

# PROMOTING PUBLIC EVENTS: POSTAL SLOGANS OF EXHIBITIONS, FAIRS AND FETES IN BRITISH INDIA (1907–1947)

## INTRODUCTION

- From the early twentieth century onward, slogan and special postmarks became important instruments of public communication within the postal system of British India.
- These postal markings promoted industrial exhibitions, agricultural fairs, charitable fetes, educational events, and civic celebrations across the subcontinent.
- The postal administration utilised these slogans as a low-cost publicity medium capable of reaching a very wide audience through ordinary mail circulation.
- The exhibit demonstrates how postal propaganda evolved from occasional commemorative cancellations into promotional campaigns linked to public events and exhibitions.

## PURPOSE AND SCOPE

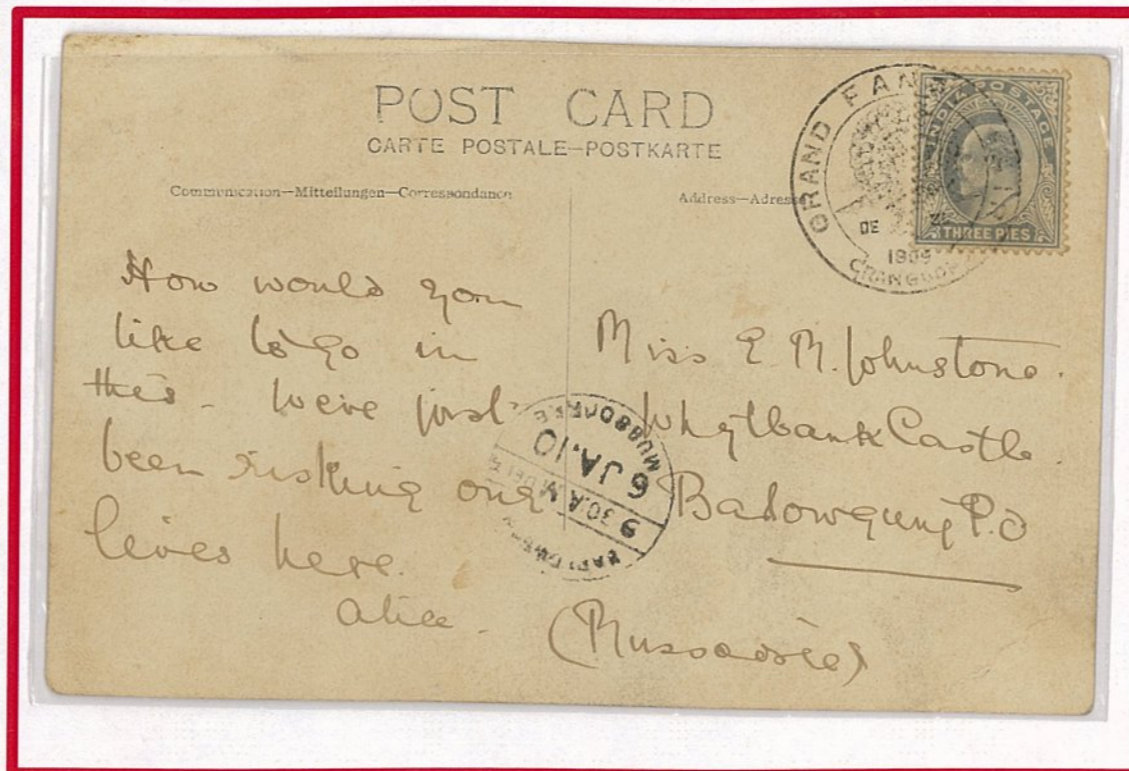
The exhibit studies slogan and special postmarks used for promoting exhibitions, fairs, and fetes in British India between 1907 and 1947. It includes postal publicity relating to industrial and commercial exhibitions, agricultural fairs, charitable and civic fetes, regional and national promotional campaigns, as well as special postmarks used at exhibition venues.

Coronation Durbars and Royal Visit slogan postmarks have been excluded, as these represent a very wide range beyond the scope of a single-frame exhibit.

Wherever relevant, brief historical references to the objective, significance, and location of the events have been included to provide context to the postal material displayed.

### EXHIBIT

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### TREATMENT

The exhibit is arranged according to the nature and purpose of the public events rather than in strict chronological order, thereby highlighting the diverse objectives served by postal publicity in British India.

Special postmarks and slogan cancellations are studied together to demonstrate the different methods adopted by the postal administration for promoting exhibitions, fairs, fetes, and related public events.

The exhibit further illustrates how postal slogans evolved into effective instruments of public awareness, commercial promotion, and civic communication through their widespread and repetitive use on everyday mail.

The classification system used by A. K. Bayanwala in his book has been uniformly used

### REFERENCES

- 1)A. K. Bayanwala: Slogans & Special Post-Marks of India
  - 2)Brian Cartwright: Slogan Cancellations (IP)
  - 3)B.T.Cheverton: Slogan Postmarks (IP)
- (IP)= INDIA POST, published by India Study Circle, London



### GRAND FANCY FAIR RANGOON 1909

Exhibition in Rangoon to showcase local arts and crafts.

Dated 30th December 1909. As par Bayanwala: **"Very scarce... 6 or 7 pieces exist"**

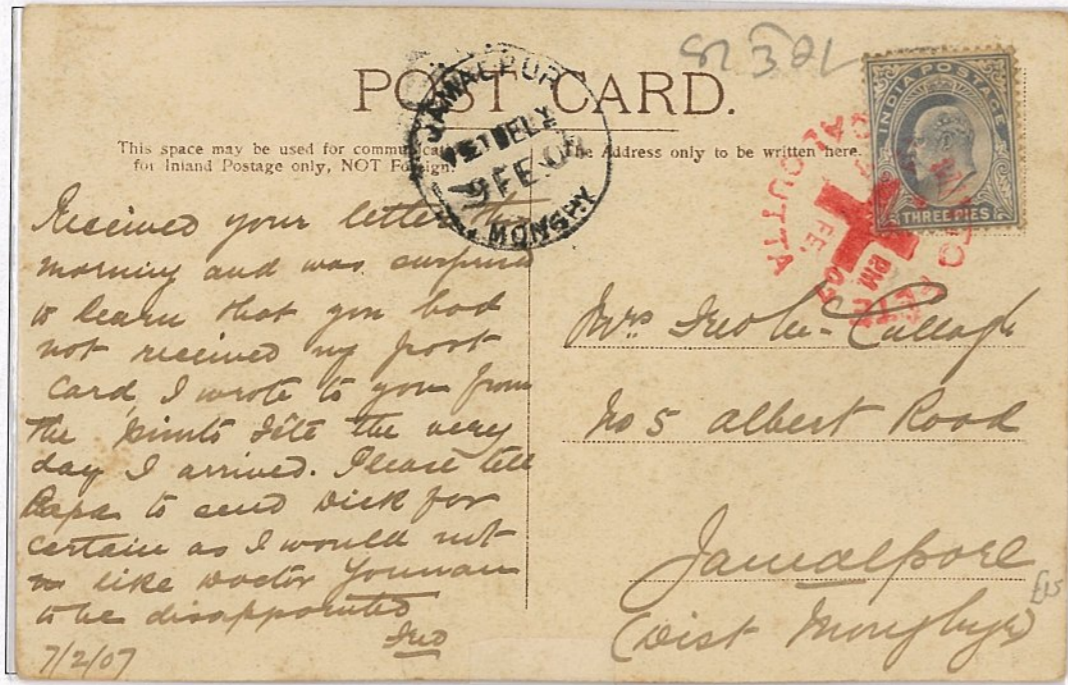
**Bayanwala Type SP-40**

### RARITY

Rare/ scarce items indicated by a **red border**. No formal rarity index exists for slogan and special postmarks of this nature. The rarity of the material presented has therefore been assessed on the basis of recorded auction appearances, exhibit usage, and the known or observed period of postal usage.

Classifications are unrelated to valuation.

The Minto Fete, held in Calcutta 20 January- 7 February 1907 under the patronage of Vicereine Lady Minto, was one of the most prominent charitable and social events of the British Raj. Organised to raise funds for the Lady Minto Indian Nursing Association, the fete combined entertainment, exhibitions, military displays, music, and public attractions on a grand scale. The event featured its own temporary post office using a distinctive red-cross "Minto Fete Calcutta" cancellation. It also became philatelically significant for the issue of commemorative Cinderella labels authorised by Lady Minto, which later generated design related



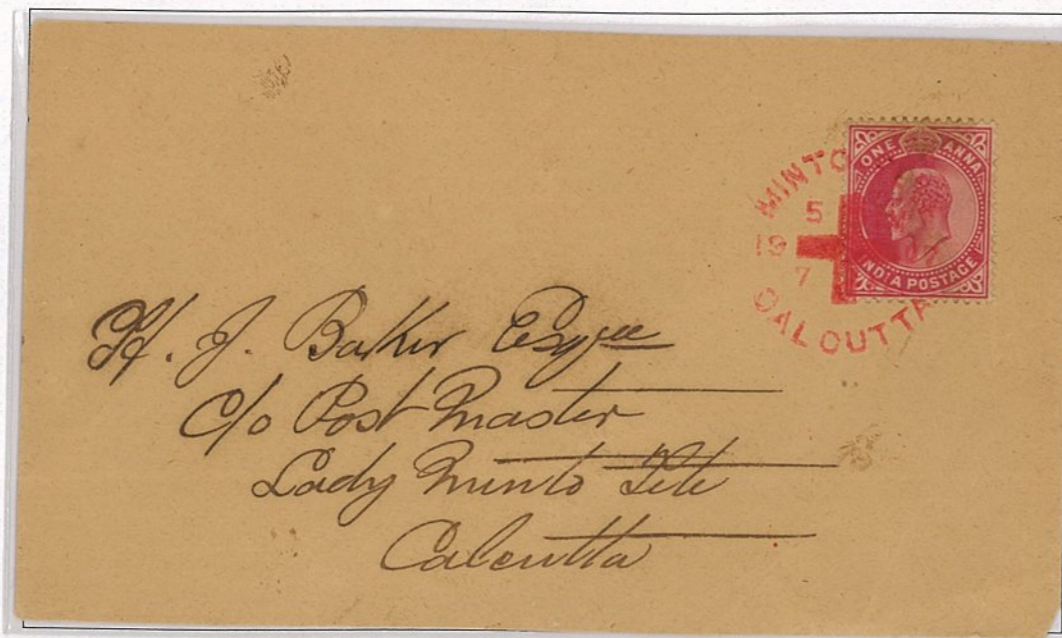
Posted from the Fete P. O on 7th February 1907 to Jamalpore, Monghyr, delivery 9th February. **LAST DAY COVER.**  
Bayanwala SP 39



**LADY AND LORD MINTO.**  
4th Earl of Minto was Viceroy of India from 1905 to 1910.  
(Photographic reproduction)



Special **fund-raising labels** for **Lady Minto's Fête** in Calcutta resembled official postage stamps and bore portraits of **Lord and Lady Minto**. Viewed as disrespectful to the British monarchy. stamps. Official protests led to labels being **withdrawn**.



Philatelic letter, posted from the Fete P.O to receiver, C/O Post Master, Lady Minto's Fete. 7th February, **LAST DAY COVER.**  
Bayanwala SP 39



RECEIVING POSTMARK ON REVERSE  
←



Letter to Earl of Minto from India, May 1911, after laying down office of Viceroy of India



**FUND RAISER (MADRAS PARK FAIR 1915, OUR DAY FETE, 1917)**

**INDUSTRIAL/ COMMERCIAL (MADRAS EXHIBITION 1917 HUNAR NAGAR, 1928)**



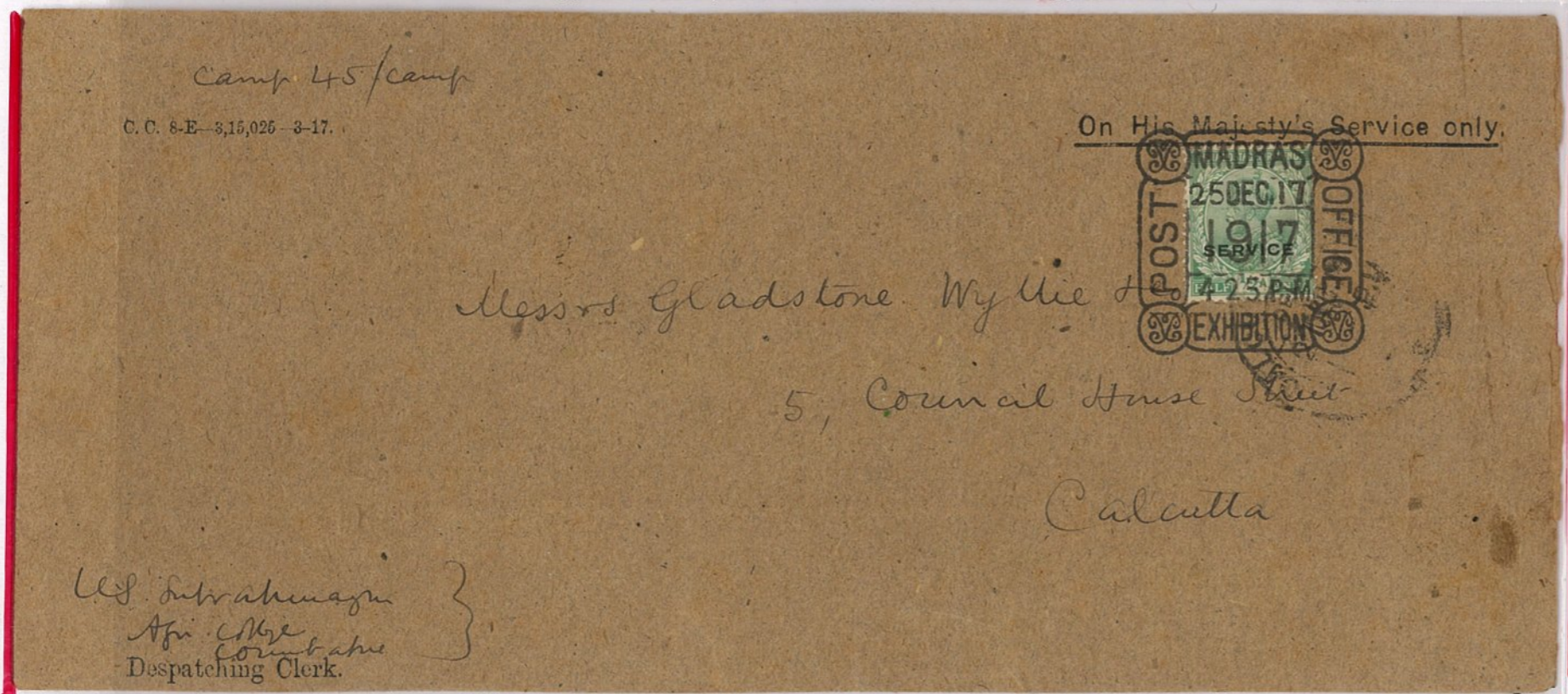
A 1/2 Anna seal was printed for affixing on the envelopes depicting the 'HOSPITAL SHIP 'MADRAS'' for fund raising. 320,000 stamps were issued.



**OUR DAY FETE 1917** Held during World War I as part of the "Our Day" movement, the Bangalore Fete of 1917 raised funds for war charities supporting Indian troops.

The cover, posted on 15 February 1917 soon after the fete opened, bears a CANCELLOR postmark and a 1/2 Anna charity seal depicting a nurse aiding a wounded soldier. **Bayanwala Type SP-49**

**MADRAS PARK FAIR 1915**  
Held at 's Park Fair Ground, Madras, the exhibition showcased regional arts and industries. **The Madras Park Fair was primarily to raise money for the Madras War Fund**, which supported the British war effort and **the Hospital Ship Madras**. Public donations and special War Fund stamps reflected civic and patriotic support during World War I. **Bayanwala Type SP-47**



**MADRAS EXHIBITION 1917** was held at the Park Fair Ground from December 1917. It showcased industrial agricultural products. **Bayanwala Type SP-61**

**Hunar Nagar, Bombay, 1928**, was a temporary craft exhibition showcasing Indian handicrafts and indigenous industries. It highlighted traditional craftsmanship while also reflecting the difficult conditions faced by contemporary artisans.

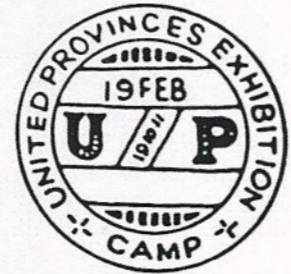
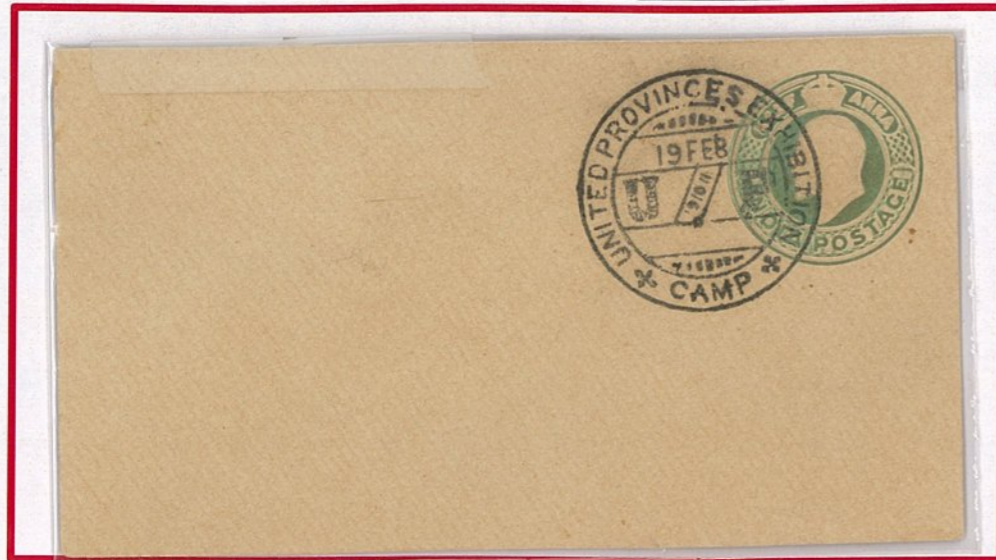
**Bayanwala Type SP-51**

# INDUSTRIAL/ COMMERCIAL EXHIBITIONS

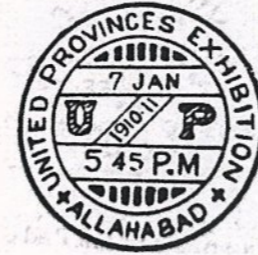
# U.P. EXHIBITION, ALLAHABAD 1911

The United Provinces Exhibition of 1911, held at Allahabad, showcased the industrial, agricultural, and artistic progress of the province. Organised to coincide with the visit of King George V and Queen Mary to India, it reflected growing regional pride in local craftsmanship and enterprise. The exhibition featured numerous pavilions, displays of indigenous industries, and cultural programmes attracting large public attendance.

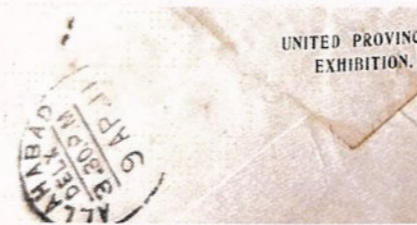
Extensive postal publicity, including special cancellations and commemorative postmarks, was used to mark the event.



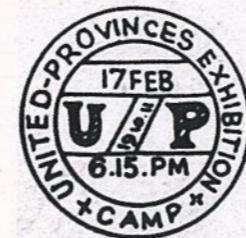
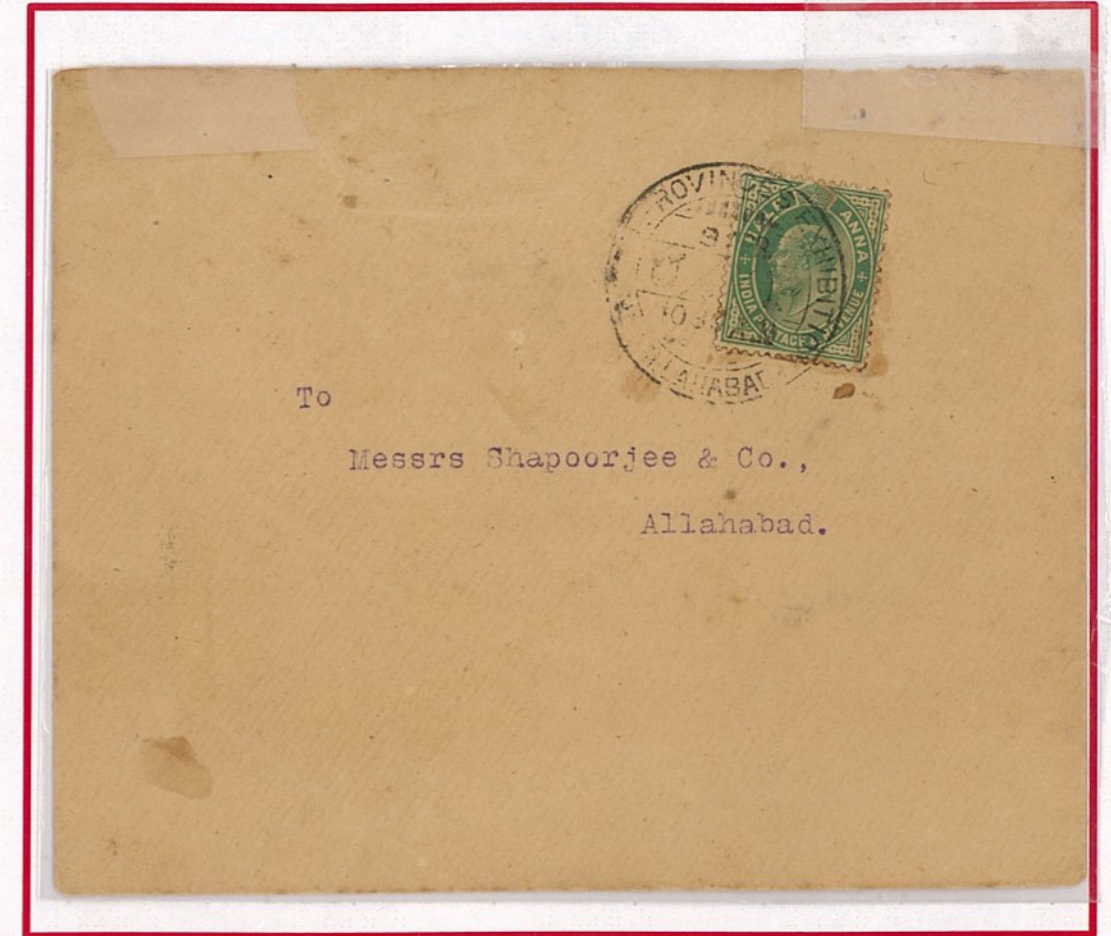
Bayanwala Sp-42



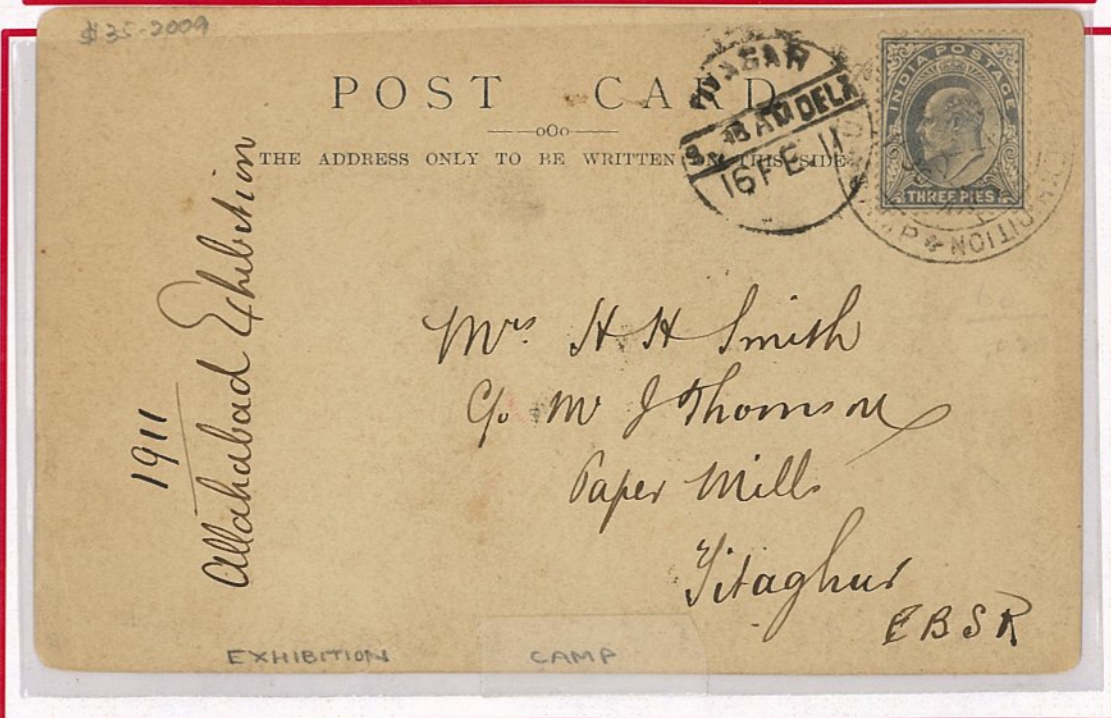
Bayanwala Sp-41



REVERSE OF ENVELOPE:  
OFFICIAL STATIONERY



Bayanwala Sp-43  
on Postcard



On February 18, 1911, the **world's first official airmail** flight took off from Allahabad, India, during the **United Provinces Exhibition**. French pilot Henri Pequet flew a Humber-Sommer biplane, carrying about 6,500 letters across the Yamuna River to Naini in just 13 minutes

# INDUSTRIAL/ COMMERCIAL EXHIBITIONS

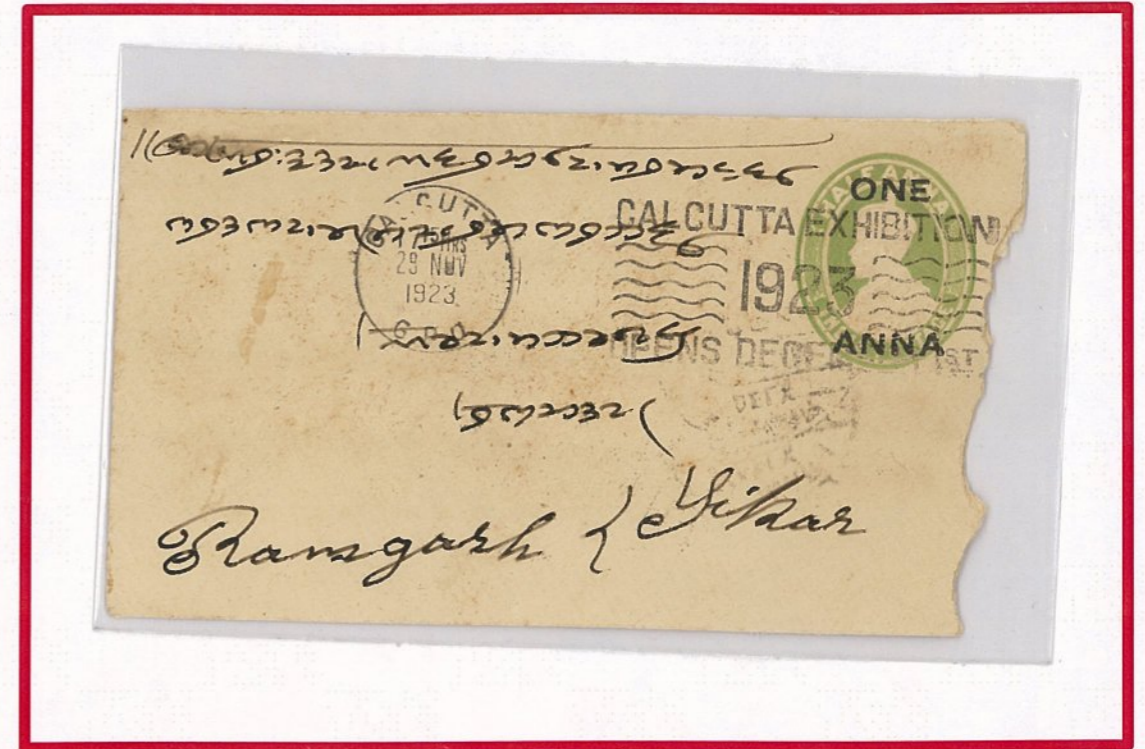
# CALCUTTA EXHIBITION 1923/ BRITISH EMPIRE EXHIBITION 1924

The Calcutta Exhibition of 1923 originated from India's planned participation in the British Empire Exhibition, Wembley, 1924-25. Organised following the Legislative Assembly's sanction of ₹25 lakhs for India's representation, the Calcutta event showcased Bengal's industrial and commercial progress. The Wembley Exhibition, conceived to strengthen imperial trade and unity after World War I, displayed the achievements of Britain and its dominions and colonies. India's pavilion highlighted its art, crafts, and industry, while both exhibitions employed special postal facilities and commemorative cancellations for publicity and promotion.

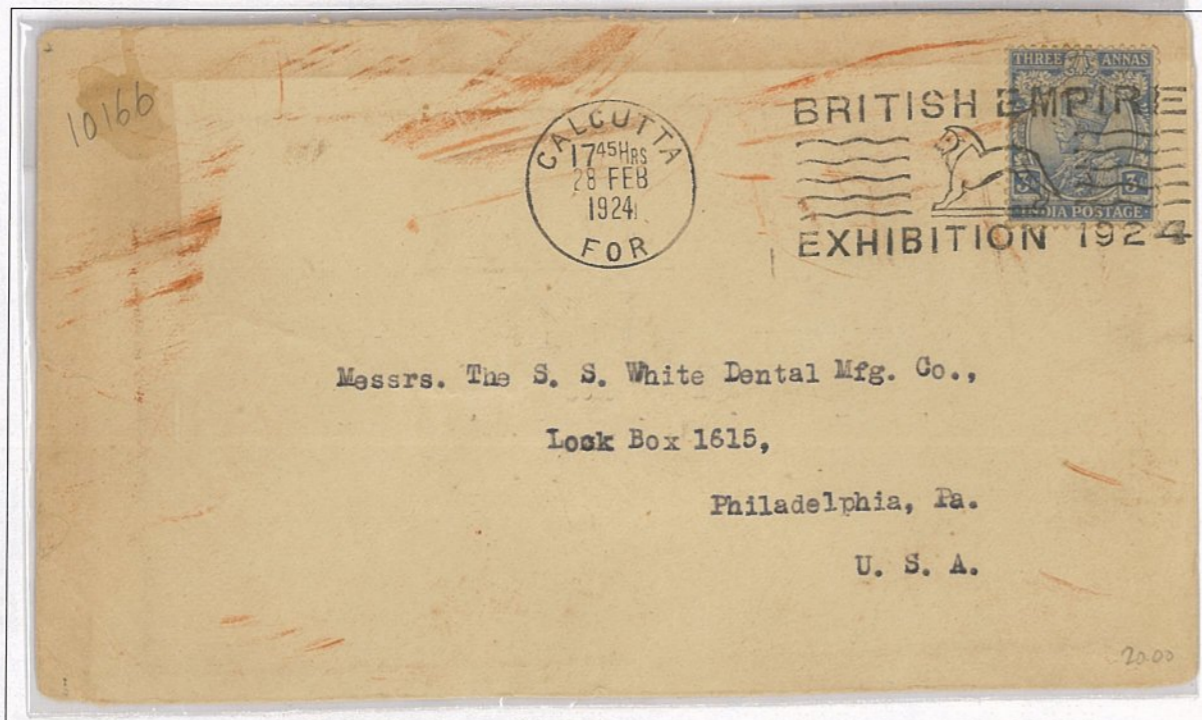


Posted Calcutta GPO dated 6th September 1923. Estimated usage 23rd August to 1st November 1923.

**Bayanwala Type SI, 41.**



Posted Calcutta GPO dated 29th November 1923. **Estimated usage 1st to 31st December 1923 only.** **Bayanwala Type SI, 42**

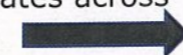


Calcutta GPO 28<sup>th</sup> February 1924, **Extensively used both for domestic and foreign mails** for creating *awareness about the Exhibition in 1924.* **Bayanwala Type SI, 40**

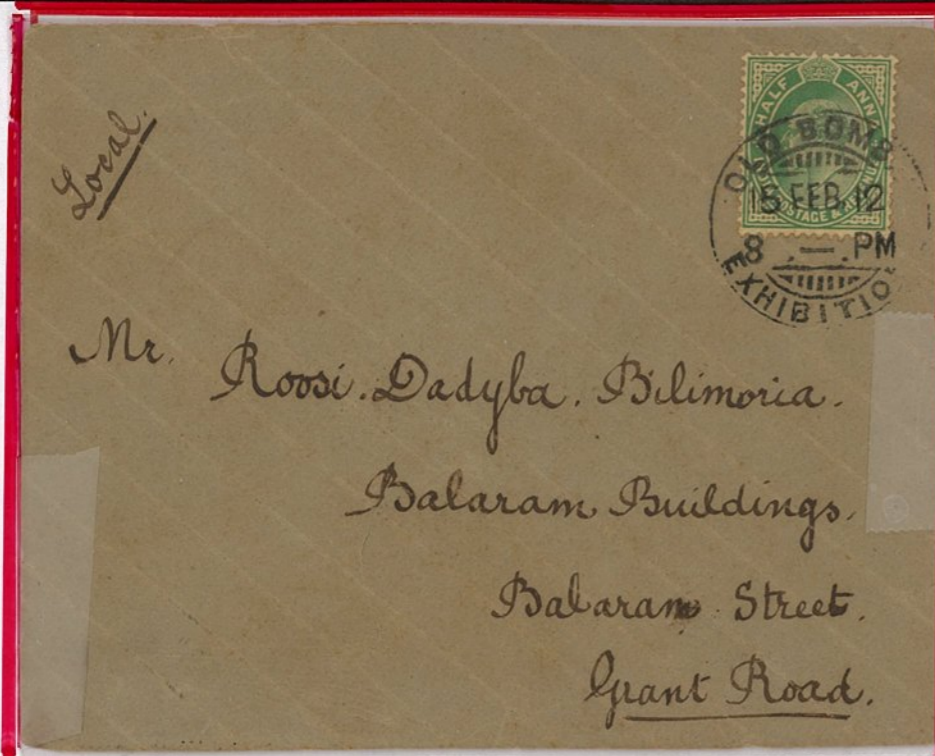


Similar postmark introduced in Britain from October 1922 onward.

Comparable postal publicity campaigns were subsequently adopted by nearly 20 countries, dominions, and protectorates across the Empire.







← **"Old Bombay Exhibition 1911"** refers to the events and displays organized to mark the arrival of King George V and Queen Mary in Bombay (now Mumbai) in December 1911, which served as the first stop of their Indian tour for the grand Delhi Durbar. An exhibition was held from 4 December 1911, featuring various programs and entertainments over several days in honour of Their Majesties.

Dated 1th February 1912. Differs from Bayanwala's figure (left) as it has the time written below the date.

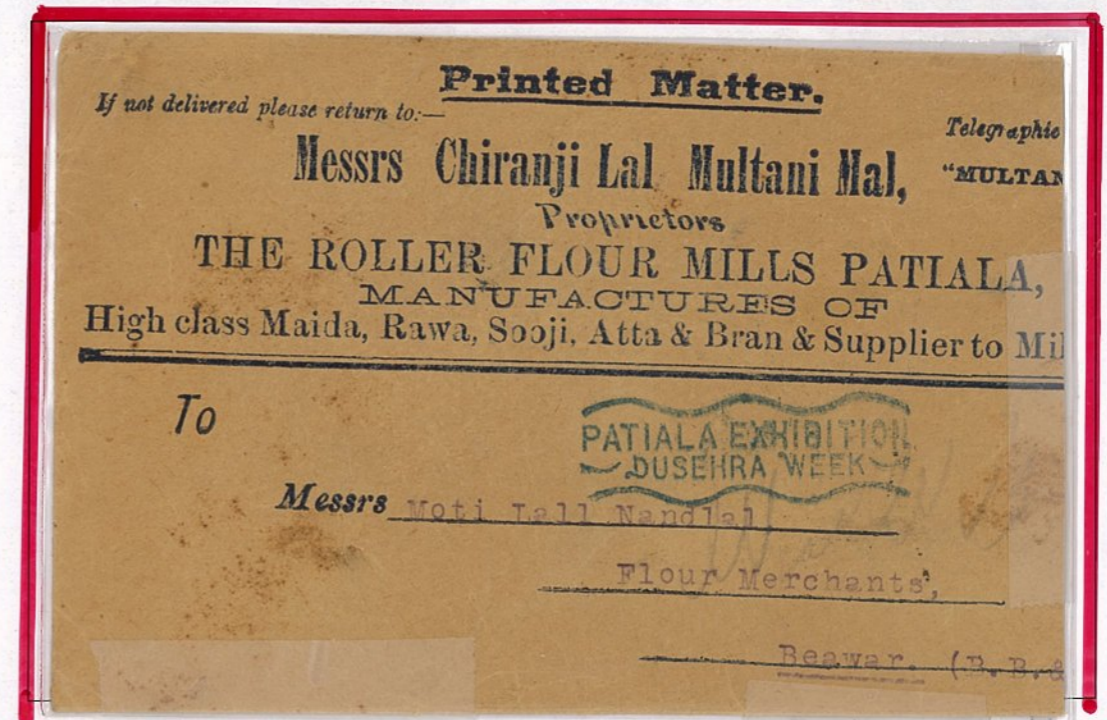
**THIS VARIANT NOT RECORDED BY BAYANWALA**



**1st MARIAN CONGRESS** for India, Burma, and Ceylon held in Madras, January 4-6, 1921.

It was the first event of its kind in Asia, dedicated to honouring the Blessed Virgin Mary and promoting Marian devotion among Catholic communities. Organized under the Archdiocese of Madras, it brought together clergy from across South and Southeast Asia, marking an important milestone in the growth of Catholic religious movements in British India. **Bayanwala Type SP-61**

PATIALA EXHIBITION DUSEHRA WEEK



**PATIALA EXHIBITION- DUSEHRA WEEK 1926**

Dated 13<sup>th</sup> October 1926. This postmark was affixed on both incoming and outgoing mails at Patiala State P. O's in 1926 on account of Dusserah

**CONCLUSION**

- The exhibit demonstrates how slogan and special postmarks evolved into important instruments of public communication and publicity in British India between 1907 and 1947.
- Through exhibitions, fairs, fetes, industrial shows, charitable fund raisers, and public events, the postal system promoted commercial development, civic participation, and social awareness using everyday mail circulation.
- The material illustrates the diversity of postal publicity methods, ranging from temporary event cancellations to long-running slogan campaigns associated with industrial, commercial, cultural, and fundraising activities.
- The exhibit further reflects the economic, social, and administrative priorities of late colonial India, while documenting the growing role of postal propaganda before the emergence of modern advertising media.
- These slogan and special postmarks survive today as important postal historical records of how the postal system supported public outreach, event promotion, and civic communication across British India.