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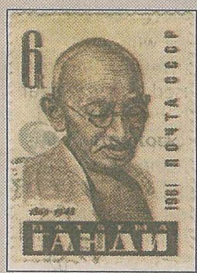
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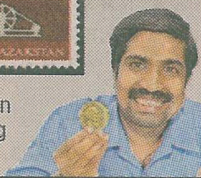


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## Mahatma, only leader who has stamps released across globe



M L Rajesh with a coin and stamps depicting Mahatma Gandhi



C Shivakumar | ENS  
Chennai, October 2

MAHATMA Gandhi was the only leader whose stamps were released throughout the world, cutting across different ideologies prevalent during the Cold War era, according to a philately expert.

Displaying rare stamps of Mahatma Gandhi released by the Soviet Union in 1969 to mark his birth centenary celebrations during the era of Leonid I Brezhnev, M L Rajesh, who has a collection of the stamps of the Father of the Nation from across 100 countries, said immedi-

ately after the empire crumbled, newly formed independent states of the erstwhile communist nation released his stamps in the late 1990s.

After gaining independence, Kazakhstan issued stamps of Gandhiji in 1994, while Tajikistan released one in 1999 to mark the 130th anniversary of the Indian leader. Turkmenistan released two stamps in 1997 and 1999.

"Even Cuba released a stamp in 1997 to mark India's 50th anniversary of Independence," he says, displaying the stamp.

"I used to collect stamps when I was six years old.

The obsession with Mahatma Gandhi started six years ago when I attended an exhibition in Chennai, which had various collections of Gandhi," says Rajesh, a resident of New Gummidipundi in Thiruvallur district.

"I have 21 stamps of Mahatma Gandhi from the American continent, 25 from across Europe, 31 from Africa and 28 from Asia," says the 31-year-old employee of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited.

Rajesh feels Gandhian philosophy is the need of the hour. "While the world is facing violent upheavals, people should follow his mantra of *ahimsa*," he said.

He also displayed the serial number of Gandhiji's date of birth being collected in ₹5 to ₹1,000 denomination.

His other collections include 600 photos of the Mahatma, besides postcards, inland letters, special cover of Gandhi and a telephone card.

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