

# A Remarkable 1935 Registered Airmail Cover from Dindigul to Germany

*A Study of Postal Procedures, Route Choices, Airline Timetables, and Rate Decisions in India*

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## 1. Introduction

This cover, posted from Dindigul on Monday, 19 August 1935, offers an insight into the functioning of the Indian postal system at the intersection of rail, emerging domestic air services, and the expanding Imperial air routes of the 1930s. What might appear at first glance to be an ordinary letter to Untertürkheim, Germany, in fact documents postal involvement for correcting customer oversight, competing airmail tariffs, missed flight connections, and the fully traceable journey via Tata Airlines and Imperial Airways Service IW 368.

The cover also preserves a key operational detail: the blue-pencil cancellation (Jusqu'a) on the airmail etiquette at Brindisi, indicating the precise termination point of the air service, after which the letter continued to its destination by surface transport.



Front



Reverse

## 2. Posting and Initial Processing at Dindigul

The sender properly affixed the postage and superscribed 'Registered Air Mail Post' before posting the letter into the Post Office Letter Box without obtaining registration. When the clerk opened the box, he noticed the omission and recorded it with a manuscript note: "Found in Offices L.B." and gave it to the registration window where the cancellation DINDIGUL / REG./19 AUG 35 and the registration label R 587 Dindigul, and  $\frac{587}{19/8/35}$ , in manuscript was applied completing the registration process.

## 3. The Correct 12½-Anna Brindisi Rate (In Force from 7 July 1933)

The franking on the cover totals 12½ annas, corresponding exactly to the postal rate established on 7 July 1933, when India reduced the European airmail surcharge by 2 annas and declared: *No internal airmail surcharge would be added for letters carried via the Imperial Airways route to Europe.*

The rate components were: Surface letter rate: 3½ annas, Airmail fee via Brindisi: 6 annas, Registration fee: 3 annas, Total = 12½ annas. This is precisely the amount of postage on the cover, making the franking fully compliant with the Brindisi-route tariff.

#### **4. The Co-existing Accelerated Athens–Berlin Route (From 1 October 1933)**

From 1 October 1933, a faster but more expensive route became available through the cooperation of Imperial Airways and Deutsche Lufthansa, which connected Athens to Germany and other countries in Central/Eastern Europe, saving one day in transit. The tariff for letters carried via this accelerated route was: Surface letter: 3½ annas, Air fee via Athens: 8 annas, Registration: 3 annas, Total = 14½ annas.

Initially, the clerk at Dindigul mistakenly assumed that this higher tariff applied and wrote: **‘Two annas affixed short’** But upon review, the post office realised the affixed franking fit the Brindisi rate. The shortage notation was struck out and replaced with: ‘India–Italy (Brindisi)’ superscription in manuscript. Thus, the intended routing was correctly identified and recorded. The cover was then forwarded for dispatch, with all these internal steps preserved on the envelope itself.

#### **5. Internal Movement Within India: The Tata Airlines Schedule**

The cover’s progress was directly shaped by the operating schedule of Tata Airlines, which in 1935 flew the Madras–Hyderabad (Deccan)–Bombay–Ahmedabad–Karachi route only twice a week, every Monday and Friday at 2 p.m.

Because the letter was posted in from Dindigul, approx. 440km from Madras on Monday, 19 August, it was too late to catch the Monday Tata flight departing that afternoon. Consequently, it remained in Madras until the next scheduled Tata service on Friday, 23 August 1935, which transported it to Karachi with an overnight halt en route. This four-day wait is entirely normal given the fixed twice-weekly timetable.

#### **6. Arrival at Karachi:**

After reaching Karachi on Saturday, 24<sup>th</sup> August via the Tata flight, the letter became subject to the Imperial Airways westbound schedule, which also operated only twice weekly, on Wednesdays and Sundays. Imperial Airways Flight IW 368 — Sunday, 25 August 1935 was the connecting flight where it was placed aboard the aircraft Hanno, which departed Karachi at 9:00 a.m.

#### **7. The Westbound Journey on Imperial Airways Service IW 368**

The cover’s journey followed the established Imperial Airways westbound progression:

- 25 August (Sunday): *Karachi* → *Sharjah* — overnight stop – Aircraft - Hanno
- 26 August (Monday): *Sharjah* → *Baghdad* — overnight stop – Aircraft - Hanno
- 27 August (Tuesday): *Baghdad* → *Alexandria* — overnight stop – Aircraft - Hanno
- 28 August (Wednesday): *Alexandria* → *Brindisi*, arriving at approximately 14:40 hrs – Aircraft – Satyrus

This itinerary matches the BRINDISI / 28 VIII 35 transit marking on the reverse.

#### **8. Termination of the Airmail Portion at Brindisi**

Upon arrival in Brindisi, the letter was off-loaded, as the prepaid 12½–anna air fee covered transport only up to Italy. Postal officials then crossed out the airmail etiquette in blue pencil, a *jusqu’a* mark indicating: “Airmail service ends here; onward conveyance will be by surface transport.” From Brindisi, the cover continued by rail through Europe to Untertürkheim, a two-day journey where an arrival strike on the reverse, though faint, confirms final delivery.

## 9. Philatelic Importance

This cover is notable for several interlocking reasons:

- Postal procedural markings: missing registration label noted and corrected.
- Rate clarification: incorrect “two annas short” marking, later struck out.
- Routing endorsement: “India–Italy (Brindisi)” confirms application of the 12½–anna tariff.
- Detailed airline chronology: delayed connections on Tata Airlines and consequently on Imperial Airways.
- Complete Imperial Airways flight IW 368 sequence preserved in dates and routing.
- Airmail etiquette cancelled at Brindisi (Jusqu’a marking), pinpointing the precise end of the air-leg.
- Full international routing: Dindigul → Madras → Karachi → Brindisi → Germany.

Few surviving covers document the operational realities of India–Europe airmail in the mid-1930s as clearly and as elegantly as this one.

## 10: Acknowledgement

- The author thanks Mr. Dharmdev Maurya for his research and assistance.

## 11: References

- Indian Air Mails Postage Rates unit 1956 by *Jeffery Brown*.
- Aircraft Movements on Imperial Airways 'Eastern Route 1927-1937 (Vol.1) by *Peter Wingent*. Under license from the author, this book is available for sale from [ankitha@airmailssocietyindia.org](mailto:ankitha@airmailssocietyindia.org)