





4





# Jewel of India

The 4a was the Empire's first lithographed bicolor stamp

By PETER COLLINS  
For Stamp Collector

In 1852, the governor of Scinde province in northwest India, Bartle Frere, resolved to improve his Dawk (postal service) and, as part of his reforms, decided to prepay postage with stamps such as had been introduced in England only a decade before.

His first issue comprised a red wax seal with a design of a Christian cross, a letter "P," and the "mystic sign of 4," the symbol used by the East India Co. to mark packages that were being shipped to them. The design was in every way significant. These stamps are now highly prized among the world's rarities.

India's central government watched the Scinde Dawk experiment with interest. Bartle Frere's reforms were a success. They brought improvements in service and efficiency to the Indian posts. In Bombay, the East India Co. began moves to emulate the Scinde scheme.

Stamps were to be produced by British stamp printers, but the authorities wanted to set up their service much more quickly than they could expect to receive the stamp order from England.

The East Indian government had a perfectly competent printing department in Calcutta. Capt. Thuillier of the Royal Engineers, who was superintendent of the print shop, provided a series of designs for the proposed stamps, and experimental printings were made on the lithographic presses of the surveyor general's office. Since both designs and execution seemed satisfactory, full-scale production was undertaken to produce a stamp supply until De La Rue could have the required order shipped out.

From earliest days of collecting, it was realized that all the early Indian lithographed stamps showed constant variations in the printing, and they became very popular. Most attractive of all, however, was the four-anna stamp, handsomely produced in two colors, with a wealth of philatelic detail to provide many years of study.

This value was octagonal in design, featuring the

tracts, agreements, and declarations, watermarked once in the sheet with the East India Co.'s coat of arms and the words "STAMP OFFICE."

A pane of 12 stamps could conveniently be printed on this paper, and Thuillier was instructed to produce "a few thousand blocks of 12 stamps." By mid-October, 700 sheets had been delivered to the superintendent of stamps, and Thuillier reported that all his presses were fully occupied, turning out 1,000 sheets of stamps a day. The 4a stamps first went on sale Oct. 15, 1854. By the end of the month, a further 17,170 sheets had been delivered, and the litho

Thuillier had four further printings made. For these a new head die was engraved. It is readily recognizable, the main differences being in the chignon (hair at the back of the queen's head). For these printings it was found possible to print in sheets of 24.

When a further new printing was required, another die was made, which also has distinctive features. Retouching of the head was required on some positions of the printing stone, providing minor varieties that give clues to plating and also to the period of printing.

For a fourth printing, a new frame die was prepared. Slight differences

tial. Generally the queen's head is set comfortably in position in the center of the frame, but on stamps where it has been substantially misplaced, it is noticeable that the head overlays the frame. This proves that the frame was printed first, and it is of significance in naming the famous error of this issue, the inverted head.

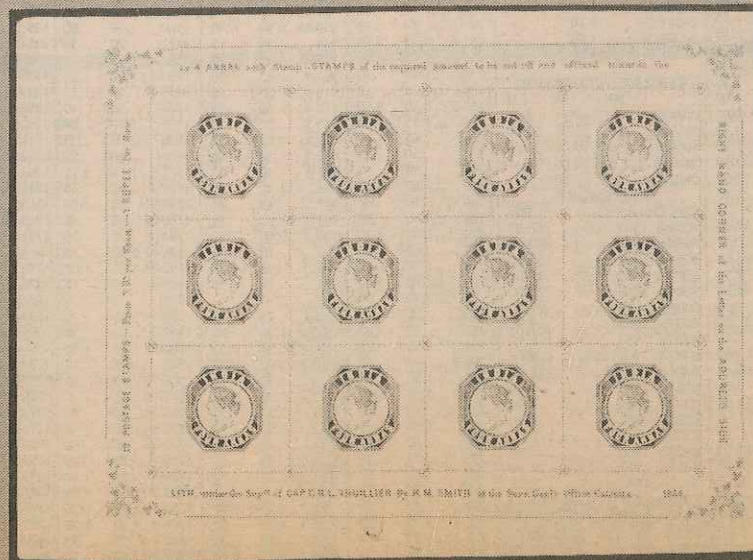
It will be apparent that great philatelic possibility attaches to a study of this stamp. Yet despite the interest that Indian specialists had uncovered, the 4a variety with inverted head was not recorded until Jan. 31, 1874, when a copy was noticed in one of the collections being shown at a meeting of



Scinde Dawk 1/2 anna



The cut-to-shape inverted head, found in a European collection, 1985.



India 1854 4a sheet from the first printing.



# JEWEL OF INDIA

(Continued from page 22)

£12,000. A fair profit on a single deal thus resulted from sharp eyes and knowledge!

Jal Cooper, the great Indian dealer and a wonderful character, told how on June 9, 1945, one of his customers came to his office and took from a snuff box, where it had been folded up, a creased and rather crumpled piece of paper. Inside, in a reasonable state, was a 4a stamp. Cooper hit the roof. It had an inverted center.

"It's a fake," said the owner. "No it's not," said Cooper. He could not contain himself and rang up C.D. Desai, one of India's great philatelists. "Can you send your car round?" he asked. "I have something I'd like you to see."

Desai was equally delighted and immediately made a purchase at a price which satisfied the vendor, and undoubtedly gave Jal a good profit. "Do you want a certificate?" Jal asked. Desai was furious. He was the world's greatest authority on Indian stamps and certainly did not need an expert certificate to say a stamp was genuine.

In view of the way in which his new possession had been stored, Desai thought it could be improved by cleaning. With Cooper's assistance, the stamp was carefully removed from its small native envelope, washed in peroxide, bathed in water, and pressed. The envelope too was freshened up by treatment. The stamp proved to be the finest inverted head that had ever been seen. No wonder the former owner thought it was

too good to be true. It had four margins, was lightly canceled, and now looked clean and fresh.

## Desai's prize

The Philatelic Society of India was a most exclusive stamp club. During the period of the Raj, senior positions in the society were only held by British sahibs, but such a brilliant philatelist as Desai could not be ignored, and he became the first Indian president of the society.

As a collector, he was of such a generous spirit that he wanted his collection to be sold in his lifetime so that he could know the pleasure of someone else owning these gems. Unhappily, he died unexpectedly at the age of 59, and his stamps were conveyed to England and sold by Robson Lowe in May 1949. The inverted head with its cover realized £750.

Prior to the Desai sale, the highest price in auction paid for an inverted head had been for what proved to be a fake. In the boom after World War I, a cut square copy had been offered at auction on March 20, 1920. It was bought for £360 with the proviso that a certificate be obtained from the Royal Philatelic Society. When this pronouncement came, it proved adverse.

The Williams Brothers tell its story. An Indian army colonel on his way home on leave stopped at Marseilles, where he bought the inverted head for 1,100 francs, a fair price at the time.

After World War I, the colonel came to sell his collection, but no one would take the inverted head.

One dealer, suspecting it was faked, asked for permission to boil it, thinking it would fall apart, but although it survived this test, the dealer still would not take it. This was the reason the stamp came to be auctioned, and the subsequent certificate proved that the professional's doubts had been well-founded.

## A rarity today

Examples of the variety may be seen in the Tapling collection in the British Museum, and a copy is in the Royal Collection, from King George V's purchase of the L.L.R. Hausburg collection.

It is now believed that 28 copies of this great rarity exist.

The fine example on cover was not Desai's only copy. It is recorded that in 1927, he paid 5,000 rupees for a fine, cut square copy.

When the purchaser of Desai's cover sold again, his holding proved to be even more extensive and magnificent than Desai's. Offered as the Koh-i-Nor collection in Robson Lowe's London auction of Feb. 25, the fine copy on cover realised £41,040 (including buyer's premium).

A second very poor, cut to shape copy, so heavily obliterated as to be virtually illegible, realised £11,340 (including buyer's premium), an even more remarkable figure. □

## References

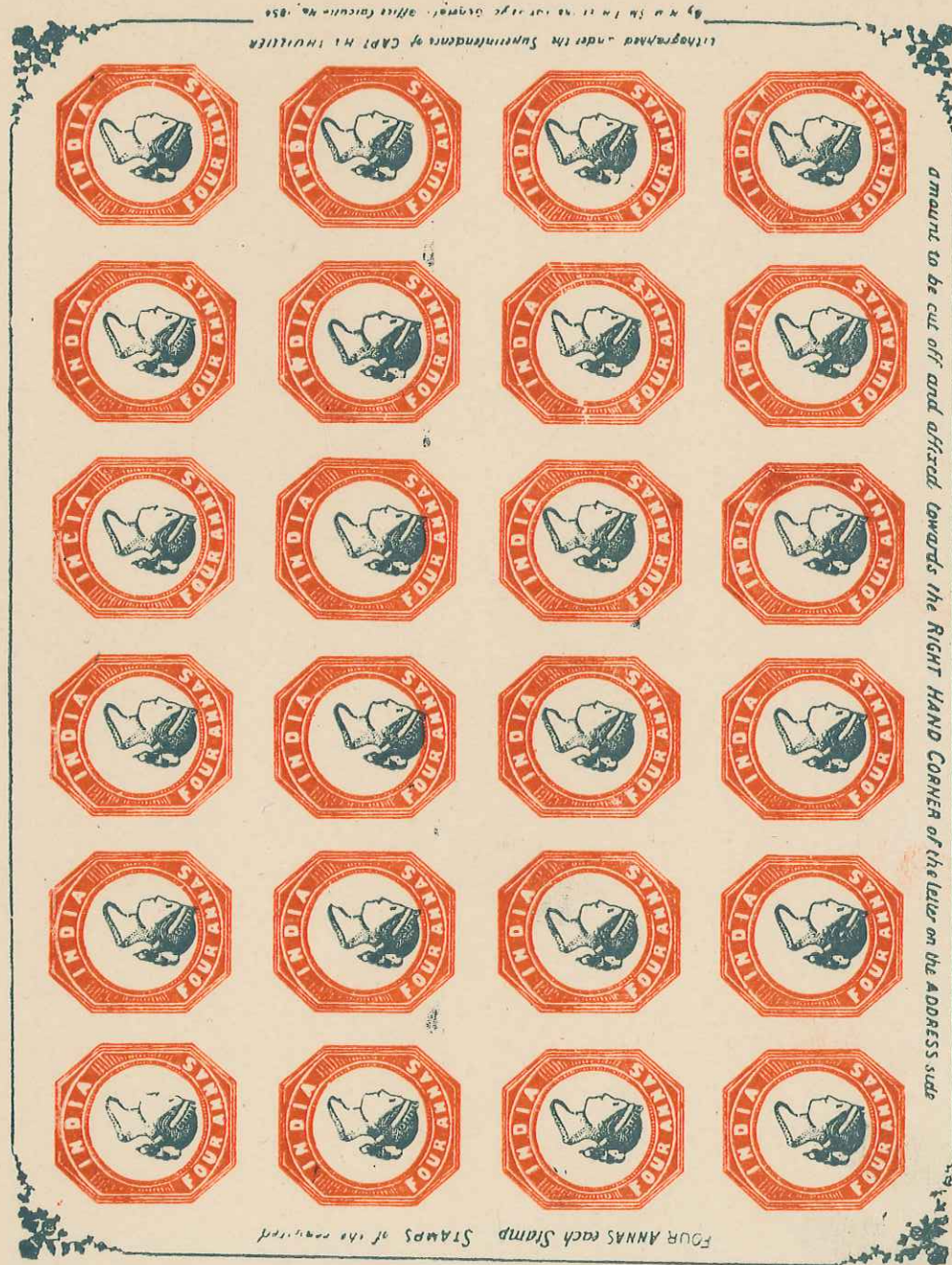
- Stamps of Fame*, by L.N. and M. Williams.
- Stamp Lover*, Vol. XXXVIII.
- Robson Lowe auction catalogs: The Desai Collection 1949; British Empire Sept. 24, 1985; The Koh-i-Nor Collection Feb. 25, 1986.







Leuchtturm Lygionhouse





























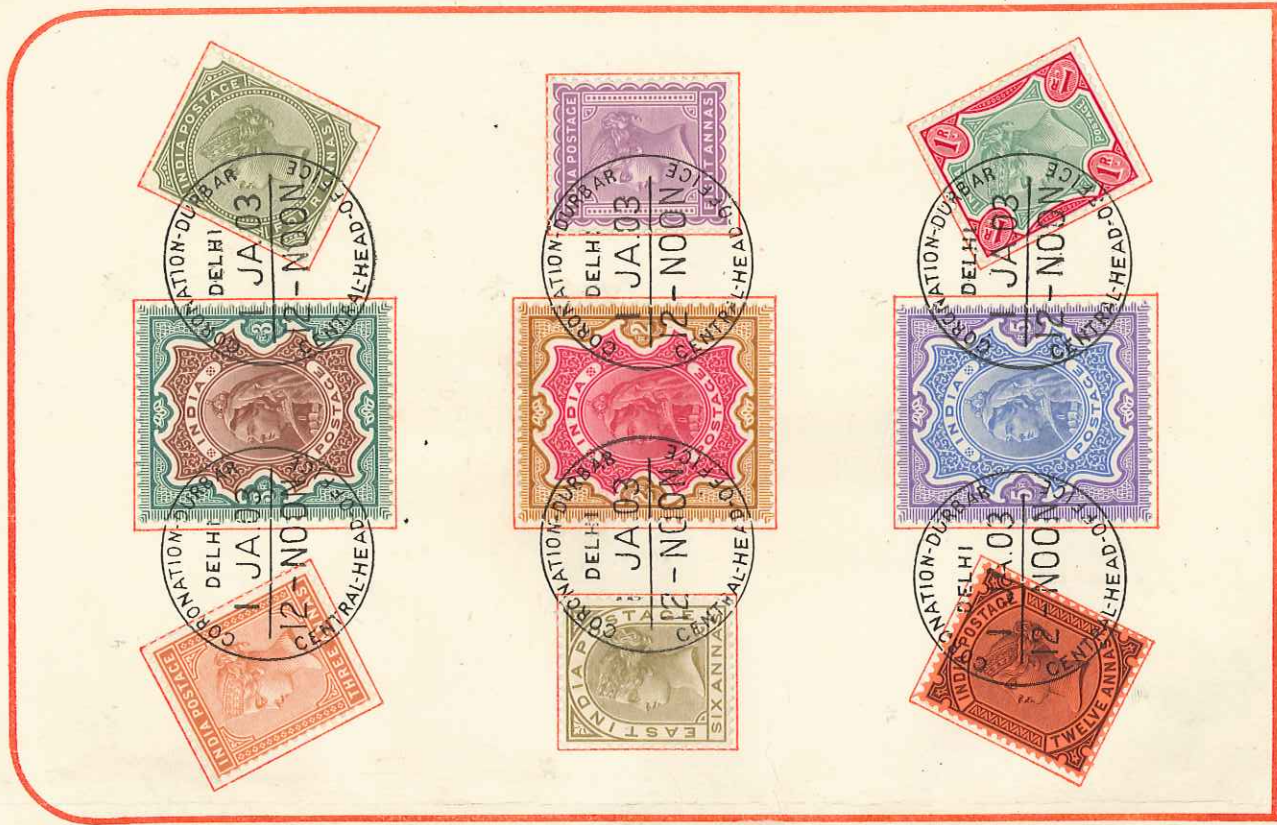
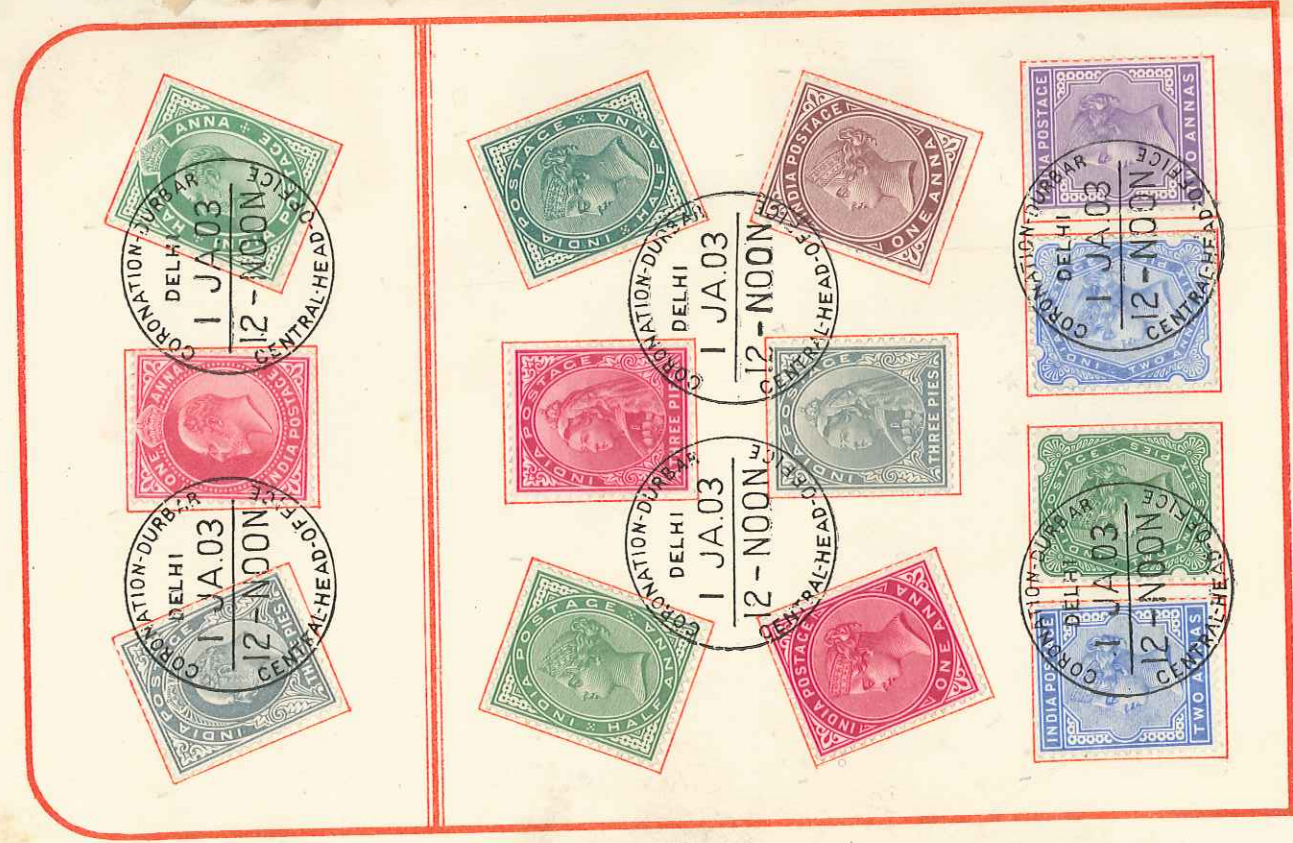








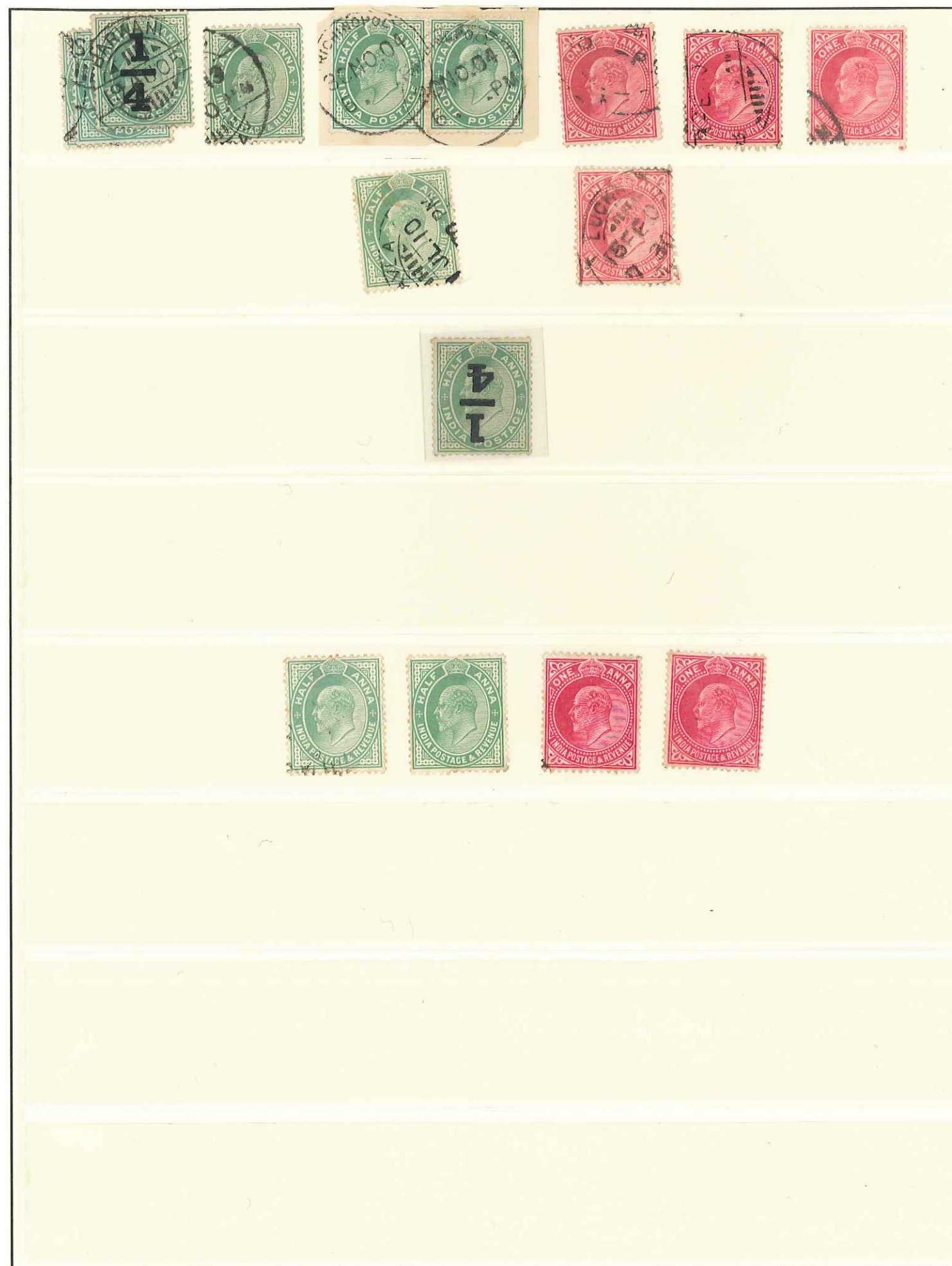
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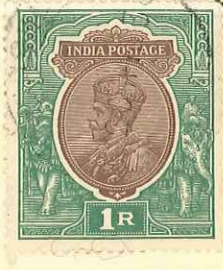
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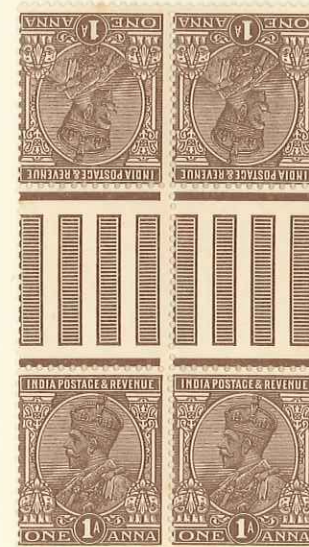
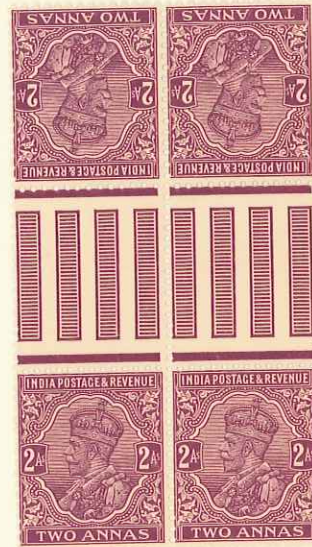












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Block of 8 Interpaneu

cat 176/30



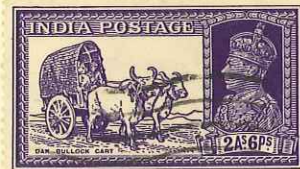














# GENERAL

## STAMP TOPICS

### A Permanent Indian Issue Appears

#### CORONATION NOTES

(BY C. E. POST)

The first of the permanent issue of India postage stamps of the new reign, showing a portrait of His Majesty King George VI, were placed on sale on August 23, and the type is illustrated to-day.

The 1 anna and 9 pies were issued then and the ½ anna and 3 pies in



the same design are expected to follow shortly. The design of the Rupee values has been sent to London for the approval of the King-Emperor.

The design of the four low values, which has been prepared and printed at the Security Press, Nasik, is in many respects peculiarly characteristic of India. In the centre is the head and shoulders of the King-Emperor, showing more of the shoulders of the King than in the current issue so that the richness of his robe can be better appreciated. The portrait is contained in a pointed arch reminiscent of a type of Indian architecture. In the top corners is the lotus flower with leaf and stem, and at the bottom the value.

The other eight values of the anna series which are to be issued, in the same size as the Jubilee issue, tell a story of the development of mail transport which is closely connected with the history of the Post Office in India. At the right in each stamp within an ornamental panel is a portrait of the King-Emperor facing to the left. In the balance of the space are to be found the following illustrations:

2 annas scarlet.—A Dak runner carrying a spear with a bag of mail

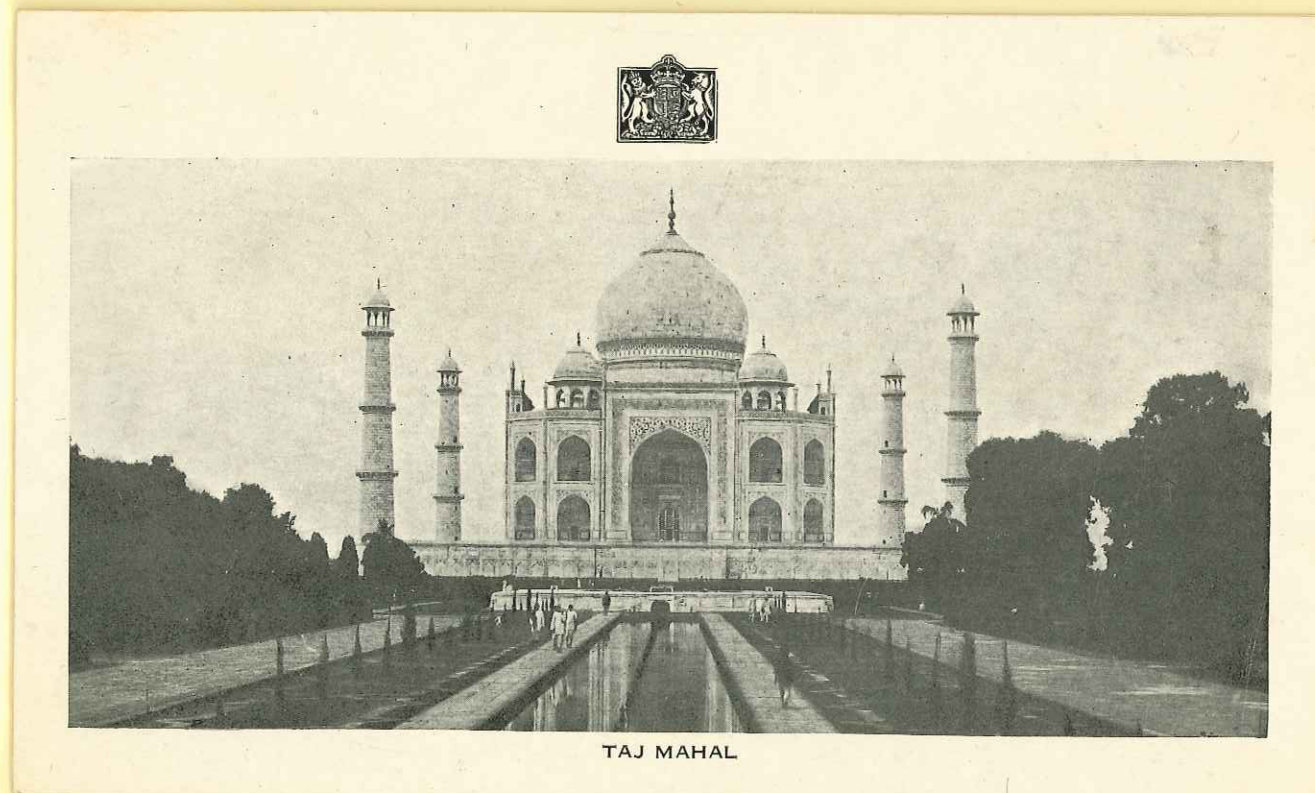












TAJ MAHAL









THE POSTAL SYSTEM IN INDIA IS, PERHAPS, AS ANCIENT AS HER TEMPLES. FOR, LIKE ALL POSTAL SYSTEMS, IT WAS BORN OF THE NECESSITY OF MAINTAINING COMMUNICATION, SO THAT THE EMPEROR MIGHT KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE OFFICERS IN CHARGE OF PROVINCES AT A DISTANCE FROM THE CAPITAL; AND HIMSELF, BE KEPT INFORMED OF WHAT WAS TAKING PLACE.

IBN BATUTA, TRAVELLING IN INDIA, IN THE TIME OF MOHAMMED BIN TUGHLAK, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY SAYS :-

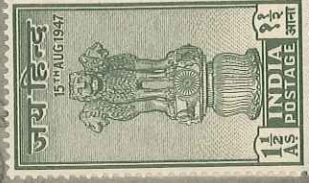
"THERE ARE, IN HINDUSTAN, TWO KINDS OF COURIERS, HORSE AND FOOT; THESE ARE GENERALLY TERMED "EL WOLAK", THE HORSE-COURIER WHICH IS GENERALLY A PART OF THE SULTAN'S CAVALRY, IS STATIONED AT A DISTANCE OF EVERY FOUR MILES. AS TO THE FOOT-COURIERS THERE WILL BE ONE AT A DISTANCE OF EVERY MILE OCCUPYING STATIONS WHICH THEY CALL "EL DAYAH" AND MAKING ON THE WHOLE THREE MILES; SO THAT THERE IS, AT THE DISTANCE OF EVERY THREE MILES, AN INHABITED VILLAGE, AND WITHOUT THIS, THREE SENTRY BOXES WHERE THE COURIERS SIT PREPARED FOR MOTION WITH THEIR LOINS GIRDED. IN THE HANDS OF EACH IS A WHIP ABOUT TWO CUBITS LONG, AND UPON THE HEAD OF THIS ARE SMALL BELLS. WHENEVER, THEREFORE, ONE OF THE COURIERS LEAVE ANY CITY HE TAKES HIS DESPATCHES IN ONE HAND AND THE WHIP, WHICH HE KEEPS CONSTANTLY SHAKING, IN THE OTHER. IN THIS MANNER HE PROCEEDS TO THE NEAREST FOOT-COURIER AND, AS HE APPROACHES, SHAKES HIS WHIP. UPON THIS, OUT COMES ANOTHER WHO TAKES THE DESPATCHES AND SO PROCEEDS TO THE NEXT. FOR THIS REASON IT IS THAT THE SULTAN RECEIVES HIS DESPATCHES IN SO SHORT A TIME."

THE POSTAL SERVICE IN INDIA WAS FIRST THROWN OPEN TO THE PUBLIC IN 1837. CHARGES WERE LEVIED IN CASH, AND THE LOWEST RATE BEING TWO ANNAS FOR EVERY HUNDRED MILES, COPPER TOKENS OF THE VALUE OF TWO ANNAS WERE STRUCK AND MADE AVAILABLE FOR THE PAYMENT OF POSTAGE.

THE FIRST ISSUE OF POSTAGE STAMPS IN INDIA, WAS MADE IN SINDH IN 1852. THEY WERE OF THREE KINDS.

- 1 THE DESIGN EMBOSSED ON WHITE PAPER, WITHOUT COLOUR.
- 2 BLUE, EMBOSSED ON WHITE PAPER.
- 3 THE DESIGN EMBOSSED ON VERMILION WAFERS

NOW A CENTURY LATER INDIA HAS ANOTHER HISTORIC ISSUE. ALSO OF THREE STAMPS. IN COMMEMORATION OF INDEPENDENCE.



ASOKA LION CAPITAL  
1 1/2 ANNAS FOR INLAND POSTAGE



NATIONAL FLAG  
3 1/2 ANNAS FOR FOREIGN CORRESPONDENCE



MODERN AIR CRAFT  
12 ANNAS FOR FOREIGN AIR MAIL

THESE BEAR THE DATE 15 AUGUST 1947 AND THE SLOGAN 'JAI HIND'



