

Exploring Clocktowers of India through a Philatelic Journey, Debasish Das

In ancient India, various indigenous devices were used to measure time, such as the Ghatika Yantra, also known as the sinking-bowl type of water clock. This device consisted of a hemispherical bowl with an aperture at the bottom, which floated on the surface of water in a larger basin. When the Mughals arrived in India, they adapted the system of timekeeping, as evidenced by Mughal miniatures, such as one depicting birth of Akbar where his father Humayun is shown with astrologers consulting water-clock and ring-dials. The observatory built by Jai Singh in Jaipur also featured a chamber designated for a water clock and gong, called the gha iyālakhānā (place for water clock and gong). With the arrival of Europeans in India, specifically the Portuguese, mechanical clocks were introduced. The Church of St. Francis at Fort Kochi, built in 1516, is the oldest known monument in India with a clock tower. Over time, clock towers spread to other towns in the country. This essay explores the history of clock towers in India through a philatelic journey.



01

The oldest monument with a clock tower in India that is featured on a postage stamp is St. Andrew's Church in Chennai, built in 1821 to serve the Scottish community and commonly referred to as the "Kirk." The church's turret clock was manufactured by Thwaites & Reed, a company based in Clerkenwell.

The Rajabai Clock Tower at the University of Mumbai, designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott in a similar style as the Big Ben, took nine years to construct (1869-1878). The tower was financed by businessman Premchand Roychand, the founder of the Native Share & Stock Brokers Association, now known as the Bombay Stock Exchange, and was named after his mother, Rajabai.



03

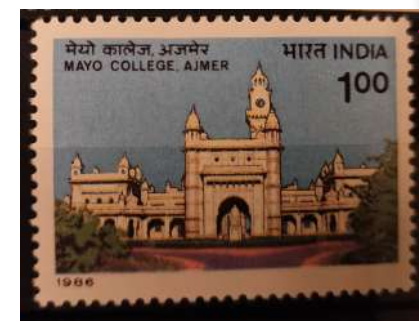
The time-ball tower is a rare and obsolete maritime method of timekeeping, used to assist navigators on ships in verifying the time. The time-ball building at the Mumbai Port Trust, called the Ghadiyal Gadi, was built in 1891.

The Lawrence School in Lovedale was established in 1858 in honor of Sir Henry Lawrence, who served as the British Resident at Lahore, Rajputana, and later as the Chief Commissioner of Oudh. The school, built in the colonial style with red bricks, features turrets, cornices, a chapel, and a towering clock tower, as well as rooms with high ceilings and large wooden doors, reminiscent of a 19th century English village. The turret clock at the school was manufactured by Messrs. J.B. Joyce of Whitchurch, England

04



02



05

Mayo College, one of India's oldest all-boys boarding schools, was established in 1875 and named after Richard Bourke, the 6th Earl of Mayo, who served as Viceroy of India from 1869 to 1872. The school was established with the goal of providing a similar education to that of Eton College in England for the sons of India's princely states and was designed in the Indo-Saracenic style by Major Charles Mant.

The Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) was established in Delhi in 1936 and was inaugurated by the Viceroy, the Marquess of Linlithgow. The institute was shifted from Bihar. The iconic clock tower at the institute's library was named the Prof. M.S. Swaminathan Library in 2016 in honor of the scientist known as the "Father of the Green Revolution in India."

07



06

The Kamla Tower in Kanpur, built in the Italianate style in 1934, was commissioned by Kamlapat Singhania, the owner of JK Industries.

08

Few Cancellations featuring clocktowers of India are shown here.

