



Photo layout at left illustrates two India airmail varieties. Top Left: Normal stamp. Top Right: Tree without a top (figure 1a). Bottom Left: Serif variety, figure B. Bottom Right: Serif variety, figure C.

## An Indian Airmail Rarity

By Grosvenor W. Bissell, M.D.

SOMETIME between Oct. 22, 1929, and Nov. 1, 1929, the Security Printing Press of Nasik, India, produced a series of airpost stamps to be used on letter mail to England. These were supposedly first postally used Nov. 12, 1929, although letters to England, dated Oct. 22, 1929, are extant.<sup>(1)</sup>

The entire series of oblong stamps, designed by R. Grant, was typographed on watermarked single-star paper in sheets of 144—12 rows of 12 stamps in each row, perforation 14. A picture of a de Havilland Hercules biplane flying over a lake, with palm trees at the left bank, is the central design. The first five stamps were 3, 4, 6, 8, and 12 anna denominations. The 2 anna value was added Dec. 2, 1929, when the airline was extended to Delhi.

Of this series, only the 8 anna red-violet has two apparently constant plate flaws or errors, although many shades exist in all denominations.<sup>(1)</sup>

The commonest of these is the "second palm tree without the top," appearing immediately below the airplane (Figure 1a), which, although unnoted in Gibbons and Scott catalogues, is well-known to Indian specialists, and mentioned in many other catalogues, notably in the Sanabria Airpost Catalogue, 1963. The latter volume classifies this variety as India 5a, and currently values it at \$9 in mint condition. The used variety is not valued, but the author has seen many specimens, both mint and used. This stamp is number 126 in the sheet "and was removed early after the defect was noted."<sup>(2)</sup>

A scarce variety also is known, first publicly noted by W. E. Fyndhem in 1954. This error is now catalogued in Sanabria as India 5b, "the second 'I' of INDIA with serif", valued at \$150 mint. It is not listed in used condition. This variety (or plate flaw also must be constant, since the author possesses two used copies (Figures 1b and c) and is aware of three other used copies and one mint copy in the collection of a philatelist of the United Kingdom, who was in India from 1922 to 1950 and who has examined thousands of used copies of this stamp in the past 20 years. Indeed, he first brought it to the attention of the author.<sup>(3)</sup> A Sanabria representative is unable to give further information regarding this stamp, but states that the variety "is scarce and most often found in used condition. . . ." He further states that the error was corrected in the early printings.<sup>(4)</sup>

It would seem that this defect was noted by the Nasik Press authorities even earlier than India Sanabria 5a, and no one appears to exactly know where this stamp occurred on the sheet.<sup>(5)</sup> This would seem to be further confirmed by a leading authority on Indian philately, Jal Cooper, who states that he was unaware of it until reported by Fyndham in 1954. He also states that he is unaware when this quite obvious error was corrected, since "the number of printings is not disclosed in my country."<sup>(6)</sup>

Indian specialists in possession of early sheets or covers of the 8 anna 1929 airpost stamp, aerophilatelists, and general collectors, would do well to inspect their albums to see whether they may have one of these "nuggets" in their collections.

(Addendum: The author has recently discovered another "serif variety" in a cheap bulk lot submitted by a wholesale dealer.)

<sup>1</sup> Stamps of India, by Jal Cooper, chapter 10, pages 123-124.

<sup>2</sup> Aerophilatelists News, Francis J. Field Ltd., Sutton Coldfield, England Jan. 15, 1947.

<sup>3</sup> Communication with A. C. Gledhill, India Study Circle, London.

<sup>4</sup> Communication with George A. Medawar, president, Nicholas Sanabria Inc., New York 17.

<sup>5</sup> Communication with Francis J. Field, Sutton Coldfield, England.

<sup>6</sup> Communication with Jal Cooper, Bombay, India.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES: Stanley Gibbons Catalogues of 1930 & 1956; Sanabria Airpost Catalogue, 1963; Encyclopedia of British Empire Postage Stamps 1951, Vol. III, The Empire in Asia, p. 190; Stamp Collecting (London), W. E. Fyndham, Apr. 30, 1954, p. 209.

### Britain's 'Happy Harold' Postmark

"Happy Harold," Britain's first pictorial postmark for tourist publicity, caused a great deal of interest when it was first used at Hastings April 1. In his letter to the Postmaster General, the Mayor of Hastings said that about 275,000 letters a week posted from Hastings and St. Leonards would carry the picture of a Saxon warrior saying "We're ready for your invasion at Hastings."

The Postmaster General, in reply, congratulated Hastings "In setting a pattern which we expect will soon become general throughout the country." The Post Office has had a large number of inquiries about tourist postmarks from a wide range of tourist resorts.