
INDIAN MARGINAL MARKINGS

INNOVATIVE PHILATELY

by

ASHOK BAYANWALA, AHMEDABAD



Various markings on postage stamp sheet margins are found since postage stamps were introduced in India. Decorative flowery designs are seen on sheet margins of first stamp issued in 1854. Instructional markings on sheet margins are also found for post office officials to help them in the sale of stamps. Some of these instruction inscriptions made very interesting reading; for example, the Half Anna Sheet of Queen Victoria Series of East India postage stamps of 1885-65, bears following instructions, to make the sale of stamp easier for the vendor :

‘Whole sheet containing 320 stamps - ten rupees’

‘One half sheet containing 160 stamps-five rupees’

‘One quarter sheet containing-80 stamps-Two Rupees eight annas’

These instructions were placed on different places of the margins of the stamp sheets. The inscriptions and markings changed with time. Different types of markings on the stamp sheets are found for machine operators, perforating personnel, sheet cutters, packers etc to make their jobs easy and foolproof while producing/printing the stamps. These sheet margins are also used by India Post for public awareness, publicity campaigns etc, at the times. We have tried to take a look at these marginal markings on the stamp sheets of Post Independence era, in form of this article.

Single coloured control marks as triangular indicators, (see illustration 1 & 2) which are found on margins of early post independence stamp sheets, were meant for perforating instructions. Colour control marks were introduced in bi-colour stamps, to ensure proper registration of both colours. Two colour rectangular boxes, one inserted into the other, were to be placed between the adjacent sheet as sheet cutting margins. Once the sheets are cut, half of the rectangular box is visible on one sheet, while the other half of the rectangular boxes setting, goes on the another stamp sheet (illustration 3).



illustration 1

illustration 2



illustration 3

When multi coloured printing was introduced, colour control registration marks, popularly known as traffic lights, were introduced on sheet margins, starting from "Air India" issue of 8th June 1973. These marks in form of thick dots or stars in a sequence, were put on the sheets to indicate and check that during the printing process the sheets are receiving the impressions of the every colour in the control key in the proper sequence and also to introduce rectifications, if required. It also appears that four parallel lines in the same order as colour combination of the traffic light, were inserted on sheet margins as an experimental measure for extra precaution. (illustration 4) But these lines appeared only on two issues, viz. Vande Mataram (issued on 30th December 1976) and Film Festival (issued on 3rd January 1977). This experiment was discontinued after a while.

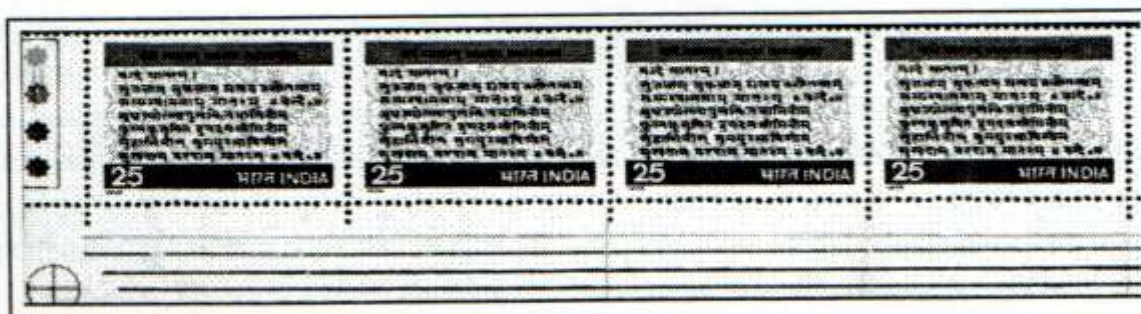


illustration 4

Jubilee lines which were introduced in 1887, to protect the edges of stamp printing plates in typographic printings, are found on Archaeological Definitive Stamps (1949) of annas value except 2½ annas stamp. Printer's name on sheet margins was introduced in fourth definitive series (1965-75). It was on all denomination except 3p, 6p and 8p, (which were issued prior to the taking of the decision and were short-lived) & had "India Security Press, Nasik Road" printed on one side of the sheet margins. The inscription was followed by a code number consisting of a letter and numerals. The letters stood for particular denominations viz., 'X' for 2p., 'T' for 4p., 'A' for 5p., 'B' for 10p., and so on up to 'N' for Rs. 10, and the numerals were meant to record the number of sheets printed- a unit indicating one lakh sheets (illustration 5). This practice was continued for all subsequent series of stamps, though the introduction of new denominations forced the use of the same letter for different denominations, sometimes even in the same Definitive Series !

Apparently, with the increasing invasion of the computerisation in the printing processes at Nasik in early 1985, the computers were used also for the counting of printed sheets. While in the earlier issues, the printer's name and alphabet-code appeared to be type-set, indicating that these were printed at the same stage as the stamps-design, in the later issues the numerals were in digital type font, which meant that these were put in by computers at a later stage. In these printings, the location of the press was spelt as 'Nashik Road', instead of the earlier 'Nasik Road' (illustration 6).



— illustration 5 —



— illustration 6 —

Later, when vegetable gum used on Indian Stamps was changed to synthetic gum in August/September 1985, the inscription on the margins of the stamp sheets of the definitive stamps carried an instruction for the public, along with the printer's name, viz. "New gumming-wet well and press, I.S.P. Nashik Road". In the seventh Definitive Series of 1986, Hindi version was added to the above English inscriptions and since then it is being continued. (illustration 7 & 7A)



illustration 7



illustration 7A

The Postal Department realised the reach and the potential of the postal stamps, it was whole of the nation, and tried to use this potential to the fullest. They made efforts to use the extra space available on the stamp sheets, i.e. the sheet margins, as "Message Carriers to the Masses". To popularise and to increase the awareness about the "PIN" code, the Postal Department printed the slogan:

पिन कोड से तेज डाक

"PIN CODE FOR FAST MAIL"

in Hindi and English on the these margins (illustration 8). Sheets of the following stamp issues carry the PIN code communications / slogan on them :

#	Date	Issue	Deno
1.	13-12-1975	- Golden Jubilee of Indian Security Press	25p.
2.	20-12-1975	- Theosophical Society	25p.
3.	25-12-1975	- Inpex-75	25p.
4.	25-12-1975	- Inpex-75	200p.
5.	03-01-1976	- L.N.Mishra	25p.
6.	10-02-1976	- Bird's Sanctuary	25p.
7.	04-03-1976	- 16th Light Cavalry	25p.
8.	10-03-1976	- Allexander Graham Bell	25p.
9.	18-03-1976	- Muthuswami Dikshitar	25p.
10.	15-08-1976	- Param Vir Chakra	25p.



illustration 8

These inscriptions were made in a row, independent for every individual stamp on the extreme left or extreme right pane of the sheets.

In a similar way, to publicize the INDIA-80 International Stamp Exhibition, the Postal Department came out with the following inscription on the sheet margins:

**“ISP Nasik Road, India International Stamp Exhibition 1980,
Jan 25 - Feb. 3, 1980.”**

as this single inscription spreads over full margin of one side of the sheet, there is only one inscription per sheet. These inscriptions are printed on two sides of four panel printing sheet (illustration 9). The following stamps sheets are found with India-80 inscription :

#	Date	Issue	Deno
1.	02-07-1979	- Centenary of the Post Card	50p.
2.	15-10-1979	- 50th anniversary of First Air Mail	30p.
3.	15-10-1979	- 50th anniversary of First Air Mail	50p.
4.	15-10-1979	- 50th anniversary of First Air Mail	100p.
5.	15-10-1979	- 50th anniversary of First Air Mail	200p.
6.	04-12-1979	- IAEA	100p.
7.	21-12-1979	- Guru Amar Das	30p.
8.	21-01-1980	- UNIDO	100p.



illustration 9

The Department of Posts once again came out with a two line inscription as :

**“INDIA-89 World Philatelic Exhibition, 20-29 January, 1989
New Delhi”**

in Hindi and English on sheet margin to popularise / publicize “INDIA-89” the Indian International Stamp Exhibition. This inscription also spreads out over full margin and is found on both sides on the issued stamp sheets. The following stamps sheets are found with India-89 inscription (illustration 10) :



illustration 10

#	Date	Issue	Deno
1.	03-11-88	- Times of India	150p.
2.	11-11-88	- Abdul Kalam Azad	60p.
3.	14-11-88	- Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru	60p.
4.	14-11-88	- Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru	100p.
5.	05-12-88	- Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah	60p.
6.	06-12-88	- K.M. Munshi	60p.
7.	02-01-89	- Harekrushna Mahtab	60p.
8.	02-01-89	- Mannathu Padmanabhan	60p.
9.	10-01-89	- Lok Sabha Secretariat	60p.
10.	11-01-89	- Lucknow Museum	60p.
11.	20-01-89	- Baldev Ramji Mirdha	60p.
12.	13-04-89	- Saifuddin Kitchlew	60p.

In the year 2000, the Department of Post, once again grabbed the opportunity to publicise another International Stamp Exhibition on these stamp sheet margins and came out with three different

inscriptions to promote "Indepex Asiana-2000" the 14th Asian International Stamp Exhibition which was held at Calcutta. The first of these inscriptions was :

"INDEPEX ASIANA 2000"

a bilingual continuous text, spreads out on full margin and found on both side of the issued sheets (illustration 11). The following issues are found with the above, first inscription :



illustration 11

#	Date	Issue	Deno
1.	31-03-2000	- Siroi Lily	300p.
2.	31-03-2000	- Sangai Deer	300p.
3.	31-03-2000	- Wild Guava	300p.
4.	31-03-2000	- Slow Loris	1500p.

The second inscription in this series was :

"Visit Indepex Asiana 2000" at Calcutta from December 7-12,2000

a inscription in two languages with Hindi on one margin and English version at other margin (illustration 12). The following stamps sheets are found with the second inscription :

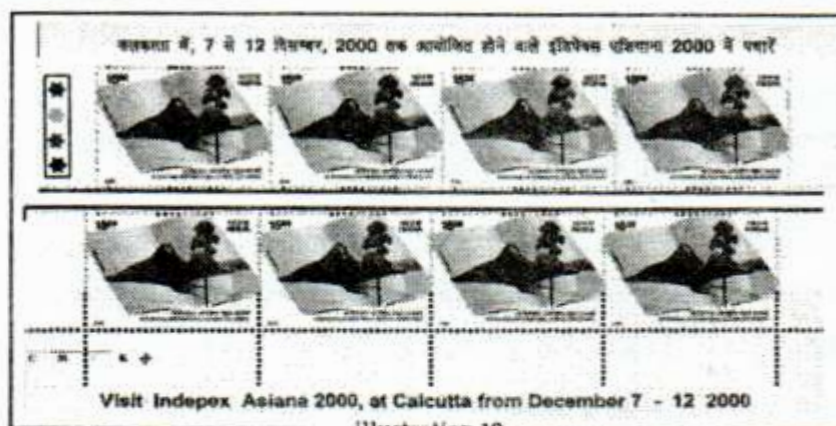


illustration 12

#	Date	Issue	Deno
1.	06-05-2000	- Rosy Pastor	300p.
2.	06-05-2000	- Garganey Teal	300p.
3.	06-05-2000	- Forest Wagtail	300p.
4.	06-05-2000	- White Stork	300p.
5.	06-05-2000	- Mixed sheet of above noted birds	300p.
6.	28-05-2000	- Dr. N.T. Rama Rao	300p.
7.	26-06-2000	- Swami Sahajanand	300p.
8.	12-08-2000	- College Chapel, Vellore	300p.
9.	15-08-2000	- V.L. Pandit	300p.
10.	15-08-2000	- B.R.Srinivasan	300p.
11.	15-08-2000	- Jaglal Choudhary	300p.
16.	15-08-2000	- R.G. Baruah	300p.
17.	15-08-2000	- Mixed sheet of above 4 stamps	300p.
18.	26-08-2000	- Kodaikanal School	1500p.
19.	17-09-2000	- XXVII Olympics	300p.
20.	17-09-2000	- XXVII Olympics	600p.
21.	17-09-2000	- XXVII Olympics	1000p.
22.	17-09-2000	- XXVII Olympics	1500p.
23.	29-09-2000	- India in Space	300p.
24.	29-09-2000	- India in Space	300p.
25.	29-09-2000	- India in Space	300p.
25.	29-09-2000	- India in Space (se-tenant)	
26.	15-10-2000	- Madhubani Paintings	300p.
27.	15-10-2000	- Madhubani Paintings	300p.
28.	15-10-2000	- Madhubani Paintings	300p.
29.	15-10-2000	- Madhubani Paintings	500p.
29.	15-10-2000	- Madhubani Painting (Above two stamps are setenant)	1000p.
30.	16-10-2000	- Raj Kumar Shukla	300p.
31.	17-10-2000	- Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma	300p.

The Third inscription in this series was :

“WELCOME TO INDEPEX ASIANA”

again bilingual, Hindi & English (illustration 13), which is found on the following stamps sheets :

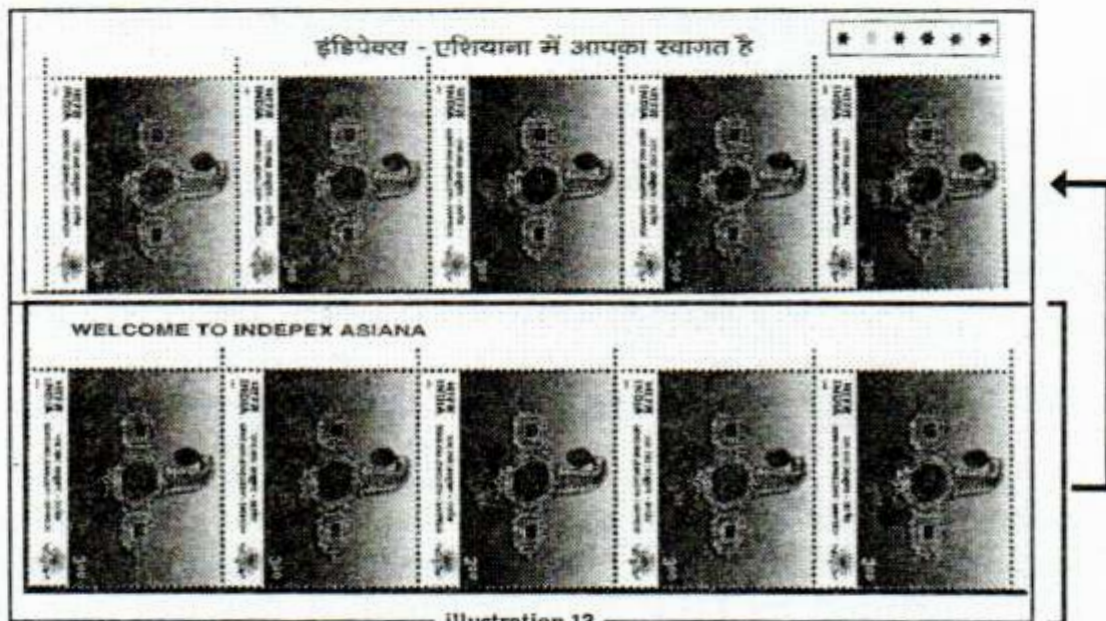


illustration 13

#	Date	Issue	Deno
		Gems & Jewellery Set	
1.	07-12-2000	- Bead Necklace	300p.
2.	07-12-2000	- Gold Necklace	300p.
3.	07-12-2000	- Turban Ornament	300p.
4.	07-12-2000	- Navaratna Necklace	300p.
5.	07-12-2000	- Bridal Necklace	300p.
6.	07-12-2000	- Temple Necklace	300p.
7.	07-12-2000	- Mixed sheet of the above 6 stamps	

As the sheets of these stamps were very large in size, both the version of this inscription are found on a single margin of the sheet with traffic lights in between.

In January 2001, to celebrate Buddha Mahotsav- Festival of Buddha, the Department of Post came out with an inscription for the occasion, viz.

**“Buddham Sharanam Gachchami, Dhammam Sharanam
Gachchami, Sangham Sharnam Gachchami”**

in Devnagri Script only, which appears on bottom margin of the following stamps sheets (illustration 14):



illustration 14

#	Date	Issue	Deno
1.	21-01-2001	- Raigir	400p.
2.	21-01-2001	- Sarnath	400p.
3.	21-01-2001	- Kushinagar	800p.
4.	21-01-2001	- Bodhgaya	1500p.

Besides the above mentioned inscriptions, colour codes, indicators etc. which appeared on all sheets of the concerning issues, different types of marks and symbols are also found on sheet margins of stamps printed by I.S.P. Nashik Road. A few are mentioned as follow :

1. "Year" of printing on 2nd Para Maratha Battalion stamp Sheets (07-09-1997) appears on the margin of all stamps of top row (see illustration 20).
2. Sometimes the "date" of printing of stamp is found on sheet margin but not on all sheets, e.g. M. Padmanabhan issue of 02-01-1989.
3. Sometimes "numbers" are found on sheet margins of commemorative stamps.
4. A mysterious printing on sheet margin of Bethune Collegiate School is found on very few sheets. It shows the middle portion of the stamp on the top margin of the sheet.

In 1993, when Private Printers were allowed to print postage stamps, different types of control marks were used by them, even colour control marks were used with initials of the colour. In 1996, Painting stamps had the name of the Printing Press- "Calcutta Security Press" on its margins in form of a circle viz. Four seasons (illustration 15). Colour alphabets are also found on the margins denoting different colours used in the stamps (illustration 16 & 17).



illustration 15

Printer's Name



illustration 16

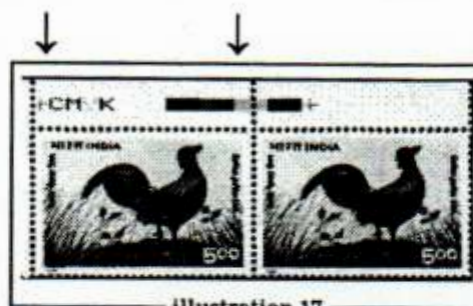
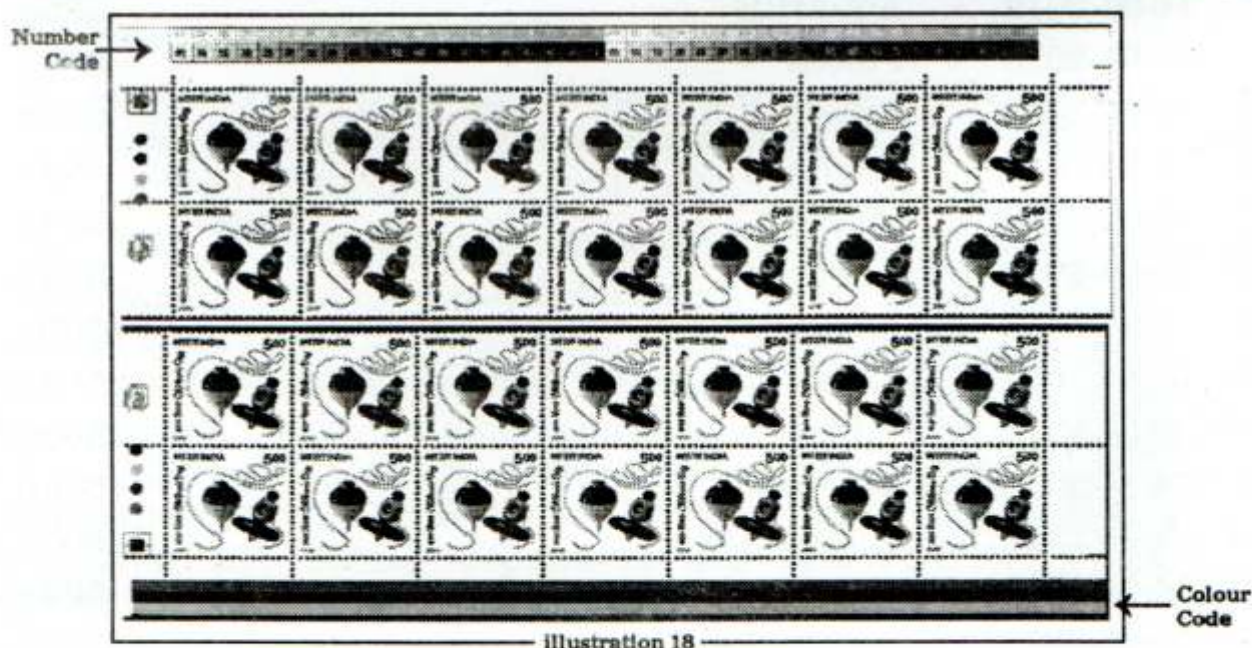


illustration 17

From 2009, India Security Press introduced Colour Code in shape of thick lines of the colours, which were used in printing of stamps. Beside these colour codes, Number Code for counting sheets were also introduced. These codes were used together in such a way, that colour code appears on one sheet margin and the number code appears on the other sheet margin (illustration 18). These codes appeared on the following stamps sheets :

#	Date	Issue	Deno
1.	1-12-2009	Greetings (Brown) Other 3 stamps of the Greetings set do not have colour on Number code.	500p.
2.	10-12-2009	Kalamkari	500p.
3.	10-12-2009	Apa Tani Weaves	500p.
4.	10-12-2009	Kanchipuram	500p.
5.	10-12-2009	Banaras Silk	500p.
6.	23-02-2010	PC Sorcar	500p.
7.	30-03-2010	Special Protection Group	500p.
8.	14-04-2010	Aquarius	500p.
9.	14-04-2010	Pisces	500p.
10.	14-04-2010	Aries	500p.
11.	14-04-2010	Taurus	500p.
12.	14-04-2010	Gemini	500p.
13.	14-04-2010	Cancer	500p.
14.	14-04-2010	Leo	500p.
15.	14-04-2010	Virgo	500p.
16.	14-04-2010	Libra	500p.
17.	14-04-2010	Scorpio	500p.
18.	14-04-2010	Sagittarius	500p.
19.	14-04-2010	Capricorn	500p.
20.	06-05-2010	Veluthampi	500p.

21.	13-05-2010	-	Udagamandalam HPO	500p.
22.	13-05-2010	-	Nagpur GPO	500p.
23.	13-05-2010	-	Shimla GPO	500p.
24.	13-05-2010	-	Cooch Behar HPO	500p.
25.	13-05-2010	-	Lucknow GPO	500p.
26.	13-05-2010	-	Delhi GPO	500p.
27.	12-07-2010	-	Rath Yatra, Puri	500p.
28.	01-08-2010	-	Talkatora Stadium	500p.
29.	01-08-2010	-	Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium	500p.
30.	06-10-2010	-	Indore State	500p.
31.	06-10-2010	-	Sirmoor State	500p.
32.	06-10-2010	-	Cochin State	500p.
33.	06-10-2010	-	Bamra State	500p.
34.	25-10-2010	-	Sant Shadaram Sahib	500p.
35.	27-10-2010	-	Cathedral School	500p.
36.	16-11-2010	-	Comptroller & A.G.of India	500p.
37.	29-10-2010	-	Kranti Trivedi	500p.
38.	14-11-2010	-	Children's Day (4 Stamps)	4×500p.
39.	06-12-2010	-	Sri Sri Borda	500p.
40.	10-12-2010	-	Prafful Chand Chaki	500p.
41.	21-12-2010	-	Craft Museum (2 Stamps)	2×500p.
42.	23-12-2010	-	Bhai Jeeven Singh	500p.
43.	24-12-2010	-	Triguna Sen & N.C.E. (2 Stamps)	2×500p.



Once again, to Commemorate the Centenary of First Official Air Mail despatch from Allahabad to Naini on 18th February 1911, India Post is organising INDIPEX-2011, a World Philatelic Exhibition at New Delhi from 12th to 18th February 2011. To publicise the Indipex-2011, India Post has inserted the official LOGO of the exhibition on the sheet margins, along with the traffic lights (illustration 19) of the following stamps sheets :



Illustration 19

#	Date	Issue	Deno
1.	25-06-2010	- CwG Baton	500p.
2.	25-06-2010	- Commonwealth Games Mascot	2000p.
3.	09-07-2010	- Sparrow	500p.
4.	09-07-2010	- Pigeon	500p.
5.	12-07-2010	- Rath Yatra Puri	500p.
6.	10-08-2010	- Talkatora Stadium	500p.
7.	10-08-2010	- JLN Stadium	500p.
8.	30-08-2010	- GK Moopanar	500p.
9.	06-10-2010	- Indore Stamp	500p.
10.	06-10-2010	- Bamra Stamp	500p.
11.	06-10-2010	- Cochin Stamp	500p.
12.	06-10-2010	- Sirmoor Stamp	500p.
13.	25-10-2010	- Sant Shadaram	500p.
14.	27-10-2010	- Cathedral School	500p.
15.	29-10-2010	- Kranti Trivedi	500p.
16.	10-11-2010	- K.A.P. Viswanatham	500p.
17.	14-11-2010	- Children's Day :Top	500p.
18.	14-11-2010	- Childrens' Day : Dolls	500p.
19.	14-11-2010	- Childrens' Day :Kites	500p.
20.	14-11-2010	- Childrens' Day : Dolls (Large Stamp)	500p.

21.	06-12-2010	-	Sri Sri Borda	500p.
22.	10-12-2010	-	Prafful Chand Chaki	500p.
23.	22-12-2010	-	YB Chawhan	500p.
24.	22-12-2010	-	Bhau Saheb Hirrey	500p.
25.	23-12-2010	-	Bhai Jeeven Singh	500p.
26.	24-12-2010	-	Triguna Sen & N.C.E. (2 Stamps)	2×500p.

It also may quite be possible that some other inscriptions or marking have skipped the above listing. Readership is requested to please inform the author on his following address to make necessary amendments / corrections in his records. The information so received on the pages of the year book's future editions.

And this is not the end , in course of the time India Post may come out with more and more such type of innovations and novalities for philately. We all need to keep our eyes open and alert to mark them. Till then , Happy Hunting.



Illustration 20

ASHOK BAYANWALA

Vrinda Niket, 96-Swastik Society, Navrangpura,

AHMEDABAD-380 009

Phone : 093270-30758

e-mail : parthlochan@rediffmail.com
