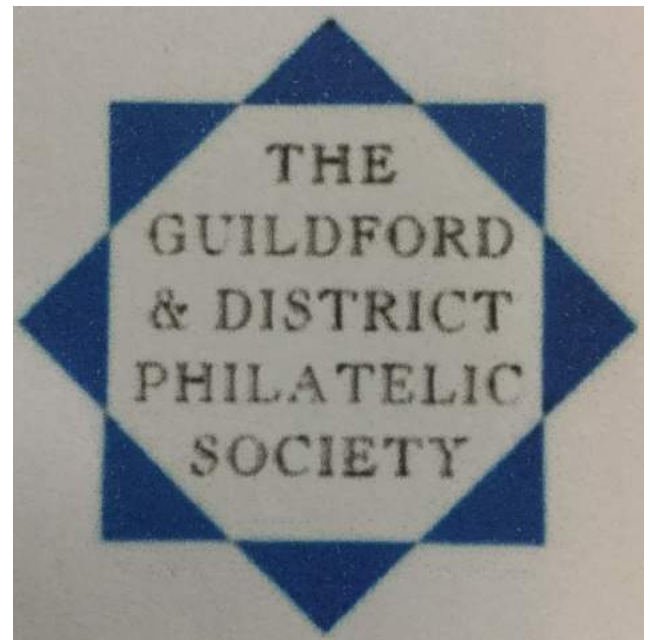
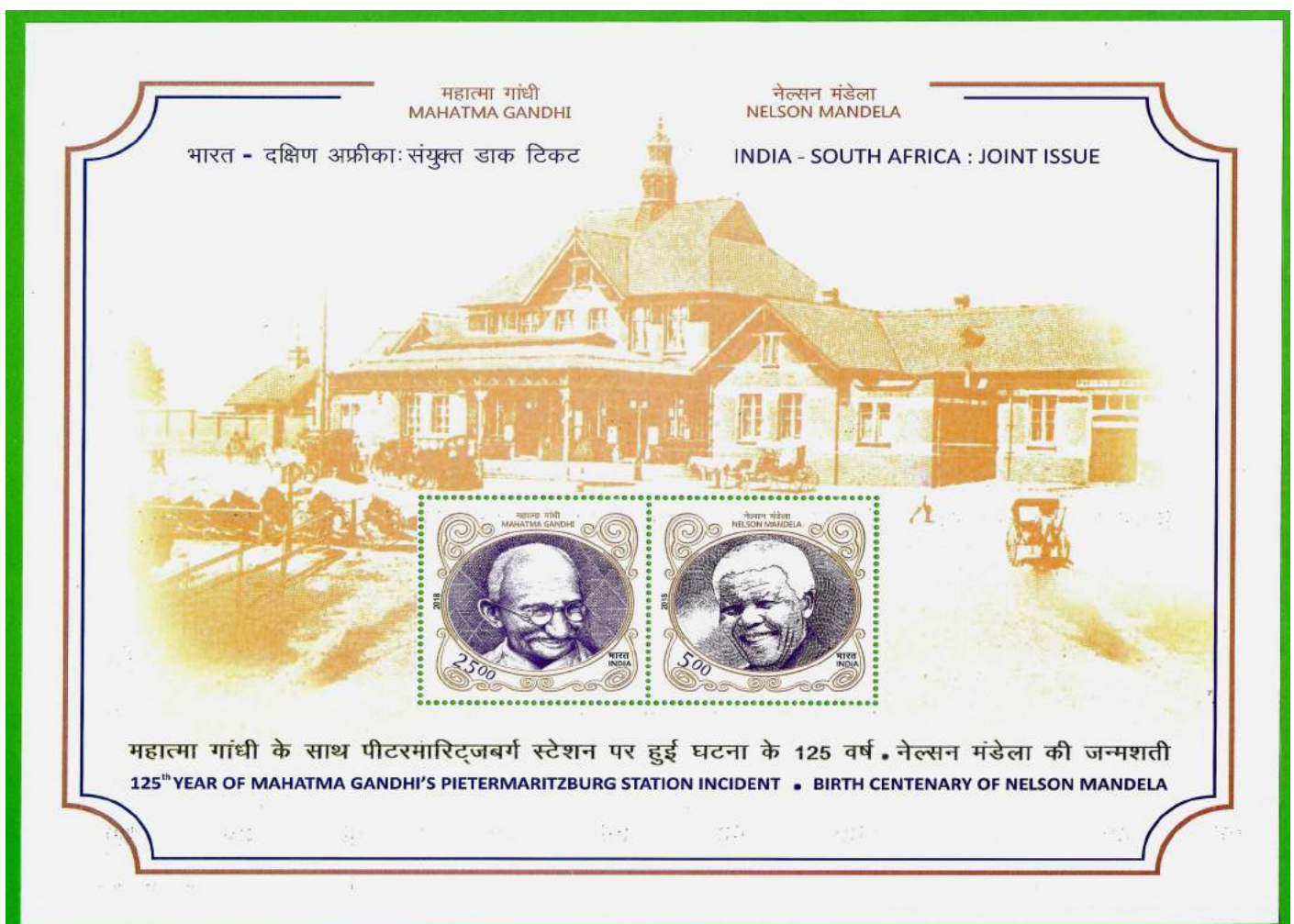


Mahatma Gandhi
2 October 1869—30 January 1948

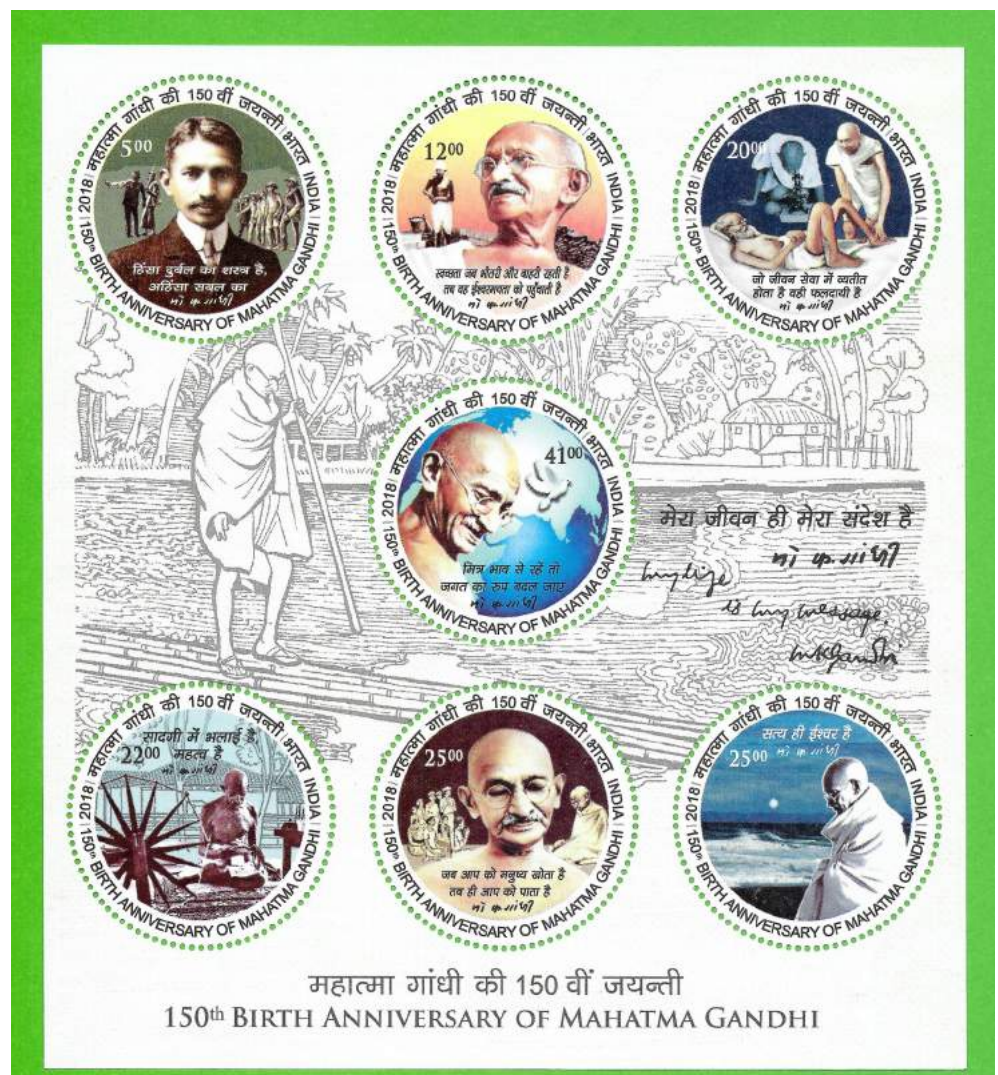
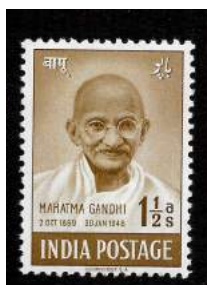
Mahatma Gandhi ("Great Soul" of India) was a social activist and political leader who founded the concept of "Satyagraha" – peaceful protest by civil resistance to discriminatory or unjust legislation. Mahatma Gandhi is revered today as India's "Man of the Millennium" and a "Champion of Liberty", and "Bapu" ("Father" in Hindu) of India.



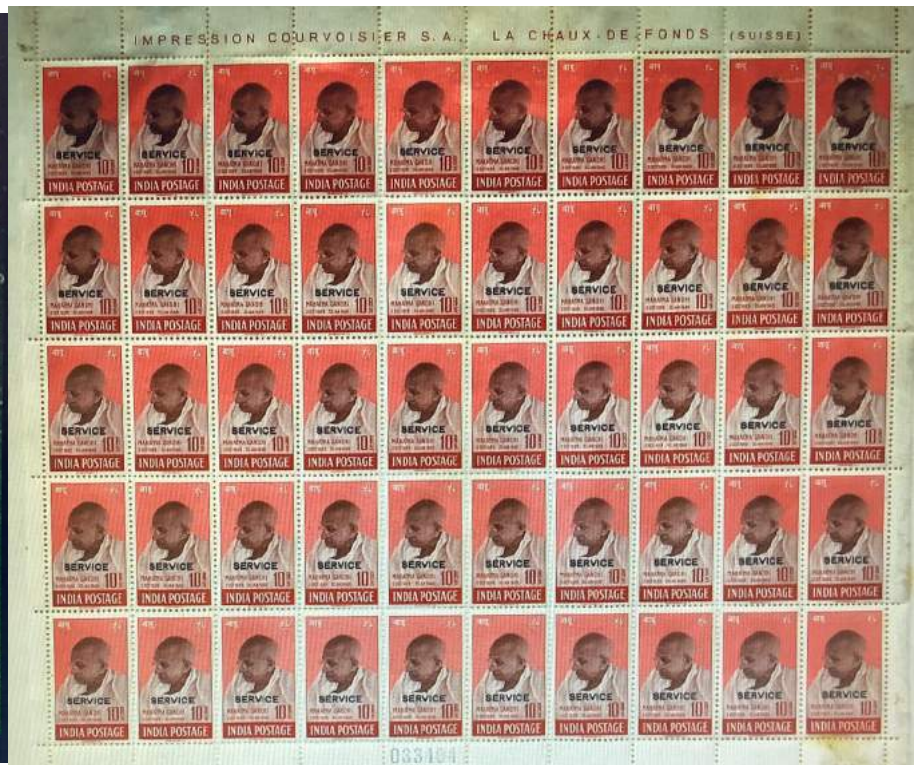
Born 2 October 1869, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was son of the Deewan of Porbandar, and after high school, went to London to study Law. In 1893 Gandhi travelled to South Africa to join Dada, Abdulla and Co as their Legal Advisor. He spent the following 21 years in the country fighting for the civil rights of Asians and Africans (which makes it all the more tragic and unreasonable that his London, Parliament Square statue was targeted during the "Black Lives Matter" Demonstration and defaced when the word 'racist' was written near its plinth. In South Africa Gandhi founded the Natal Indian Congress to work against discriminatory legislation, and fought for the rights of workers across South Africa.



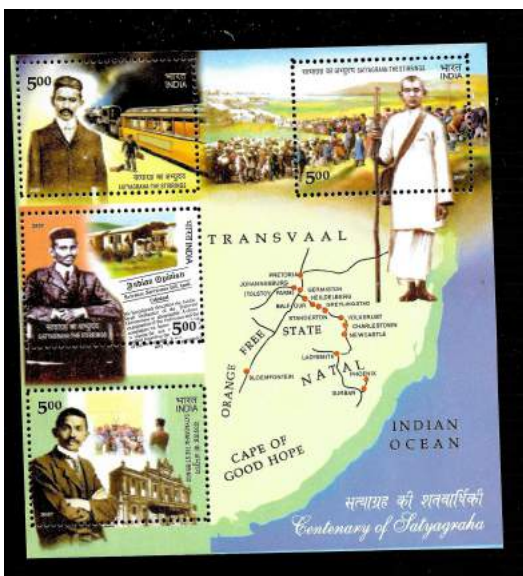
In the Second Boer War (1899-1902) Gandhi organised and led the Natal Indian Ambulance Corps, and was awarded the Queen's South Africa Campaign Medal. Whilst much of Gandhi's effort focussed on Asians – he was a man whose slogan was “May God Grant sense to everyone” and who sought “Communal Harmony” in its widest sense. Gandhi returned to India in 1915. From then he preferred to live a life of Prayer and reflection – he was an avid book reader. In 1916, having witnessed the treatment of Asian farmers by landowners Gandhi established free schools. In 1920 he became the President of the Indian National Congress. He was strongly opposed to violence but campaigned powerfully for India's independence. In 1921 he led the effort to boycott British goods. In 1930 he walked 240 miles to protest at the salt tax imposed on Indian people. During the Second World War the Indian Congress launched a “Do or Die” effort aimed at getting the British to grant India freedom, and after the War this took place – on 15 August 1947. Unfortunately, the resulting partition of India led to unrest between Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs...and ultimately to Mahatma Gandhi's assassination by an extremist Hindu Nathuram Godse on 30 January 1948.

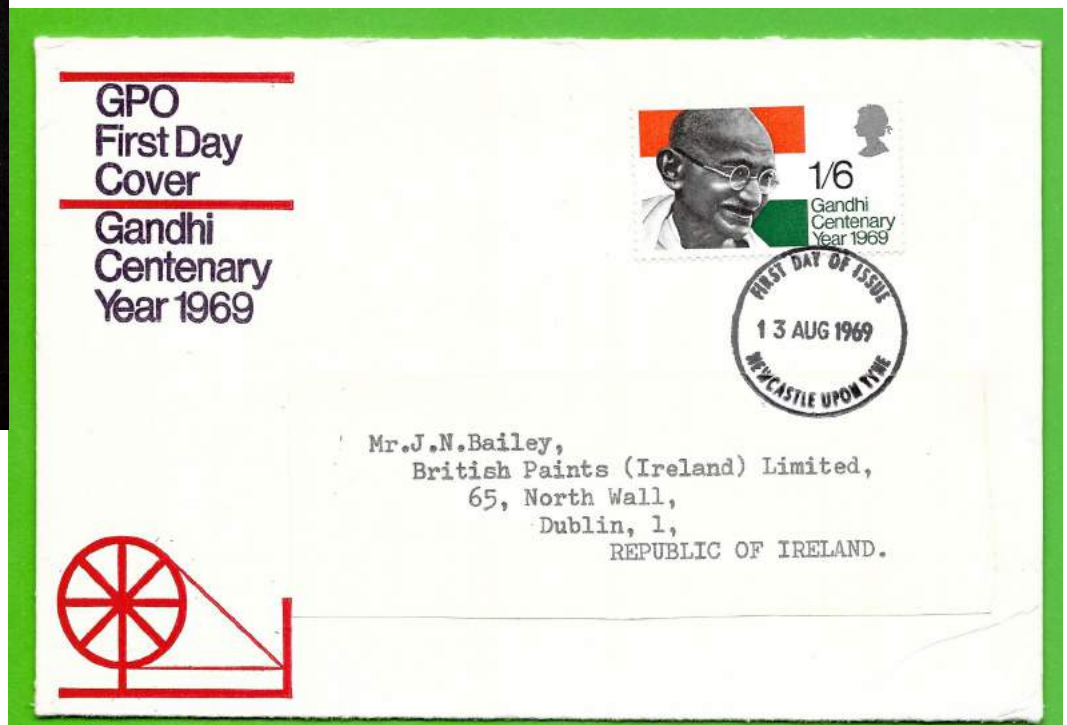


There have been more than 300 philatelic commemorations of the great man. The first was by India in 1948. The original plan was to issue a set of stamps depicting Mahatma Gandhi, in January 1948. The India Security Press in Nashik was entrusted with the task of producing a set of 4 stamps.



But before the stamps were issued, Gandhi was assassinated. The Indian Government decided to print these stamps as a memorial, and employed the services of the Swiss printers, Helio Courvoisier, Sa. LaChaux De Fonds. The word "Bapu" was printed on the stamp in Hindi and Urdu languages as a symbol of communal harmony. Four stamps with denominations 1.5 annas, 3.5 annas, 12 annas and 10 rupees were issued. One of the stamps of the set was issued with a very high price of 10 Rs., out of reach of the common populace in India. The stamps were issued on 15 August 1948, on the occasion of the first anniversary of India's Independence Day. A set of these stamps over-printed as "Service" was issued to the Government of India for official purposes. Only 100 Mahatma Gandhi 10 Rs. stamps were overprinted with "Service" and issued to C. Rajagopalachari, Governor General of India, making it the world's least printed stamp. Of the hundred stamps that were overprinted with "Service", a few were given to dignitaries, while most, including an intact sheet of 50, remain at the National Archives. A 1948 "Service" set was auctioned for 38,000 Euros on 5 October 2007. Only 18 of the stamps are known. In April 2017, Stanley Gibbons sold a block of four overprinted 10 Rs Service stamps for £500k. Forgeries are known to exist. . India has subsequently issued more than 48 stamps honouring Gandhi.





In 1961 the USA issued a stamp honouring Gandhi as the “Champion of Liberty”. Gandhi was the first non-Brit to be featured on a British stamp in 1969 – this year marking the centenary of his birth.

The year 2019 marked the 150th anniversary of Gandhi’s birth and 69 nations issued stamps commemorating Mahatma Gandhi’s contribution to human rights.

Many thanks to those of you who have contributed photographs of Gandhi postal items, especially Allan Brown – who generously loaned so many stamps that I have made them into a separate Gandhi India Stamps article on the website – please do take a look.

