Patron His Majesty the King

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Two Day Provisionals! When Jasdan Had No Stamps to Sell – the Reality of a Small State Post of India

Vivek S. Chopra, PhD

The postal history of Jasdan State is often discussed in terms of its typographed One Anna issues, their printings, perforations, and plate flaws. Less often examined is a practical question: were stamps always available at Jasdan post offices? The surviving record strongly suggests that they were not. Periodic shortages appear to have been a structural feature of Jasdan's small and centralized postal system.

Less examined is the practical question of retail availability within the State's rural network. Evidence from September 1943 demonstrates that at least one village office temporarily exhausted its supply of adhesive postage, leading to the use of locally improvised provisional substitutes.

Three covers originating in the village of Madhuka and dated 5–6 September 1943 bear an unusual expedient: the normal postal cancellation handstamp was struck upon a small piece of paper which was then affixed to the envelope in place of an adhesive stamp. The markings correspond in form to the regular Madhuka cancellation and appear to have been applied as a functional substitute during a brief shortage of stamps.

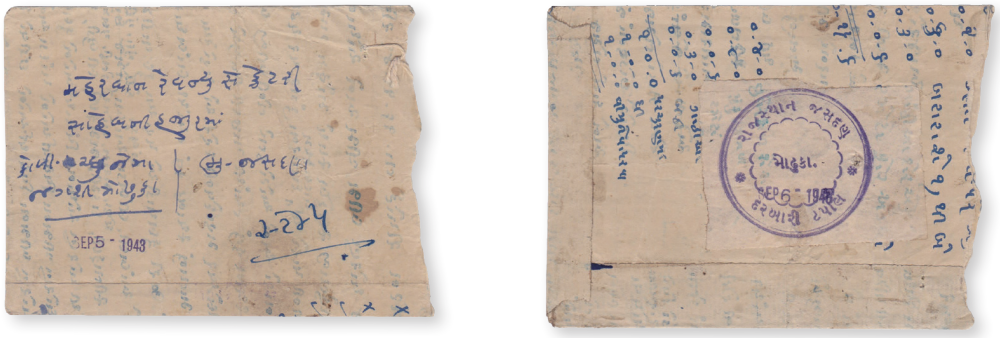

Figure 1. On the left, front of the cover (envelope made from local paper) reads in Gujarati script "respected Revenue Secretary sir, Copy [first name unclear] Jagshi, Modhuka at post Jasdan". Sep 5, 1943, stamp. On the right, the back consisting of the handstamp used as postage stamp which reads "Rajasthan Jasdan, Modhuka", Sep 6, 1943 Darbari Tapal (Royal court mail). The back cover also has expenses listed of refreshments snacks (gathiya), cigarette (bidi), and clarified butter (ghee). Showing that envelopes were made from any paper available.

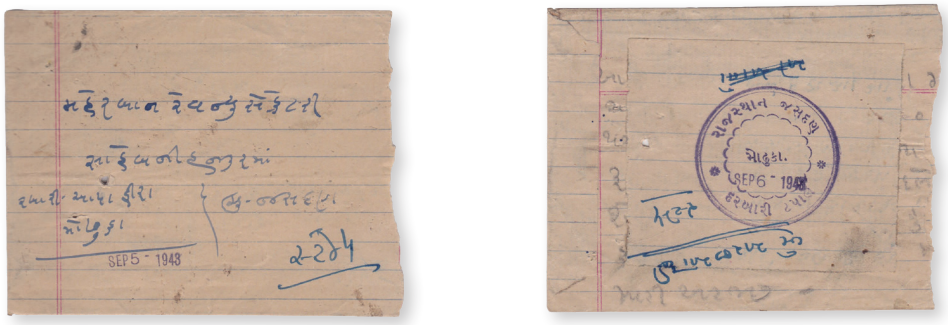

Figure 2. Another similar cover from the same date. On the left, front of the cover (envelope made from local paper) reads in Gujarati script "respected Revenue Secretary sir, Copy [first name unclear] Jagshi, Modhuka at post Jasdan". Sep 5, 1943, stamp. On the right, back consisting of the handstamp used as postage stamp which reads Rajasthan Jasdan, Modhuka, Sep 6, 1943 Darbari Tapal (Royal court mail), two applications attached.

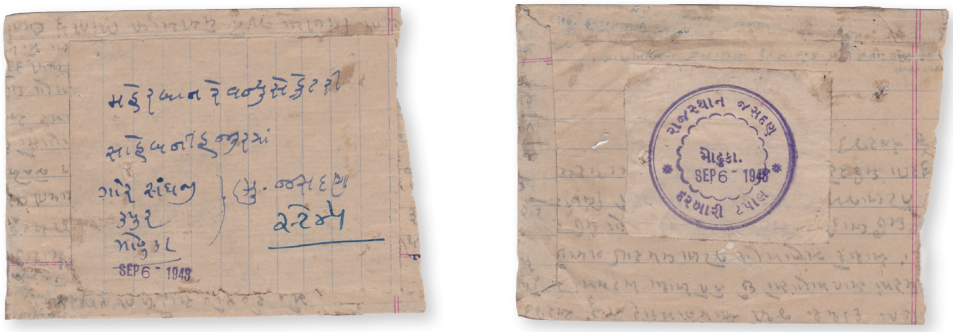

Figure 3. On the right, front of a cover (envelope made from local paper) reads in Gujarati script "In the service of the respected Revenue officer, Gor Sanghji Kapur, Modhuka at Post Jasdan". Sep 6, 1943 stamp. On the left, back consisting of the handstamp used as postage stamp which reads Rajasthan Jasdan, Modhuka, Sep 6, 1943 Darbari Tapal (Royal court mail).

A Late and Limited Postal Introduction

Regular Darbari Tapal (State Post) was formally organized in 1942, with detailed routing instructions issued under Hazur's (King) Order No. 122 (dated 22 January 1942). Before this, much communication moved through village *khataras* (bullock carts). The introduction of adhesive postage stamps was therefore part of a broader administrative reform, not a long-standing postal tradition.

The Dewan's (state administrator) reply of 25 February 1944 confirms that only 13,000 stamps had been printed to date, all by L.V. Indap & Co. of Bombay. This is a remarkably small figure for a state-wide issue, especially over two years. Between 1942 and 1944 only about 12,000 stamps appear to have been printed (in six printings of approximately 2,000 each), with many foreign dealers accounting for mint stock, and only about 13,000 stamps passing through the State Post Office in total. Such modest numbers imply that local stocks must occasionally have been exhausted.

Dealer Demand vs. Local Need and the Administrative Strain in a Micro-State

Substantial dealer interest and placement of blocks with prominent philatelic firms are recorded. If even a portion of the modest printings were absorbed into philatelic channels, village post offices may have received fewer stamps than intended. In a state producing only a few thousand stamps per printing, diversion of even a few hundred sheets could materially affect retail availability.

Jasdan was a small Kathiawar state of roughly 200 square miles. Its postal administration was new, lightly staffed, and layered atop pre-existing tapal practices. The Hazur's Orders emphasize accounting discipline and stamp control – suggesting awareness of limited supplies. The very need for meticulous monthly stamp accounting implies that stock management was tight and replenishment uncertain.

Centralized Distribution and Village Dependency

The Darbari postal regulations reveal a highly centralized supply chain. Stamps were issued to village groups, and every month the officer in charge had to render accounts of stamps sold and balances remaining. Village-level *patwalas* (landowners) did not appear to hold large inventories; their role was collection and conveyance. In such a system, even minor delays in replenishment from Jasdan headquarters – or from the Bombay printer – would have left smaller offices without adhesive postage.

Given that many villages sent mail only twice weekly, and supplies were routed in groups,

interruptions in distribution were almost inevitable. Many villagers were illiterate, and letters were often written by petition writers. Usage volumes were modest. When adhesive stocks ran low, it is plausible that letters were carried without stamps and accounted for later, charges were entered manually, fiscal stamps were substituted, or correspondence reverted temporarily to traditional delivery systems. The scarcity today of genuinely used postal covers – relative to mint material – may partly reflect uneven availability at the counter.

Two-day Provisionals

The village of Madhuka, listed under Group 9 in the Darbari Tapal arrangements of Jasdan State, formed part of the structured rural postal network instituted under Hazur's Orders in 1942. Within this administrative scheme, Madhuka did not function as an autonomous head office but operated under a grouped distribution system, its correspondence routed through Jasdan headquarters. Mail was dispatched on designated days – typically Monday, Wednesday, and Friday – and the supply of adhesive postage was centrally controlled. Regulations required that stamps issued to village groups be strictly accounted for, with monthly returns rendered to the State authorities.

Despite this structured framework, evidence survives of a temporary disruption in stamp supply at Madhuka in early September 1943. Three covers demonstrate the use of a provisional expedient (again overlapping the SG2 being SG1 time frame): the regular postal cancellation handstamp was struck on small pieces of paper which were then affixed to letters in lieu of adhesive stamps. Two of these covers were prepared on Sunday, 5 September 1943, and dispatched on Monday, 6 September 1943 – the normal outward mail day for Madhuka (see Figures 1 and 2). A third was both written and dispatched on 6 September 1943 (see Figure 3).

A comparison with contemporary usage elsewhere in the State is instructive. A cover illustrated in Medhora's study, posted from Vinchhiya – one of the principal post offices – on 5 September 1943, bears normal adhesive postage, as shown below in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Vinchhiya post office letter prepared on Sunday September 5, 1943 (the same day as the Madhuka provisionals) but stamps (SG3 Perf 10.5, light green) were used to pay the postage of the heavy letter probably registered post pricing for urgent recorded delivery. Reference and copied from PM Medhora article. The handstamp in violet clearly shows the date as Sept 5, 1943, showing that stamps were available in bigger post offices within the state but absent at Modhuka PO.

This indicates that the shortage was localised rather than statewide. The Madhuka provisionals therefore appear to represent a brief, two-day emergency measure, devised at village level. The expedient is reminiscent of the "Franca" labels of Peru in which official handstamps served as temporary postage substitutes.

Conclusion

Taken together, the evidence indicates that Jasdan post offices likely experienced occasional periods without stamps for sale. This was not necessarily mismanagement but the natural outcome of very small print runs, centralized supply from an external Bombay printer, wartime production and transport constraints, diversion of quantities to dealers, limited village-level inventory, and twice-weekly mail dispatch cycles.

For the postal historian, this has two implications: commercial covers are genuinely scarce not only because of low mail volume but also because adhesive availability was inconsistent; and variations in shade, perforation, and paper correspond to reactive reprints – possibly triggered by stock depletion.

In short, the Jasdan Darbari Post was a functioning but fragile system. Its adhesive stamps were not continuously abundant commodities but episodic administrative tools – appearing, disappearing, and reappearing in modest quantities as the needs of the State and the printer aligned. The Madhuka material thus provides rare and tangible evidence not only of intermittent stamp availability within Jasdan's rural network but also of the practical ingenuity employed by local postal officials to maintain continuity of service.

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Figure 5. Map showing Jasdan. © 2026 Google.