

Stamps of India: Article of the Month - February 2012

Demonetization of India's Stamps

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The demonetization of postage (and revenue) stamps is the process by which the stamps are rendered no longer valid for postage. In general, stamp demonetization is a rare event, since any unused stamp is effectively equivalent to its face value, and there is no financial disadvantage if postal customers use old stamps on their mail. Demonetization chiefly occurs in connection with major upheavals in the postal system, such as a transfer from one country to another, or currency changes, such as decimalization, or a change of government. The process of exchanging millions or billions of stamps in the public's hands, plus that of exchanging post office stock, is usually complicated and difficult, and offers much interest for students of postal history.

In India the postage stamps have been demonetized for the first time in 1938. The postal notice of July 23, 1938 issued by Gurunath V Bewoor, the first Indian to become the Director General of Indian Posts & Telegraphs, notified the demonetization of ordinary and service postage stamps, and postal stationery bearing the portrait of Queen Victoria and King Edward VII with effect from September 1, 1938. These were however allowed to be exchanged for the then current stamps of equivalent value up to February 28, 1939.

With independence on August 15, 1947 where on one side the country was partitioned in two and on the other side the integration of hundreds of princely states was a challenging task. Many of the princely states maintained their own postal system and issued stamps in some cases till 1951.

The governance of the French enclave Chandernagore was ceded to India on May 2, 1950. More information is required regarding validity of French India stamps in Chandernagore that was merged with West Bengal state on October 2, 1955.

The stamps and postal stationery of most states were continued to be accepted for postal charges up to April 30, 1950. These could be exchanged for Indian stamps up to July 31, 1950.

The stamps of Gwalior, Patiala, Nabha, Jind, and Chamba that were overprinted on the issues of British India remained valid for postage up to December 31, 1950. These could thereafter be exchanged for stamps of equivalent value up to March 31, 1951.

The stamps of Travancore Cochin ceased to be valid for prepayment of postage with effect from July 1, 1951. These could be exchanged for Indian stamps of equal value up to September 30, 1951.

The stamps issued during the reign of King George V and King George VI ceased to be valid for postage with effect from October 1, 1954. These could be exchanged for then current stamps of equal value up to ~~March 31, 1955~~ **December 31, 1954**.

On November 1, 1954, the four French enclaves of Pondichéry, Yanam, Mahe, and Karikal were de facto transferred to India. The details of the stamps of French India's demonetization requires further research.

All denominations of Anna Pie series, except 4 Annas, 8 Annas, 12 Annas, and Rs 1½ were demonetized with effect from October 1, 1959. These could be exchanged with stamps in decimal denominations up to November 30, 1959

Portuguese enclaves of Dadra & Nagar Haveli were liberated by people themselves on August 2, 1954 who established free Administration of Dadra and Nagar Haveli that was merged in Union of India in 1961. India liberated Goa and Daman & Diu on December 19, 1961 in a military action that Portugal only recognized in 1975. The stamps of India were put on sale with effect from December 28, 1961 although postage stamps of Portuguese India remained valid for postage up to January 4, or 5, or 6, 1962.

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