

PARCEL POST (1878-1901)

There are many unsolved mysteries in the working of the Postal Department that haunt philatelists for ages, and the use of adhesives on Acknowledgement Cards is one of them. This postal problem has haunted me since 1975 and the Query No. 35/84 in "India Post" has given me fresh stamina to hunt for the answer. Recently, I obtained some items which encouraged me to study Parcel Post and which provide an answer to the query.

Banghy Post, the forerunner of Parcel Post in India, was first used solely for carrying official records and articles sent by the Government. The weight limit of such dispatches was 600 tolas (7 kgs.). In 1854, Banghy Post was extended for public use. The rates varied with weight and distance and were changed slightly in 1866. Rates according to distance were abolished in 1871 and a fixed rate of 3 annas for 10 tolas was introduced. The limits of weight, which were fixed in 1869, remained unchanged at 600 tolas (7 kgs) for foot lines and 2000 tolas (22.3 kgs) for Railway lines. New parcel rates were introduced on and from the 1st April 1878, which were:

Not Exceeding 40 tolas in weight	8 annas.
Exceeding 40 tolas and not exceeding 80 tolas	12 annas.
For ever additional 40 tolas	4 annas.

Rules pertaining to Parcel Post, taken from Postal Directory of 1878, were as follows:

A. Articles treated as Parcels or Packets, when they do not exceed 10 tolas in weight.

Any article not exceeding ten tolas in weight which is specially marked for transmission as a parcel, and fulfills the conditions laid down for parcels, is treated as a parcel; and any article not ex-

ceeding ten tolas in weight, and not falling to be treated as a parcel, which has the ends open and is prepaid with one anna postage, and does not contain any letter or communication of the nature of a letter (unless such letter or communication be wholly printed or lithographed) is treated as a packet.

B. Articles treated as parcels or packets when they exceed 10 tolas in weight.

All articles committed to post office which exceeds 10 tolas in weight, and which do not fall to be treated as letters, registered newspapers of proof sheets, are treated as parcels or packets; those which are posted fully prepaid at parcel rates or super scribed by the senders for transmission as parcels or presented at the post office for that purpose or which, owing to deficient payment, or excess of size or mode of packing, cannot be forwarded as packets, are treated as parcels; and the others are treated as packets.

C. Parcels and packets how transmitted: All parcels are transmitted by banghy post under a system of registration; packets not exceeding 10 tolas in weight are transmitted by letter post, and packets exceeding that limit are transmitted by banghy post; there is no registration for packets.

D. Parcels need not be registered: Parcels being transmitted under the same precautions are registered articles, no separate registration of such parcels is necessary, and packets instead of being registered are forwarded as parcels.

E. Mode of packing, payment and contents of parcels and packets: Parcels may, at the option of the sender, be packed in closed covers, but packets must be packed in open covers, the prepayment of postage on parcels is optional, while for packets full prepayment is compulsory. Not more than one letter or communication of the nature of a letter (not wholly printed or lithographed), may be enclosed in a packet nor may a packet contain anything closed against inspection; but with these exceptions, and with the exception also of dangerous substances and other articles which cannot be sent by post in any form, there are no restrictions as to the contents of parcels and packets.

F. Unpaid and insufficiently paid parcels: Unpaid parcels are charged on delivery at the same rates as would have been chargeable if the postage has been prepaid; insufficiently paid parcels are charged

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on delivery with the deficiency.

G. Receipts given for parcels when properly packed:

A person tendering a parcel at a Post Office within the prescribed hours is entitled to get a receipt for it, provided that the parcel so tendered is securely packed in cloth, wax cloth or tin; and if it is packed in cloth or wax cloth, provided further that it bears seals with distinct impressions of some device – not that of a current coin – at intervals not exceeding five inches along the lines of sewing.

H. Receipts to be signed by addressee on delivery of parcels:

The addressees of parcels are required to sign receipts for them on delivery.

I. Limit of weight of Parcels: No parcel exceeding 25 seers (2,000 tolas) in weight can be received at any post office for despatch. Parcels received by post from seaward, exceeding the above weight, are made over to the Collector of Customs for publication in his list of unclaimed packages.

J. Size of Packets and Parcels: No packet may exceed one foot and a half in length, or one foot in width or depth; and if any such packet be posted, it will be treated as a parcel and charged accordingly. Although no particular limit of size is prescribed in the case of parcels, a Post Office may refuse to receive any parcel which, owing to its size, shape or otherwise, cannot be carried without serious inconvenience to the mail service or risk to the parcel itself.

K. Parcels between places connected by Guaranteed Railway: Between places connected by guaranteed railway, where the railway authorities may have intimated their readiness to undertake the conveyance and delivery of parcels, the post office does not convey parcels, except such as may be sent on public service. Of course, if either the place of address or the place of despatch be not on the line of guaranteed railway, the above rule does not apply.

Some drastic changes were made for parcel post on and from the 15th August 1880 when the rate of ordinary parcel post was further reduced. The changes are evident from the information printed on the back of the receipts of Ordinary Parcels of 1882. The 1878 rules did not advocate cash payment if prepaid, but the 1880 rules insisted on it. Many other changes were also introduced. The information printed on the back of the receipt is as follows:

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PUBLIC

1. Parcels may be posted at any post office. They should be tendered at the post office window.
2. Prepayment of postage is optional, but if prepaid it must be fully paid. If the sender wishes to prepay the postage, he must do so in cash. Postage stamps affixed on parcels cannot be recognized in payment of postage. Parcels having postage stamps affixed to them will be treated as wholly unpaid. Insufficiently paid parcels will not be received. (N.B. This rule does not apply to service Parcels).
3. No parcel may exceed 25 seers (2,000 tolas) in weight, nor may it be of a kind which owing to size, shape, packing or otherwise, cannot be carried without inconvenience to the mail service or risk of injury to itself.
4. The rates of postage for parcels are: if the parcel does not exceed 20 tolas in weight – 4 annas; if it exceeds 20 tolas but does not exceed 40 tolas – 8 annas; and for every additional 40 tolas or fraction thereof – 4 annas. Unpaid parcels are on delivery chargeable with the same rates of postage.
5. The sender of a parcel may obtain a receipt in a book if, when tendering the parcel, he presents the book with the address of the parcel ready written in it.
6. The sender of a parcel can obtain through the post office an acknowledgement of it from the addressee, provided he pays one anna in cash in addition to the postage.
7. The Government are not responsible for loss of, damage to, a parcel unless it is insured. The rates of insurance are: 2 annas when the value does not exceed Rs. 50; 4 annas when it exceeds Rs. 50 but does not exceed Rs. 100; and 4 annas for every additional Rs. 100 or part thereof. Insurance charges must be prepaid in cash. A parcel intended for insurance must be packed in the prescribed manner and accompanied by a declaration of the nature and value of the contents. (Printed forms of declarations can be obtained from the Post Office gratis).
8. Parcels containing coin, jewels &c. must be insured.
9. Every parcel should be packed in a closed cover bearing the name and address of the person to whom it is intended. The sender of the parcel is recommended to see its secure packing. The use of flimsy covers should be avoided; a covering of stout cloth or wax cloth sewn at the edges is recommended; but if the contents are likely to suffer injury from pressure or friction, to which parcels are always liable when in the

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parcel bags, a stout box, tin lined or otherwise, should be used; even with this precaution, however, fragile articles should not be sent by post. Parcels containing valuables should be sealed with wax, the impression not being that of a current coin.

Rates of postage on parcels again changed on and from 1st August 1895 and remained unchanged until 30th June 1901; they are as follows:

Any parcel not Exceeding 20 tolas in weight
..... 2 annas.

Any Parcel Exceeding 20 tolas and not exceeding 40 tolas In weight

..... 4 annas.

For each additional 40 tolas or fraction of 40 tolas Upto 2,000 tolas

..... 4 annas.

Registration, hitherto optional for ordinary parcels, was made compulsory for parcels exceeding 440 tolas in weight.

Registration fee for a parcel not exceeding 20 tolas
..... 2 annas.

For a parcel exceeding 20 tolas in weight

..... 4 annas.

On 1st July 1901, the rates for parcels again changed, but the biggest change was the abolition of similarity between unregistered ordinary parcels and registered articles. The treatment given to ordinary parcels and reg

istered articles was changed. It can be proved by going through the rules of "Certificate of Posting" in the Indian Postal Guide, 1903. Section I sub-section 16 says: A certificate of Posting may be obtained in respect of any postal article for which a receipt is not given by the post office.

Note: Any person posting at one time any number of unregistered parcels not exceeding six may obtain a certificate of posting in respect of such unregistered parcels for a fee of half an anna.

Cash payment for prepaid parcels was also abolished. Sub-section 83 of Section 1 of the Postal Guide, 1903, says:

Manner of prepaying charges on parcels

The postage on a parcel, and also registration fee if the parcel is to be registered, must be fully prepaid by means of postage stamps which must be affixed either to the cover of the parcel or to an official label which can be obtained free at the post office. In either case, the sender or his messenger must affix the stamps himself, postal officials being strictly forbidden to affix them. Should an official label be used, it must be pasted to the parcel; and if the sender does not do his himself, he is recommended to see it done in his presence before he leaves the post office.

(Note): If wax-cloth is used as an outer covering for a parcel and sufficient paper has not been securely fastened outside the wax-cloth, it is advisable that the postage stamps should always be affixed to an official label.

Thus we see that the treatment of ordinary

Recd
P-8 ORDINARY PARCEL ACKNOWLEDGMENT.

(To be returned to office of posting for delivery to sender.)

One Anna postage stamp to be affixed here by office of posting.

Received a parcel No. 12 addressed to—

(Name) Pabu Petha

Signature of addressee [Handwritten Signature]

Date of delivery 1-2-6 188 .

Fig. 1.

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parcels as registered articles and the prepayment of such parcel postage was by cash only from 1880 to 1901. This treatment and prepayment by cash is interrelated with the use of adhesives on its acknowledgements.

A special acknowledgement form for ordinary parcels was introduced in the 1880's reading "ORDINARY PARCEL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT". The rectangular box in the upper right corner reads One anna/postage stamp/to be affixed/here by office/of posting.

This confirms Clause 6 of the instructions found on the back of the 1882 parcel receipts. The Special Acknowledgements are scarce because it appears that the Postal Department discontinued printing them as it was difficult for the public to use different types of acknowledgements for different services. Therefore the postal department came out with a multi-purpose Acknowledgment card in the 1880's only, with "Space for postage stamp" in the upper right hand corner.

F-4 ACKNOWLEDGMENT.
(To be returned to office of posting for delivery to sender.)
Received a Parcel No. 789 address
(Name) Be Shri Karamchand Lalit
Signature of addressee
Date of delivery 189
Here enter "registered article" or "parcel," as the case may be.

Fig. 2.

Therefore, we can now, conclude that, if an acknowledgement of an ordinary parcel is needed, the postage of the parcel and its acknowledgement has to be prepaid in cash, while a registered parcel with its acknowledgement had to be prepaid in stamps only. Cash thus obtained for an ordinary parcel is retained by the post office and in exchange the post office puts one anna stamp on the acknowledgement of an ordinary parcel to differentiate from registered articles. Therefore, adhesives

are always found on an acknowledgement of an unregistered ordinary parcel. Sometimes we find adhesives on registered parcels, but in my opinion, that is a freak on the part of the postal clerk. I say "freak" because mostly registered parcel acknowledgements do not have adhesives on them.

I have got one receipt of an ordinary parcel with one anna adhesive on it, canceled by the P.O. of posting. My example is from Porbandar dated 29.6.1883. In my opinion,

R. & P. 4 ACKNOWLEDGMENT.
(To be returned to office of posting for delivery to sender.)
Received a Parcel No. 194 address
(Name) Mr Lalun
Signature of addressee
Date of delivery 22-10 1883
Here enter "registered article" or "parcel," as the case may be.

Fig. 3.

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it is again an error on the part of the postal clerk. The adhesive should be pasted on the acknowledgement and not on the receipt.

"A.D" in manuscript is visible on the receipt, which proves that an acknowledgement was attached to the parcel.

A.D.

Form 39. Receipt for the Sender of a Parcel.

No. 109 Weight in tolas 22. Dated 29-6-1883

Received a parcel addressed to—

D. O.

Lilavhar Panyal
Bombay

Postage paid Rs. 8 As. 8. Postage due Rs. 6 As. 0

Sawney R. O.








Fig. 4.

In a nutshell, we have adduced that the adhesives were used on acknowledgements of an ordinary parcel post from 1880 to 1901, and prepayment of parcels was done by cash. Now, one question arises – did post offices paste stamps on parcels as they were doing in the case of acknowledgements, or they used to forward them without stamps? The question is answered by Section 83 of the Postal Guide of 1903, as I have

mentioned earlier. But stamped labels for unregistered parcels are very hard to find. In my opinion either the rule was not strictly followed or parcel covers, being of cloth, were destroyed at the time of opening. If nay reader has the Postal Guides of 1880-81 and 1895-96, he can throw more light on this aspect of parcel post. I have got a part of the entire ordinary parcel with a special label which reads "Stamp label for

कार सरकार. गां

Handwritten text in Devanagari script

Handwritten text in Devanagari script

Handwritten text in Devanagari script

Stamp Label for unregistered parcels.




Fig. 5.

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unregistered parcels". It has a pair of 1 anna stamps, which was the correct rate of postage for ordinary parcels in 1899. It appears that, after pasting these stamps on the label,

they were cancelled and after cancellation, the label was pasted on the parcel. This example is from CHANDOR, District NASIK, dated 18.10.1899 and addressed to Indore city.

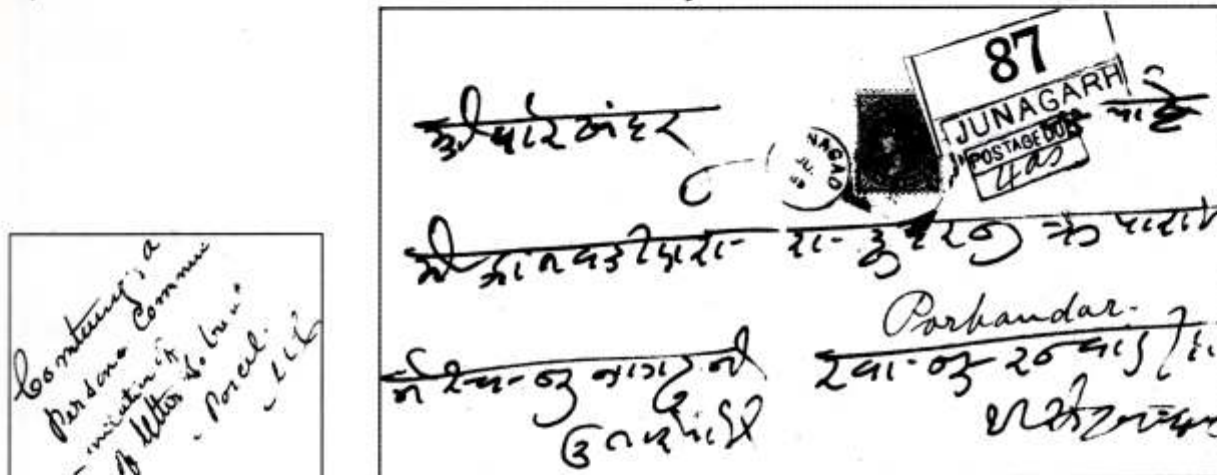


Fig.6.

I, also have two interesting examples which prove the truth of rule "A" of the Postal Directory of 1878 and rule "2" of "Instructions to the Public" of 1880. These two postal articles, posted from Junagadh as Packet Post in July 1889, both with one anna stamps. As the Postal Department found personal communications of the nature of

letters the articles were treated as parcels; they were labeled and made bearing to the tune of appropriate Parcel charge of 4 annas. The parcel charge in 1899 was 2 annas. The one anna stamp already affixed on the article was not considered as part payment because the rules are very clear on the subject, which we have discussed earlier.

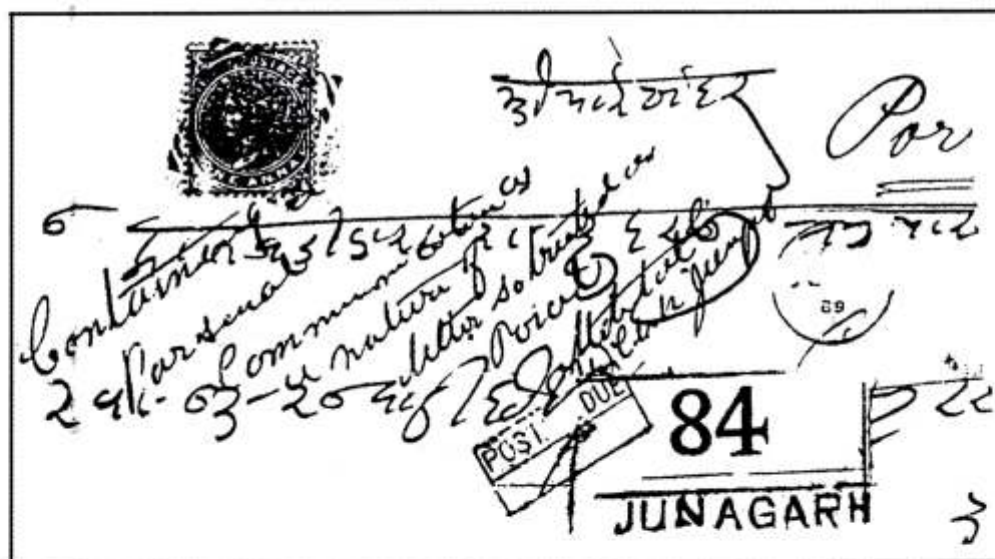


Fig. 7.

It appears that special receipts for parcel post were printed from its inception. In 1880, two different types of receipt were printed

for Ordinary and for Insured parcels and were named Form No. II-1 and No. II-2 respectively.

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Form No. II-1.
Receipt for the Sender of a parcel.


No. 47 Weight 13 tolas.

Date 22. 11 1881.

Received a parcel addressed to—
Hanuman Kherchadess
Bombay

Postage paid Rs. As. Postage due Rs. As. 4.

Stamp of despatching office.



[Signature]
Receiving Officer.

Fig. 8.

Form No. II-2.
Receipt for the Sender of an insured parcel.

No. 446 Weight 13 tolas.

Date 7 9 1881

Received an insured parcel addressed to—
Y. K. Kherchadess
[Signature]

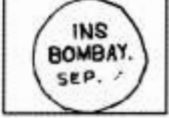
Postage paid Rs. 7 As. 4

Insurance charge Rs. 2 As. 12

Total Rs. 10 As.

Stamp of despatching office.

Value insured Rs. (in words) [Signature]



No. 1102 As.

[Signature]
Receiving Officer.

Fig. 9.

It further appears from my collection that the size of receipt for Ordinary parcels was reduced in 1881-82 and Form No. .

was changed to No. 39. Special receipts for Insured parcels in this period are not found.


Form 39. Receipt for the Sender of a Parcel.

No. 3039 Weight in tolas 111.

Dated 21-12 188

Received a parcel addressed to—
D. O. Gorsawal & Kherchadess
Gooly pore

Postage paid Rs. As. Postage due Rs. 1 As.



[Signature]
R. O.

Fig. 10.

A compact receipt-cum-acknowledgement was printed later in the 1880s for ordinary parcels. The front and back of the said receipt is shown below, which tells its own story.

Bombay P.O. used to have special cachets for parcels, which read "P" or "PAR" in the cancellations. No other special cancellation for Parcel Post is found in this period.