

Philatelic Journal

of
India

HON. Editor: DHIRUBHAI MEHTA

THE CAMEL POST



The stampless cover addressed to Diwan Nathmali of Jaisalmer by G. Buhler, Education Inspector. The address carries the instructions that the letter should go through Vyas Chatrubhuj at Jodhpur (See article "CAMEL POST" page 235).

Published by

THE PHILATELIC SOCIETY OF INDIA

Single Copy Rs. 6/

CAMEL POST IN INDIA

By Ashok Bayanwala

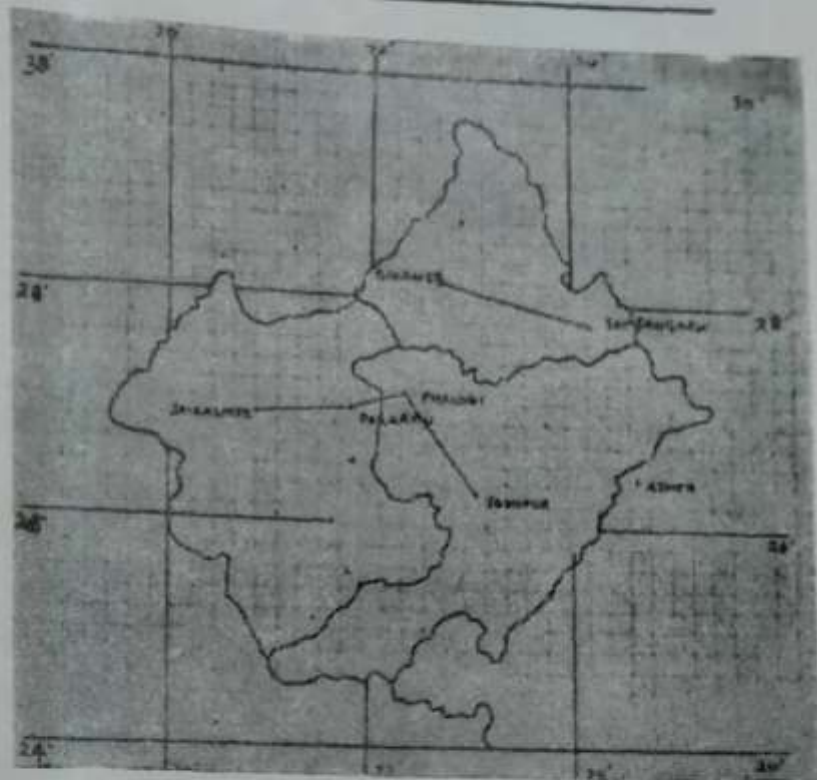
The camel or dromedary post is one of the most ancient method of mail transport in India. The camels were introduced along with horses and bullocks for carrying mails to curtail the money and time consumed by runners. As there is no literature on camel post of India, I have tried to write this article by the help of my collection and information collected from philatelists and philatelic magazines to enable the readers of this article to come out with their material, knowledge and information.

The camels or dromedaries were only method of transport in dessert areas. And it remained very much there, till roads and rails were introduced in dessert areas. Camel post is depicted on 3½ as. stamp of Transport series of King George VI which was issued on 15-12-1937. Even camel is shown as one of the methods of carrying mails on I anna stamp of "Centenary of postage stamp" which was issued on 1-10-54. No special cancellations were ever provided on mails which were carried by camels. Therefore, it is very much difficult to sort out which mail was actually carried by camels. But some mails can be sorted out by the help of postal history.

In Jaisalmer State, there was no organised postal system till late eighties of the last century. In fact post office was first opened on 1st March 1888 in Jaisalmer town, by Imperial Postal Department. Before that period, the state had appointed some camel sowars (riders) who used to cater the needs of postal system for the State and also for the public.

Mails of Jaisalmer town and its adjoining places were handled from Jodhpur town by camel carriers. The route between Jaisalmer and Jodhpur was Via Phulodi and Pokaran. The distance between Jodhpur and Phulodi was 33 kms. and from Phulodi to Pokaran 18 kms. and from Pokaran to Jaisalmer 30 kms. All together the distance from Jodhpur to Jaisalmer was 81 kms.

Mails of Jaisalmer were handled by one Vyas Chaturbhuj who was agent carrier and had an establishment in Jodhpur; had camels to



The cities connected by the Camel Post.

carry mails to and from Jaisalmer. All mails for Jaisalmer were handed over to Vyas Chaturbhuj at his shop, by Jodhpur post office by affixing their delivery postmark, because there was no post office after Jodhpur, on the Jodhpur — Jaisalmer route of 81 kms. When a post office at Pokaran was opened in early 1880's, the Jodhpur post office used to hand-over mails to Vyas Chaturbhuj without its delivery post mark. And he in turn, used to deliver them at Pokaran post office. Then the Pokaran post office used to put its delivery post mark and gave back to Vyas Chaturbhuj for onward transmission and delivery of the mails at Jaisalmer. When the post office was opened at Jaisalmer in 1888 Vyas Chaturbhuj used to deliver mails at Jaisalmer post office. Jaisalmer put its delivery post mark on mails. In all these operations, camels used to carry mails, because that was the only economical and time saving method to carry mail in the dessert areas. Can any reader ascertain the period of continuance of this arrangement? My findings are supported by covers in my collection, some of which are illustrated on the coverpage and the following pages.