

# The King Cobra on Postage Stamps

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The world's largest (reaching 6 metres or more) venomous snake, the King Cobra, *Ophiophagus hannah*, is naturally subject to more than expected attention, its name used, among others, for showcasing the strength of materials (including amplifiers, beer, golf clubs, portable extractors, power connectors and radio-controlled racing cars), heighten perceptions of danger and warn of dangerous toxins. Conversely, it is also used as a symbol of longevity, fertility, renewal, and has a strong association with several eastern religions (including Buddhism and Hinduism). This iconic species finds widespread use in postage stamps of the world.



The earliest stamps depicting the species appears in a series of definitives showing the Hindu god associated with creation, Brahma, flanked by King Cobras. These were issued by the French Government in India between 1914–1929 (Stanley Gibbons [SG] numbers 26–35; 68–70; 72; 74; 80; 88–93; 95–97), with a variety of surcharges. Closer to our time, stamps bearing images of the species have been issued by countries with and without King Cobra populations. The former includes Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, and separately, by the postal authorities of North Vietnam (in 1975) and unified Vietnam (in 1989). The latter group of nations, including Grenada Carriacou and Petit Martinique, Grenadines & Saint Vincent and Romania, have commemorated special events, such as the Chinese Lunar New Year.