

Political Organizer and Negotiator

First Indian Round Table Conference

Arrested on 5th May 1930, in the aftermath of the Salt March, Gandhi and most leaders of the Indian National Congress were imprisoned without trial for the rest of the year.

In response, the Non-cooperation movement [that began in 1920] was intensified.

Ramsey MacDonald, as the Labor Prime Minister, made overtures to Congress for a political compromise.

Many discussions were held in prison and the Congress Cabinet held on to the demands originated by Gandhi as early as June '30:

- constitutional goal of Dominion Status
- repeal of the Salt Tax
- amnesty for political prisoners
- prohibition of liquor and opium sales

None of these demands were accepted by the British government. The Indian National Congress, the mainstream of Indian Nationalist politics, did not participate in the London conference that followed.



London-Delhi Registered air mail. 11½p franking and special Dec-1-1930 postmark.

The First Indian Round Table Conference was held in London November 12- January 19, 1931.

The conference was held in St. James Place and a special cancellation was used during the two month period for mail from participants.



14 Apr 1991

B. R. Ambedkar, a lawyer, was one of the most prominent Indian delegates- representing the backward class- referred to as the "untouchables".

Despite having broken ranks with Gandhi and the Congress establishment recently, he surprised the British by calling for nothing short of full Dominion Status for India.

Ambedkar went on to later serve as one of the original framers of the Indian Constitution of 1950.

Rt. Honorable V. S. Srinivasa Sastri, an educator [called the *Silver Tongued Orator*], was chosen to represent the moderate Hindu intellectuals, outside the mainstream of Hindu nationalism.

Sastri reminding delegates and the press that both Lord Irwin [the Viceroy] and Ramsey MacDonald were going back on explicit commitments they had made in 1929 towards Dominion Status.



The Delegates.

Attending the conference were 60 to 70 Indian representatives handpicked by the Viceroy. Indian delegates were chosen to speak for specific factions- including Moslems, Untouchables and the native Princely states.

An equal number of Englishmen residing in England, reputed "experts" on Indian matters, also participated.

The conference failed due to British obduracy regarding granting full Dominion status to India.

Mohammad Ali Jinnah was chosen to represent the Moslems of British India as the emerging leader of the Muslim League.

By then, Jinnah was identified by British as the ideal weapon they could use in their divide-and-rule strategy against the Hindu-dominated Indian National Congress.

Jinnah ended his speech with "*I must express my pleasure at the presence of the Dominion Prime Ministers... they are here to witness the birth of a new Dominion of India*".



Lahore-Scranton Registered Airmail. Franked with three values of Jinnah stamps (27 Rs.)

Second Indian Round Table Conference

Within a week after the end of the first RTC, Gandhi and his Congress colleagues were released from prison on January 26, 1931.

Earnest dialogs to insure the participation of Congress in future conferences ensued.

The "Delhi Pact of Truce" between Lord Irwin and Mahatma Gandhi [on behalf of the Congress] was signed on March 5, 1931.



24 Dec 1998

The British Government agreed to:

- release all political prisoners and restore confiscated farmers' property
- withdraw arbitrary ordinances and repressive legislation
- repeal the Salt Tax for those living along the sea shore
- recognize the people's right to lawfully and peacefully picket dealers of opium, liquor and foreign goods

In return, Gandhi agreed to suspend the civil disobedience movement and participate in the forthcoming Round Table Conference to hammer out the structure for a federalized constitutional entity in India.



London SW1-NW2 Registered mail. 4½p franking and special Nov-30-1931 postmark.

The Second Indian Round Table Conference was held in London September 14- December 1, 1931.

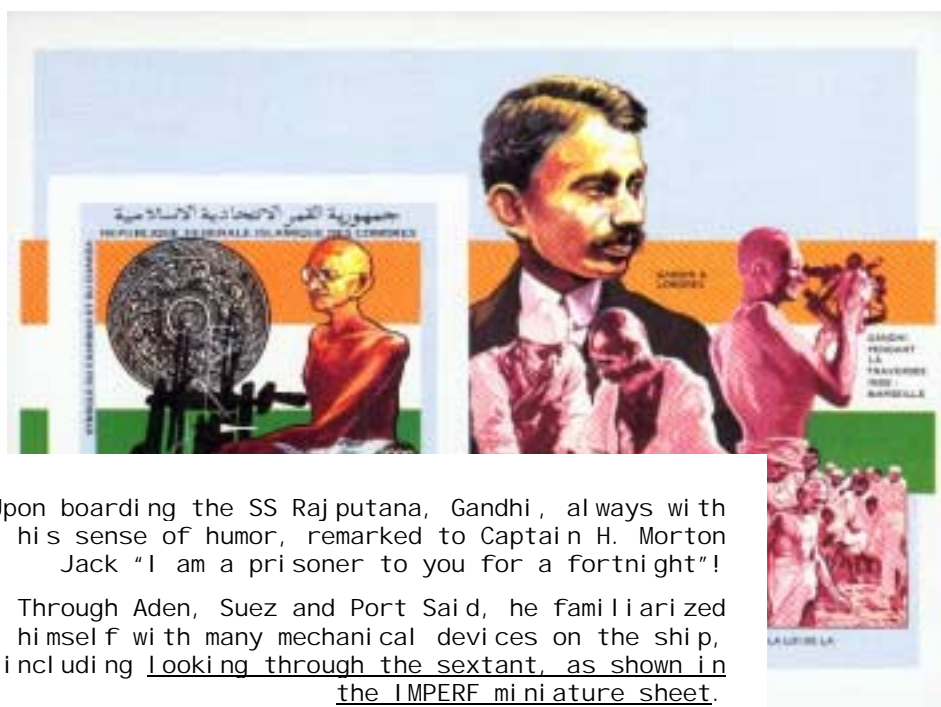
Coercive handling of farmers with respect to land tax arrears and the restoration of property escalated with the involvement of Congress in the implementation of the *Delhi Pact*. Not pleased with the resolution, The Congress Working Committee pulled out of the RTC. Gandhi negotiated a solution with the Viceroy by August 26. Leading to his decision to proceed to London on August 29, 1931.



29 Oct 1998

At age 61, Gandhi set sail from Bombay on August 29, 1931.

This was to be his last voyage to England.



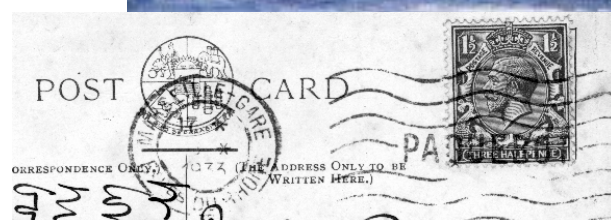
Upon boarding the SS Rajputana, Gandhi, always with his sense of humor, remarked to Captain H. Morton Jack "I am a prisoner to you for a fortnight"!

Through Aden, Suez and Port Said, he familiarized himself with many mechanical devices on the ship, including looking through the sextant, as shown in the IMPERF miniature sheet.

The S. S. Rajputana arrived Marseilles, France-September 11, 1931.

18 Nov 1991

Marseilles - Paris - Boulogne - Folkestone and then to London; all by automobile, driven by an official from the India Office.



Marseilles-Gare PAQUEBOT. Maritime mail from the SS Rajputana [France-England]. Same ship, same route. Franked with 1½p.



24 Dec 1998

The Delegates to the Second RTC included:

- 13 British ministers and MPs headed by Ramsay MacDonald
- 19 Indian Maharajas and Princes representing the states
- Gandhi and 75 other representatives of British India



15 Sep 1998



1 Jan 1962



21 April 1988

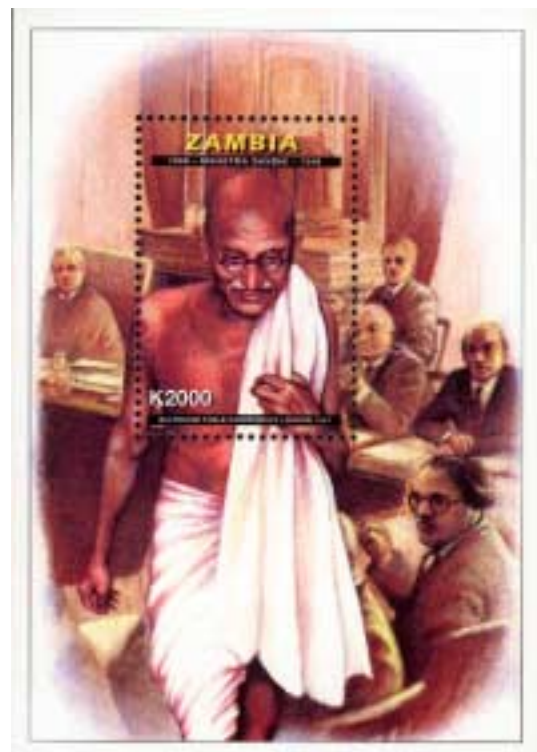


11 Jun 1984



13 Feb 1964

Indians. Prominent among the British Indian delegates were Madan Mohan Malaviya [founder of Banaras Hindu University], Mohammad Iqbal [poet and philosopher], G.D. Birla [industrialist] and Sarojini Naidu [poet and Congress activist]. All but Mr. Iqbal were also passengers with Gandhi on the SS Rajputana from Bombay to Marseilles. Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Srinivasa Sastri, from the first RTC also attended the second.



30 Jan 1998

St. James' Place. Gandhi made his maiden speech at the conference on September 15, 1931, in which he elaborated on the mandate of the Indian National Congress. He subsequently addressed ten other sessions.

Will Rogers, famous American artist, captured the image of Gandhi at the conference thus:

"All Delegates were well dressed in tailor made suits. But a skinny little fellow with nothing but a breechcloth, with a spinning wheel and an old she-goat comes there representing more humanity and with more authority than all the high hats in the world. It's sincerity versus diplomacy!"

Needless to say, all eyes were on Gandhi every time he walked into or out of a session, as shown in the image on the miniature sheet here.



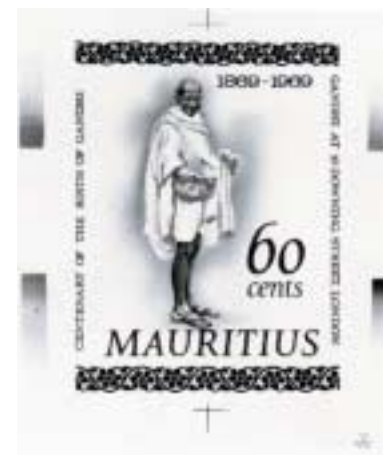
18 May 1998



15 Oct 1998

10 Downing Street. Gandhi visited with Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald at 10 Downing Street, an image captured in the stamps shown here.

Shown to the right is an approved bromide of the 1969 issue from Mauritius.



1 Jul 1969

The Attire. More than who he visited, it was Gandhi's attire in England that attracted a lot of attention. When questioned by a reporter about his attire, he said:

"When Englishmen visit India, do they forsake their European clothing and adopt our Eastern dress..? No. If I came here to live and work as an English citizen, then.. I should wear the dress of an Englishman. But I am here on a great and special mission, and my loin-cloth, if you choose so to describe it, is the dress of my principals, the people of India." And then he quipped: "If this depression keeps on much longer, I shall be the best dressed man on this island!"

When he visited the King and Queen Buckingham Palace, he did even better, saying that the King wore enough for both of them!



4 Apr 1979

Only issue to show Gandhi and Ramsey MacDonald together. Progressive proofs from the Scottish "Local" Gandhi centenary set of 1969.



29 Oct 1998

While in England, Gandhi visited Manchester area mills in Lancashire and was warmly welcomed by displaced mill workers and owners. They sympathized with him and appreciated his efforts to revive the domestic handloom industry in India!

The boycott of British goods was part of the movement that had intensified by 1930. Cotton exports from mills in the Lancashire region to India were particularly hit by Gandhi's "homespun" movement.

Stamp showing Gandhi spinning yarn in 1931.

As early as 1920, records indicate that India imported over £34 million in textiles from Manchester and Liverpool mills in the Lancashire region.

This was part of the £80 million of textile and machinery that were exported to India from England that year.



After over a 100 years of stable business, import of British cloth and yarn fell by 75 percent between December 1929 and December 1930.

Manchester-Shrewsbury 1869 letter. Note embossed seal: Whitwell Linen Thread Yarn & Co.



Liverpool-Shrewsbury 1866 letter.

Addressed to Linen Owner's family on Embossed Company Stationery



Archival Gutter Pair: 2 stamps from 1984 Antigua & Barbuda

19 Nov 1984

Leaving London.

Gandhi decided to leave England on December 5, 1931.

At 8:30 AM, he was driven to Victoria Station, where he bid farewell to friends, Indian and English.

Mrs. Naidu, who accompanied him to Folkestone, is also shown looking out the train window, in the gutter pair displayed here. Others are his assistant Pyarelal and Madeline Slade.

Voyage Back. Gandhi crossed the Channel by boat from Folkestone and spent the day in Paris.

He then traveled to Villeneuve in Switzerland, to visit his friend Romain Rolland. This was followed by visits to Lausanne and Geneva, the seat of the League of Nations.

He then proceeded through Italy via Rome. Popular fables state that Gandhi did not get an audience with the Pope because of his attire. In reality, the Pope never gave audience in the evenings [when Gandhi arrived] or Sundays [the next day]. Gandhi did meet with Mussolini the day he arrived in Rome.

He proceeded to Brindisi [Italy] and embarked on board the SS Pilsna, reaching Bombay on December 28, 1931.

Other London Visitors.

While in England, Gandhi also visited M.P.s at the House of Parliament, Professors at Eton, Oxford and Cambridge, the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Bernard Shaw, Marie Montessori, Arthur Henderson and Lloyd George.

Perhaps the most unusual visitor he had, while in London, was Charlie Chaplin. It was stranger, when Chaplin found out that Gandhi had never heard his name before he met him!



Registered Airmail Antwerpen-Michigan. 34 BF Postage + 150 BF Registration fee.

6 Dec 1999

Civil Disobedience

Satyagraha in Transvaal

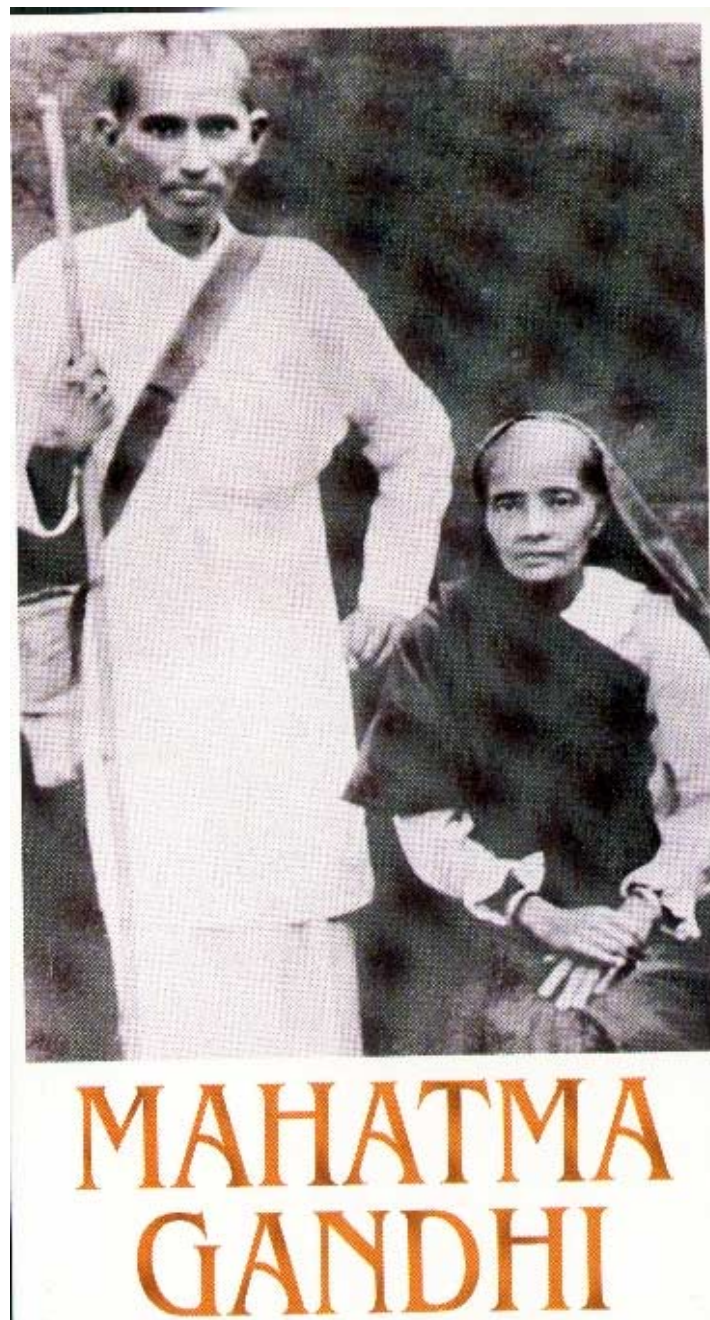
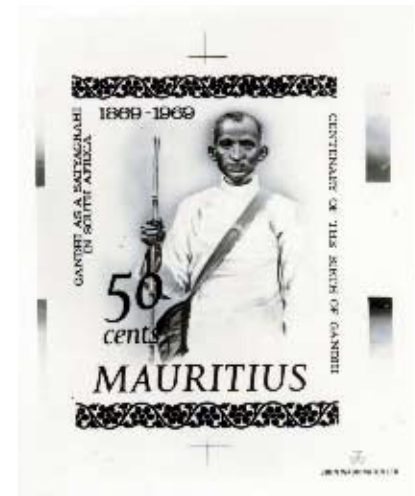


1 Jul 1969

In August 1906, a draft Asiatic Law Amendment was published in the Transvaal Gazetteer. Immediately upon reading it, Gandhi decided to organize, to demand its repeal.

Under his leadership, mass protests were held in Johannesburg.

Gandhi convinced his fellow Indians to not submit to the law, even by risking arrest. Thus was born "Satyagraha" or achieving effect through "truth force".

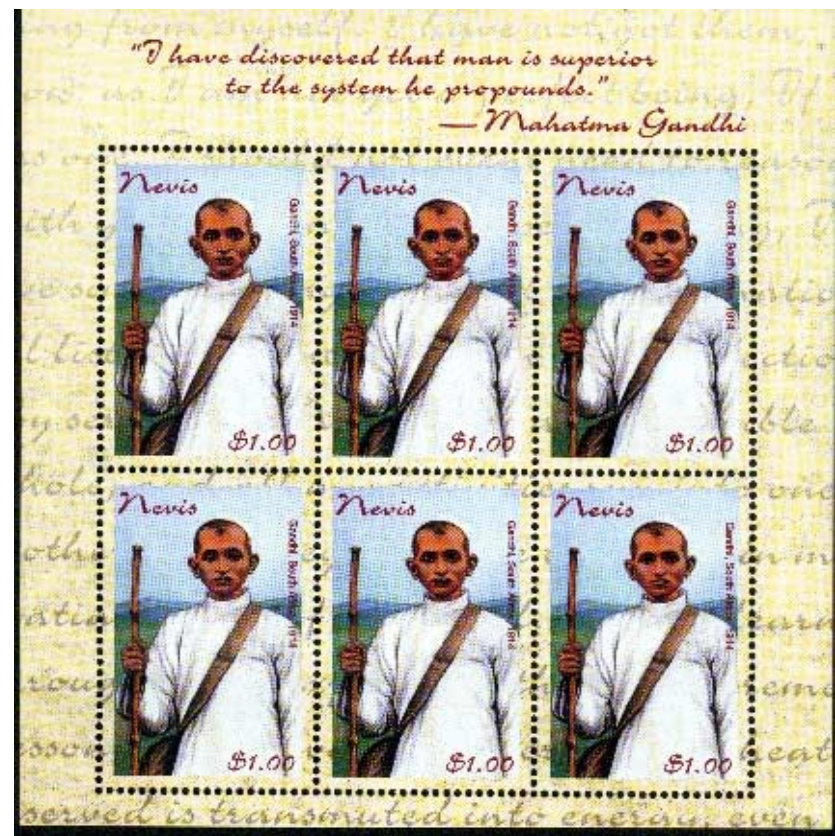


Approved Bromide from Mauritius, showing Gandhi as satyagrahi in Transvaal.

Post Card showing Gandhi and Kasturba in the Satyagrahi ashram near Pretoria, issued by the South African P.O.

To assist the several hundreds of Indian resisters who were going to prison and being released repeatedly, as a result of the protest, Gandhi established the Phoenix Ashram in Transvaal.

Miniature sheet showing Gandhi as satyagrahi in South Africa



The stamps in the adjacent souvenir sheet show Gandhi as he was when he returned to India in 1916

The marginal illustration shows Gandhi as a satyagrahi in Transvaal.

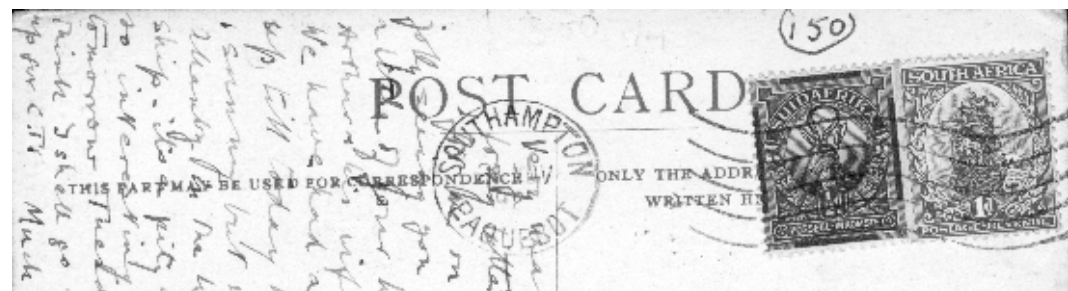
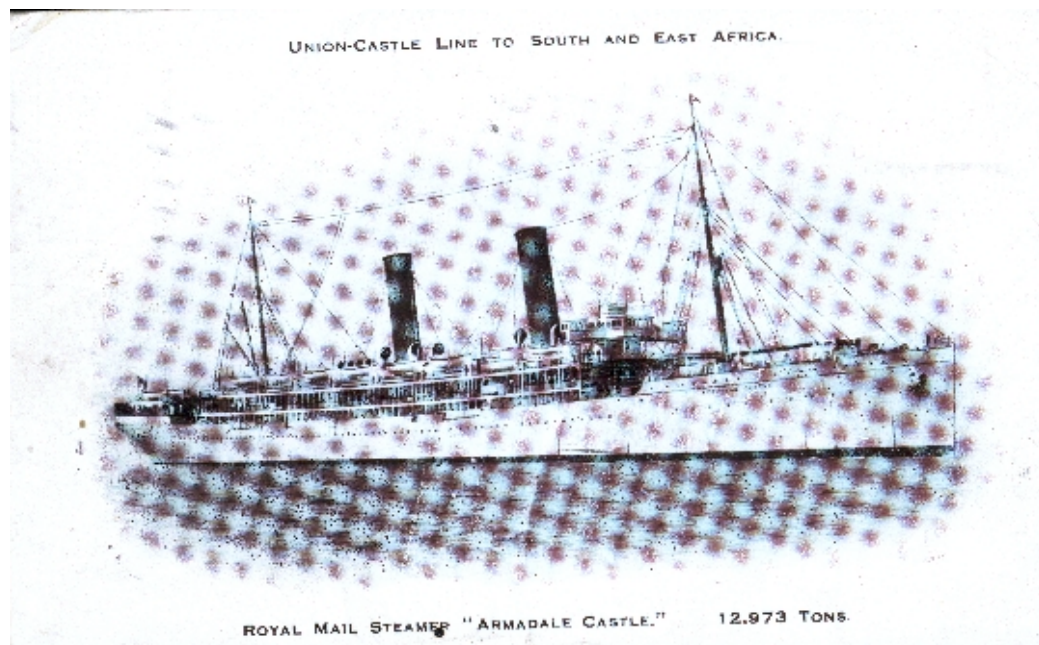
Transvaal Indian Delegation to London

On October 3, 1906, Gandhi set sail for London as part of the Transvaal Indian delegation. They arrived in Southampton on October 20, 1906.

While in London, Gandhi lobbied the various legislators in Parliament to influence the now-British Transvaal government into repealing the Asiatic Law.

Gandhi met with Winston Churchill on November 28, 1906.

He left London on December 1, 1906. The delegation left Cape Town and returned on December 18.



Maritime Mail - SS Armadale Castle. Capetown to Southampton, England voyage.

Southampton Paquebot Cancel.

Franked with 1½d South African postage. Same ship, same ports, different dates.

Swadeshi Movement- Boycott of British Goods



Labels like the ones above were used in mail and the post office was instructed to reject them, due to the target against British imports.

Gandhi added a twist to the movement that started in the early 1900s, by promoting home spun yarn.



Stamp shows Gandhi and fellow Swadeshis holding a rally, all dressed in homespun.



Pair printed on gum side of 1994 definitive.

On a lighter note, a Gandhian swadeshi industry today is selling printers wastes, like dry ink and printing on gum side as "major errors to overseas philatelists!"

Boycott of KGV Coronation [1911]



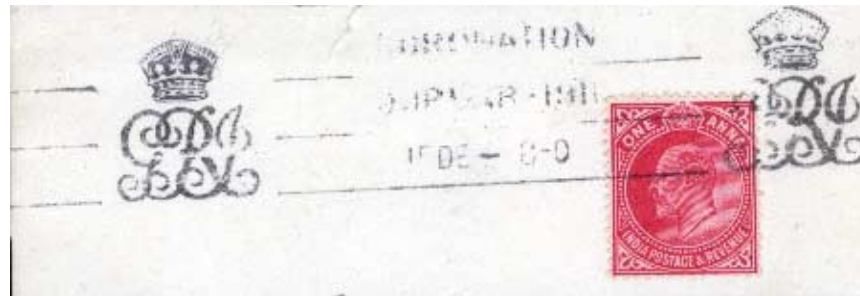
Rare pieces with the "Queen Empress Camp PO" and "King Emperor Camp PO" cancels from the coronation celebrations in India.



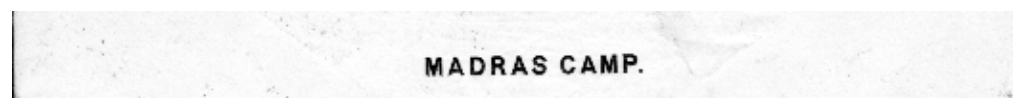
Very early usage of the "Coronation Durbar" cancel in India in October 1911.

Little cover
mailed from India
to Ireland with 1
anna postage and
the "GRI"
Coronation Durbar
1911 cancel.



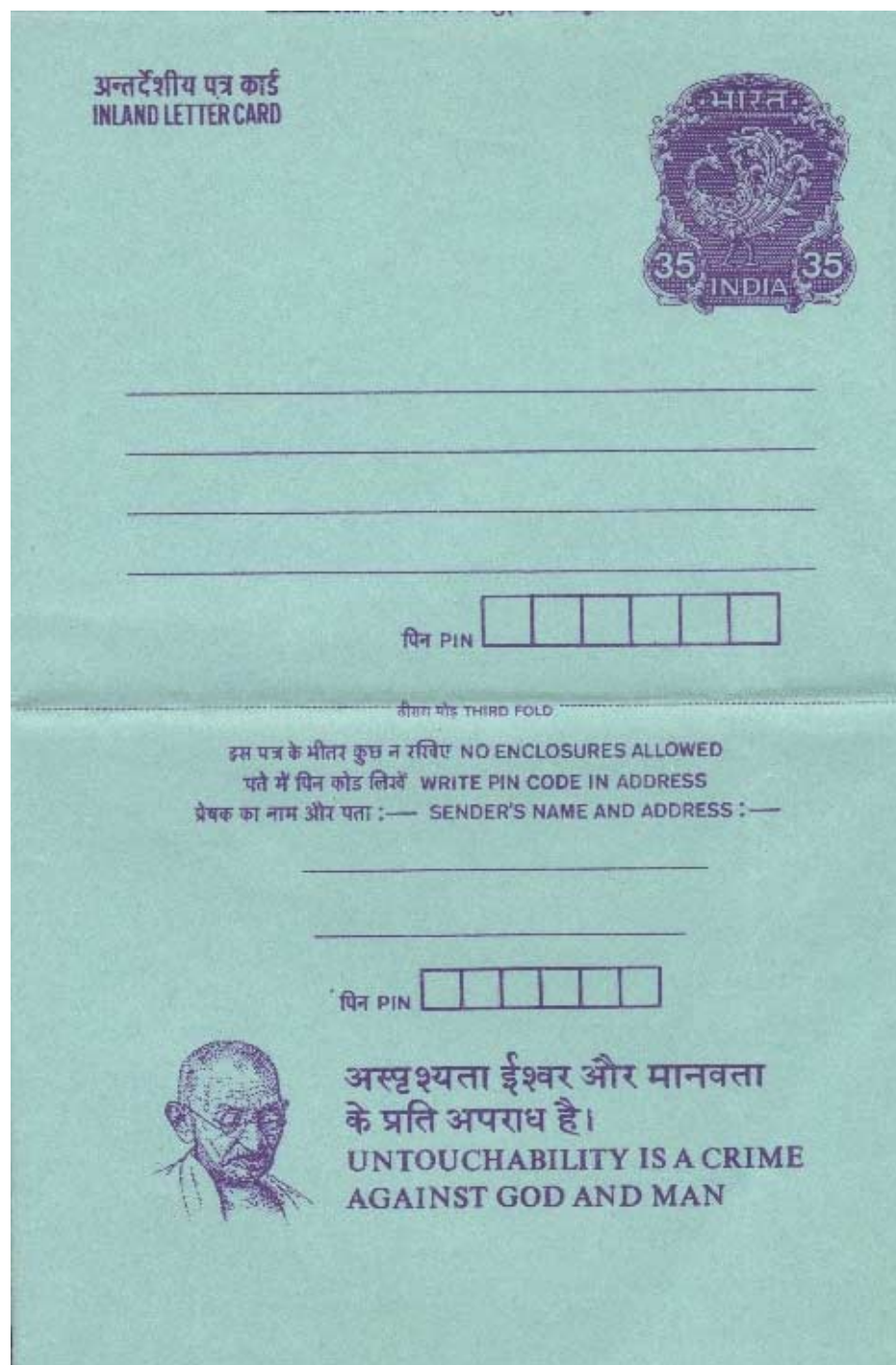


Uncommon Coronation Durbar Rolling cancel on piece with a 1 anna Edward VII stamp. Used 15 December 1911.



This coronation Durbar cancelled cover was mailed from Madras on 7 Dec 1911. Durbar cancels from Calcutta and Delhi are common, ones from Madras are not. Note rolling cancel from Chelsea in England in front of cover.

Untouchability- The Harijan Movement [1916]



Immediately upon returning to India, Gandhi initiated dialog on the Hindu caste system. He particularly spoke out against the “untouchability” practice.

This alienated several conservative upper caste Hindus.

It was perhaps his association with members of all religions and castes in South Africa that sensitized Gandhi to this issue.

Despite his efforts, Gandhi could not win over all lower caste Hindus, as will be discussed later.

He named the lower caste Hindus as Harijans, or Children of God.

Slogans like this, quoting Gandhi on several social issues, are common in Indian stationery, long after his death.

Fighting for Peasants' Rights [1917-18]



29 Oct 1998



15 Dec 1998



15 Dec 1998



30 Jan 1998

Gandhi, as he was in 1915-16, after his return to India from South Africa, is pictured in the three stamps above. This was when he organized a successful protest against the persecution of Indigo farmers in the Himalayan foothills.

It is ironical that, right when the two Gandhi stamps were issued by Sierra Leone, this nation's citizens, peasants and otherwise, were in the midst of one of the most brutal civil wars in recent west African history. Indian troops have now joined an African peacekeeping force in that war-torn land.

March-June 1918.
Gandhi, encouraged by the success in Champaran, organized peasants in Gujarat [western India] against regressive land taxes imposed by the Bombay Provincial government. This was later called the "Kheda Satyagraha".



The effort by Gandhi in Chamaran paid off dramatically.

Despite objections from the English landlords in Bihar, the Imperial secretariat in Delhi issued regulations that reversed several despicable practices.

Cover with rare Imperial Secretariat Cancel mailed from Delhi to USA in 1917. Note WWI censor marking.