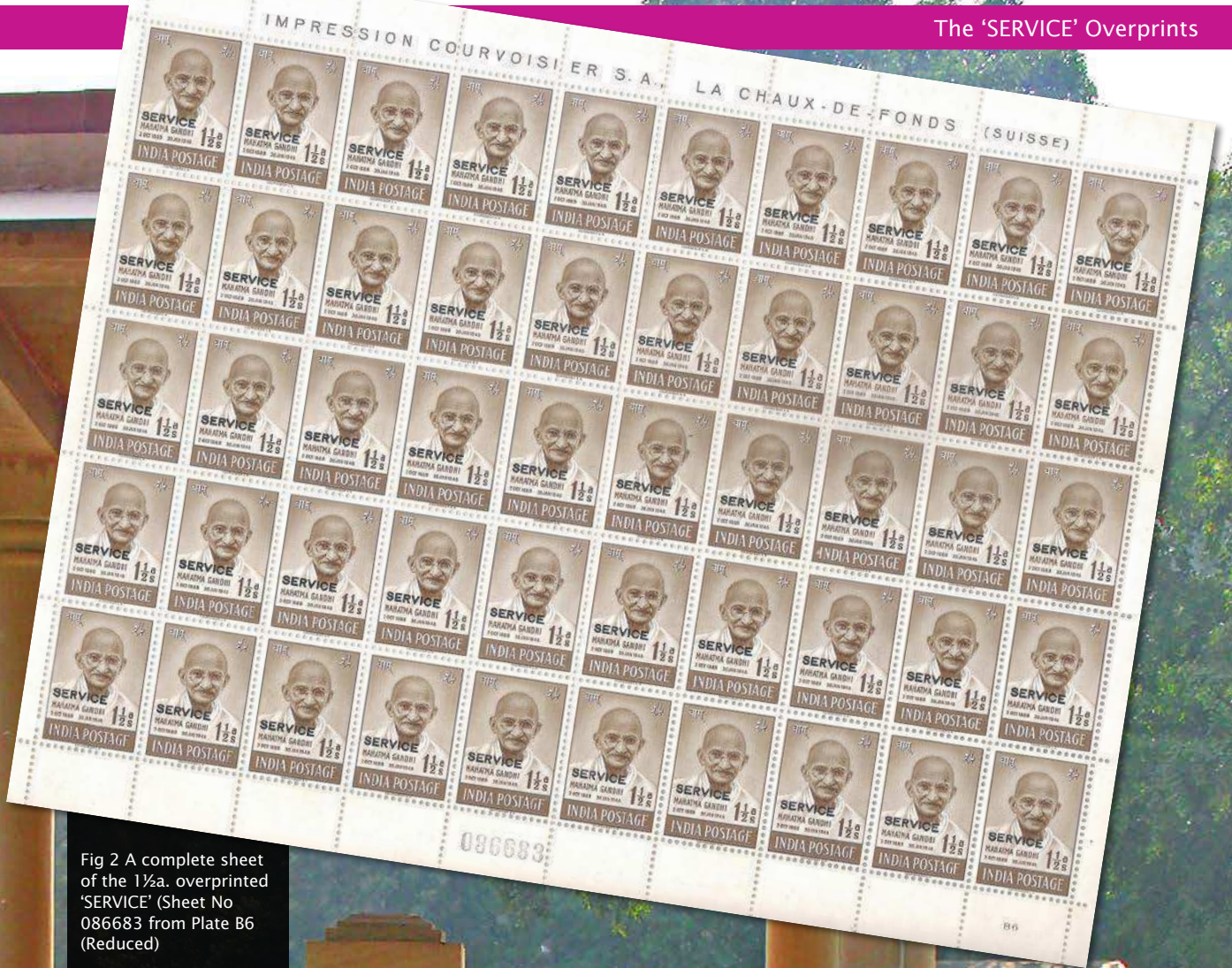


Fig 2 A complete sheet of the 1½a. overprinted 'SERVICE' (Sheet No 086683 from Plate B6 (Reduced))



Fig 3 The 10r. 'Service' overprint from plate B 11 with the 033403 sheet number in the margin

me. These shifts are progressive in nature and follow a trend (see below). The difference in the shift of location becomes more evident if a viewer compares the stamps from the first row and last row, or the first column and last column of the sheet.

To pinpoint the shifts, a benchmark is taken into account, namely the 'I' of 'SERVICE'. A viewer will find that the 'I' falls on the exact valley of the shawl in the portrait in the three lower denominations (1½a., 3½a. and 12a.). The movements in the 'I' from the valley can be located with ease and will help us to understand the movement. As these overprints were carried out using machines, the shifting is gradual and in trend, which is shown below:

Ascending position:

The distance between the overprint and the legend below in column one rises as we move from the top row to the bottom row of a sheet (Fig 4).



Fig 4 The position of the overprint in column one of the 1½a., 3½a. and 12a. values moves up as we move from the top row to the bottom row. This illustration shows the movement on a mint sheet of the 1½a. value (sheet number: 086683)

Shifts to the left:

The distance between the overprint and the left frame increases as we move across the columns from the left to the right of the sheet. This results in the 'I' of 'SERVICE' moving away from valley of the shawl (Fig 5 and Fig 6).

Fig 5 A complete row of the 1½a. value. The subtle left-to-right movement of the overprint can clearly be seen when you compare the first and the last stamp in the row (Reduced)



Fig 6 As we move between the columns from left to right, the overprint moves to the right in the sheets of the 1½a., 3½a. and 12a. values. This illustration shows the movement on a complete sheet of the 1½a., value (again, sheet number: 086683)

The overprint on the 10r. value

When analyzing the 10r. denomination, one should keep in mind that the above mentioned movements of the overprint are also found. However, as the size of the stamp and the portrait used differs to the lower three denominations, the 'SERVICE' overprint on the 10r. value needs its own study.

For observation, the writer has inspected three single examples of the 10r. overprint (BPA Certificate Nos 77364, 13376, 47937), as well as a high resolution image of the 10r. sheet in the National Philatelic Museum, New Delhi (Fig 7).

Fig 8 shows a comparison of BPA NO. 77364 (left), BPA NO. 47937 (middle) and a stamp from the complete sheet held in the National Philatelic Museum (right). As you can see, the vertical shift in the overprint is the same as that seen on the lower values. Fig 9 shows an example of a forged overprint.

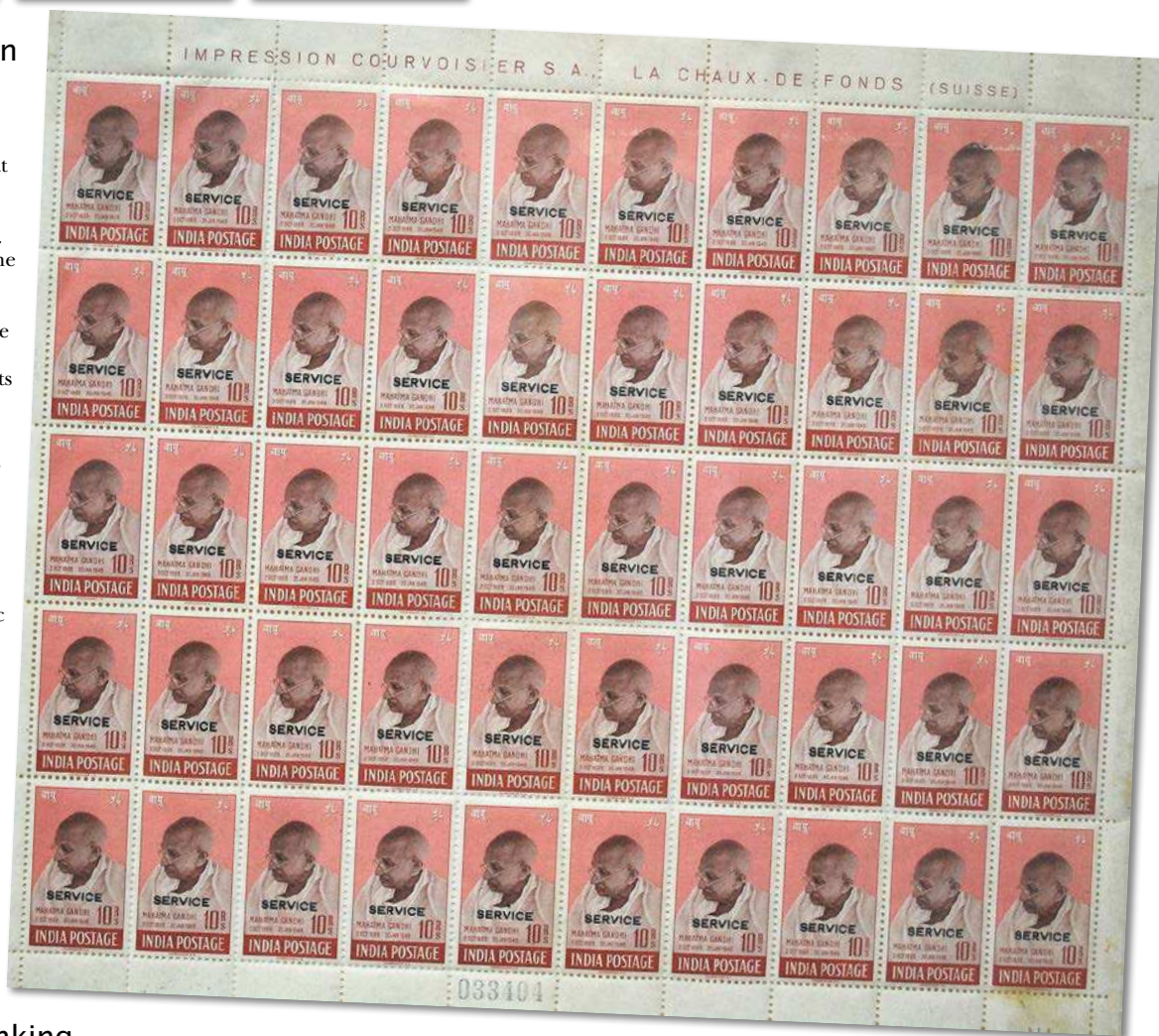


Fig 7 Sheet No 033404 from Plate A 11 of the 10r. 'SERVICE' overprint, which is housed in the National Postal Museum, New Delhi. This is the only known intact sheet of the overprinted 10r. value (Reduced)

Differences in Inking

The ink of the overprint is a dense dark grey-black and can often be seen very slightly blurred at the edges. The blur is particularly prominent in overprints of the 12a. stamp (Fig 10). Extremely faint traces of black ink have also been found on stamps indicating the spreading of ink during printing.

This study has brought new conclusions; most importantly the movement of the overprint. Based on my study and research. I feel the movements are present in all the denominations.

The overprints were carried out at Nasik Security press and not at Courvoisier. For this



Fig 8 Three examples of the 10r. 'SERVICE' stamp showing the vertical shift of the overprint

purpose, separate dies were prepared to print the impression and certain miscalculations led to movement in the position of the overprint. As with any overprints found across the world certain deviations are always found.

'SERVICE' overprints used

The SERVICE overprints form an extremely rare part of the postal history of post-independent India. Examples on cover with cancellation dates of 17 and 18 August, confirm that the overprinted stamps were simultaneously made available to the Governor General's office along with the normal issue on 15 August 1948.

Examples of the lower denominations are found on-piece, but used examples on covers are extremely rare. Derived from available record, it is thought that and only the following number of covers are believed to exist today:

1½a. 10 covers

3½a. 5 covers

12a. 3 covers (1 with a 1½a. and two with two examples of the 12a.)

No examples of the 10r. service overprint is recorded on cover.

As the 'SERVICE' overprinted stamps were made for the exclusive use of the office of the then Governor General, C Rajgopalchari, most of the used examples known are found with the 'GOVERNOR GENERAL CAMP P.O.' cancellation.

The post office was working in the former Viceroy's house. On 26 January 1950 India became a republic and the name of the post office was changed to 'PRESIDENT CAMP P.O.' Only a very few examples on-piece of the 1½a. 'SERVICE' overprint are found with President Camp P O cancellation (Fig 11); no examples have been seen on a complete cover so far. Another type of cancel, which reads 'RASHTRAPATI BHAWAN P.O.' in complete Devanagari (Hindi), is also recorded (Fig 12).

Fig 13 shows one of the most interesting and unique uses of the 1½a. 'SERVICE' stamp recorded. It is on an internal airmail cover to Madras and posted there carrying a Madras Airport Post Office postmark. This is believed to be the only example of the 'SERVICE' issue cancelled outside of the Delhi post office. Fig 14 shows another rare airmail cover; in this case, two 12a. 'SERVICE' stamps have been used on a cover to Perth, Western Australia.

No record is available of when the 'SERVICE' overprinted stamps were taken out of service. The normal issue was withdrawn as early as 31 December 1948. However,



Fig 9 A 10r. stamp with a forged 'SERVICE' overprint



Fig 10 An overprint with slightly blurred edges on the 12a. value

Fig 11 1½a. 'SERVICE' on a cover with the President Camp P O postmark



Fig 12 1½a. 'SERVICE' stamp on cover with the Rashtrapati Bhawan P O postmark



Fig 13 1½a. 'SERVICE' stamp on an airmail cover to Madras (Reduced)

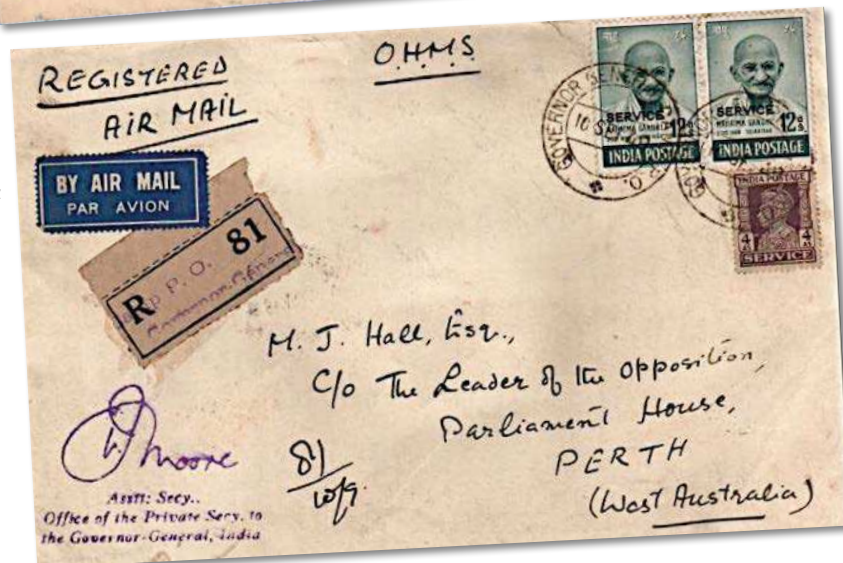


Fig 14 A pair of 12a. 'SERVICE' stamps on a cover to Perth (Reduced)

the 'SERVICE' overprints are known used up to as late as 1950. Fig 15 shows a cover with a 3½a. 'SERVICE' stamp on a cover posted on 23 February 1949.

As already stated, the 'SERVICE' overprints were not available for public usage but for the Governor General's Office only. However, as news of the overprinted stamps spread, collectors were very keen to obtain examples. An interesting letter found in one of the 'SERVICE' covers from Assistant Secretary Moore highlights the desirability of the 'SERVICE' stamps with contemporary collectors (Fig 16). The letter is addressed to Ms Iris Heiden in Madras and politely states that it would not be possible to send her a full set of the 'SERVICE' stamps, as she requested. The single 1½a. example used on the cover containing the reply would have to serve as a consolation.

A story that emerged was that Shri. Rajagopalachari came up with a novel idea to sell these official stamps at double their face value, with the proceeds to be transferred for the relief of Harijans (backward caste). Philatelists were thus able to obtain copies of these stamps at a premium of 100 per cent over the face value.

A full list of known 'SERVICE' covers (recorded by the writer in June 2013) is presented in Table 2



Fig 15 A 3½a. 'SERVICE' stamp on a cover posted on 23 February 1949 (Reduced)



Fig 16 A 'SERVICE' cover sent from Assistant Secretary Moore to Ms Iris Heiden in Madras. The enclosed letter politely turns down her request to be sent a full set of the 'SERVICE' overprints (Reduced)

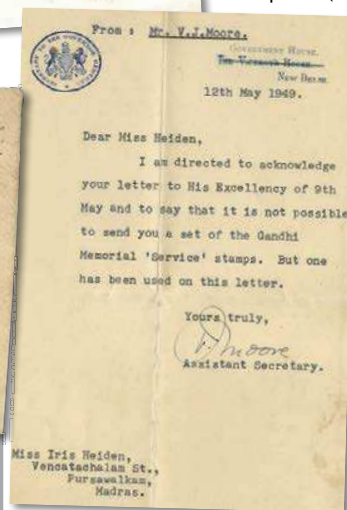


Table 2:

SR.NO	Denomination	Date	Addressee	Postmark
	12 Annas			
1	12a. (2 copies)	10.09.48	M. J. Hall Esq, Perth Australia	GOV.GEN.CAMP P.O
2	12a. (2 copies)	27.10.48	Col. A. C. Taylor, Canada	GOV.GEN.CAMP P.O
3	12a. + 1½a.	11.09.48	S. R. M Mayappan, Malaya	GOV.GEN.CAMP P.O
	3½ Annas			
1	3½a.	23.02.49	W. Hayden, London	DELHI AIR
2	3½a. + 1½a. + 1½a.	01.11.49	Manager, The Hindu, Madras	GOV.GEN.CAMP P.O
3	3½a. + 1½a.	18.11.48	Chief Secretary, Govt. of West Bengal	GOV.GEN.CAMP P.O
4	3½a.	-	Lord Pethwick Lawrence of Peaslake	-
5	3½a. + 3½a. + 1½a.	-	SRI. S. S. Swamigal, Madras	GOV.GEN.CAMP P.O
	1½ Annas			
1	1½a.	17.08.48	Dr. Mone Mohan Das, New Delhi	GOV.GEN.CAMP P.O
2	1½a.	17.08.48	P. M. Valaudipani M.L.A, New Delhi	GOV.GEN.CAMP P.O
3	1½a.	18.08.48	P. L. Narsimha Raju, New Delhi	GOV.GEN.CAMP P.O
4	1½a.	18.08.48	PT. Balkrishna Sharma, New Delhi	GOV.GEN.CAMP P.O
5	1½a.	18.08.48	A. K. Menon, New Delhi	GOV.GEN.CAMP P.O
6	1½a.	19.08.48	K. N. Desai, New Delhi	GOV.GEN.CAMP P.O
7	1½a.	11.09.48	Mrs Mona Herman, Madras	KILPALK, MADRAS
8	1½ as	20.01.49	Secretary ,F.P.S.C, New Delhi	GOV.GEN.CAMP P.O
9	1½a.	03.08.49	Chief Secretary, Govt. of West Bengal	GOV.GEN.CAMP P.O
10	1½a. strip of 3	05.01.49	Chief Secretary, Govt. of West Bengal	GOV.GEN.CAMP P.O
11	1½a.	12.05.49	Ms. Iris Heiden, Madras	GOV.GEN.CAMP P.O

During the limited period of roughly six months for which the stamps were kept on sale, people and institutions made good use of the stamps by posting them on envelopes to different parts of the world. The variety of postal uses are now part of extensive studies made by collectors of the Gandhi Memorial stamps. However, a couple of questions still remains unanswered: Why did the Government issue a stamp of such a high denomination as 10r., which had limited postal usage? Also, why were the remaining issues destroyed and not extended for sale, thus causing scarcity? These questions are difficult to answer at present due to the lack of relevant documents. Nevertheless, the Gandhi memorial issue is a unique combination of an attempt to honour the leader and a series of human errors which made the issue all the more popular and limited in its reach. The issue undoubtedly holds immense pleasure for Gandhi collectors the world over and will continue to grow in popularity as the time goes on.

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Conclusion

This small collection of articles attempts to investigate various realms of the Gandhi Memorial stamps—design, diplomacy, issue and postal usage. An attempt has been made to consolidate a series of early investigations and new revelations in a manner that offers an insight into one of the most popular issues of independent India. Most of the information has been derived from the inspection of archives of letters maintained by Courvoisier.