



# SIPA

## Bulletin

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### SOUTH INDIA PHILATELISTS' ASSOCIATION

(Founded 1956)

(Affiliated to the Philatelic Congress of India)

## RECENT TRENDS (THEMATIC)

(Kerapex-90 Seminar Paper)

M. S. BHASKARAN NAIR

Philately was born out of stamp collection. We cannot see the tap root of a tree. We see only from the stem and above. Unless one is interested in the wood, for house building, boat building or furniture, the wood is not an item of attraction for ordinary people. The attraction begins from branches with plenty of leaves, flowers and fruits. There is an unresolved everlasting dispute whether "the seed or the tree is important". The fact is, all are equal. But the attraction for ordinary person is flower and fruit. Thematic collection is the "flower and fruit of the tree". Beautiful to look at, giving pleasant smell, used for garlands, decoration, worshipping God, making medicine, supplier of honey and finally giving fruits-edible and reproductive. Traditional philately rests in the roots and stem. Though roots support the tree and feed it, only few know about it. The average person is not interested in viewing it or understanding it. In philately classics come under that group. The collector of classic period lives in ivory

towers. Not visible for ordinary persons. Collections include very costly materials. Will not expand. Only change hands. Large gold and grand Prix used to be its monopoly. The exhibitor and his exhibits are known and admired. In fact this class is static. Not mobile. There is little prospects for growth and expansion. To search and find a pre-stamp material or a very rare stamp or a stamp with accepted printing mistake is impossible. For decades philatelists have kept them in high order

Gradually the visible part namely stem, grew in importance. Country Collections, Postal Stationary followed by postal history grew in importance. Though many materials in the category are costly, materials are still available. An amount of search is necessary. Many entries were destroyed after removing stamps. Now postal history collectors are frantically searching for such items. But to an ordinary person, viewing an exhibition, these items are of little or

The views contained in the articles published are the author's own and not necessarily those of the Association.

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### SIPA MEETINGS

SECOND SUNDAY of every month-Regular meeting at the Philately Bureau, Anna Road, Post Office.

THIRD SUNDAY of every month-Auction meeting at our Library Hall at 6, Nannian Street, Madras.3.

(Timings: 10.45 a.m. to 1 p.m.)



no interest Only spcialists can appreciate it. When branches like, Aerophilately, Maximaphilly etc. began to grow like branches. more and more people took interest in various varieties of postally issued or used materials. Studies began on subjects related to the design on stamps. Collectors of Queen Victoria or King George V stamps never bothered to study about their administration or Royalty. Collectors of traditional philately were interested in the design on stamp, Colour variation, die variation, printing errors, paper used for printing stamps, the designer, engraver etc. Studies were purely on stamp making techniques. But in aerophilately different designs appeared. Studies on early Scientists who developed air service, including the pigeon Service became popular. Interest increased for collectors Collections could be understood and appreciated by ordinary persons.

Thematic philately (the FIP accepted term) spread like leaves, flowers and fruits of trees. In colour, majority of leaves is green, though each is different in shape and size. Stamps on different subjects as per design were issued by many countries. Early collectors concentrated on stamps of same design, country wise or period wise. Not much study except catalogue study was necessary for such collection. The subject and object of collection were specified. In the Aug. '89 American Philatelist there is an article by Fred Foldvary on "Topical Philately". Details given below are interesting.

The most direct is **SUBJECT** (design shown in the Stamp-example portraits, flag etc.) It is called subject Collection. The stamp should have a design of the subject.

Second is **TOPIC** Commemorating event or thing. This can be called "Purpose of Issue Stamp" Olympics, UPU (75th or centenary) Coronation or Wedding Series. Here the subjects depicted on stamps will not be very important. Any design, cancellation, post marg etc. connected with the purpose of issue is important. In this many different subjects such as athletics, stadiums,

emblems etc. may be included. The third is topic of **ASSOCIATION**. Example For George Washington topic of association any philatelic item related to George Washington would qualify. Even postal history events at the time of Washington is relevant. But it will be irrelevant to show a material depicting the false teeth worn by Washington "Defining one's topic is not a one time process. It is continuous. Not only the topic grows and changes, but newly discovered issues can challenge a previous definition".

FIP definition includes everything-i.e. "Subject" or purpose of issue (Subject of the stamp namely design.) (2) "Purpose" is the event or thing commemorated (3) "Event" topical purpose of issue. Thus FIP definition of **SUBJECT** covers both "SUBJECT and EVENT TOPICS FIP continues "Thematic collection as, one starting from the subject on the items, develops a theme, presents a thesis or idea, sounds very much like "TOPIC OF ASSOCIATION".

The linguistic issue of the terms "Theme and Topic is partly a matter of nationality with Americans using the word "Topic" in general sense and the Britains preferring the broad use of the term "Thematic".

#### Recent Trends :

Germany introduced postal stationary and post marks an important feature in Thematic collecting. Meter stamps were introduced in 1930's. This idea has caught up with the world only recently. The modern trend is changing from stamp collecting to philatelic collecting. In International exhibition top award winning exhibits, there things are noticeable.

- (i) Inclusion of large number of covers, cancellations and postal documents other than the stamp.
- (ii) Inclusion of increasing quantity of material pertaining to classic and middle peroid
- (iii) Importance attached to the title page and introduction.



Another noticeable change is that for the last twenty years FIP has occupied itself more with the exhibiting aspects rather than collecting. Exhibitors consist of 2% of the collecting community—a miniscule minority. However this observation is true for the entire philately.

An amount of discipline is good in anything. But foremost thematic collectors of earlier period the feeling is that Regulations are too much and to act as per directions in the strictest sense, will be impossible. Most of the countries have no access on varieties of stamps like U.S.A. or Britain. Indian collectors are distressed by the decision that unaddressed First Day Covers are declared second class. Till 1972 blank cancellations were internationally accepted. Like GREV and SREV, an IREV-Indian Regulation for evaluation should be prepared by PCI, to validate CTO stamps and unaddressed first day covers.

"The recent trends in developing Thematics have improved collections a lot, and have put them in scientific lines. These rules have made the hobby more exciting today as one has to search (research) a lot, but one does not wander in wilderness any more. Time has changed thematics for good today.

It has grown it self into a young and beautiful charming woman. It is no more a baby of seventies. Her childhood tendencies have been reduced to appropriate levels by her presentation".

She pays more attention to her "form" as well as substance". Her thematic and philatelic knowledge gets due recognition. One has to polish the "plan" for unfolding her story. Bright future lies ahead" (Prof. V. K Gupta-Thematic philately). The same view is endorsed by Mr. Randey L. Neil of "American Philatelist" on modern trends in Thematics based on FIP Regulations. "We have seen a wonderful movement towards more effective recognition for exhibition of modern material, the evolution of a wonderful albeit rather cumbersome judging system, that has improved the integrity of thematic competitions and an emphasis of the FIP Youth exhibiting that we would do well to emulate here in America"

I repeat Prof: Guptas sentence "A Bright future lies ahead for thematics". It is the duty of every philatelist and postal authority to lead junior collectors through the modern path.

(Courtesy Prof : V. K. Gupta  
"American Philatelist")

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## **THEME SELECTION**

Mr. G. MADAN MOHAN DAS

For building a thematic collection selection of a theme is the first step. There are no rules, regulations exist for this theme selection. Any subject under the sun can be explored through philately but it requires hours of research and endless quest to find the right philatelic material to tell the story. Theme selection is left to the free choice of the individual. He has to exercise the options with great care as one cannot afford to stop collecting the theme halfway, otherwise it will be a total loss in terms of money, time and energy. The

theme chosen for collection may be anything, but the theme selection for an exhibit is not the same thing. Theoretically, any theme should be capable of winning an award, but reality is different. Every subject cannot offer depth of study as right type of material is not available.

### **GENERAL HINTS :**

The following general hints will help in theme selection.

1) You may select a theme related to



your profession or speciality. One who knows the subject can develop the theme well, and at the same time will impart the seal of his personal touch and originality, which is one of the most important element. A lawyer can develop a collection, on any aspect of law. "Black marketeering and profiteering". Human Rights-the basic need for survival. A sociologist can take up Woman Liberation and so on.

II) You may select a theme related to a discipline. One will be able to develop it because he loves the subject and has a natural instinct for it.

III) You can select a theme to one's major hobby like Cricket, painting, flowers or pet animals

IV) If one is a philatelist and is having a general collection of thousands of stamps, he can try to develop 3-4 themes at a time, but he will finally have to limit to one in which he realizes that he will be most successful. This type may be called 'Hit and Trial' method.

V) A philatelist may like to enter a strange field. Searching through catalogues will open a pandora box of facts and fantasies to such a collector. A host of wonderful ideas will spring up in the mind as one scans through catalogues

VI) For beginners, thematic philately is the best medium for introducing them to stamp collecting. But for developing a serious theme, one will have to acquire an understanding of all the recognised branches of philately.

**PRECAUTIONS :** A few precautions are necessary and have to be observed before selection of the theme is finalised

I) Theme chosen should neither be too limiting. It must be manageable and usually should be such that your chosen theme maybe shown in a given number of frames. For example 'SPORTS' may include dozens of sports including olympics, international and regional events. But the award winning exhibit can be made of one olympic alone.

II) Stamps and other material should exist in good number. Some theme are very limited in scope and it maybe very hard to find varied and interesting material.

III) At times, the selected theme has already been developed by some other philatelist. It does not mean that one should reject it. How such theme can be distinct and original? one may ask here.

Originality is achieved in two ways :-

(a) by choosing a theme, never tried before.  
(b) by trying an old theme, from a different angle. Remember the the proverb 'Old wine in a new bottle'. You can bring distinctness as a result of investigations, providing information, not found in specialised catalogues, by using one's imaginations.

**POPULAR THEMES :** Stanley Gibbons, American Topical Association and many others carry out periodical surveys to find the current trends in thematics. From the recent survey of popularity poll replies received by the Stanley Gibbons to their questionnaire from 7000 collectors; they have provided the list of ten popular themes in the following order

(1) Birds; (2) Animals; (3) Flowers; (4) Railways; (5) Aviation; (6) Ships; (7) Royal Family; (8) Marine Life; (9) Sports/Olympics and (10) Famous people. Popular themes are easier to collect, as there are well-trodden paths to follow. The material is listed and stocked by dealers. But such themes are becoming monotonous. So personal thought is necessary for tailor-made themes. Themes in 'fashion' are generally not advisable for higher awards. A difficult/strange theme, well treated, should naturally attract the attention of the jurors in an exhibition. It has another advantage-there is no collection for comparison and will be judged on its own merits.

**TITLE SELECTION :** Title is necessary to polish and give a proper shape to the theme. It reflects objects, scope and limits of the collection. Selection of title requires much ingenuity and imagination on the part of the



philatelist. Title must be clear and precise, easy to understand, free from ambiguity, catchy, impartant much information in a few words, correct and in agreement with the plan. If only a part of the whole collection is being exhibited, then the title should be modified, in a suitable manner.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS :** One is at liberty to choose and develop any theme, but some themes are more important than others. There fore if one is having an eye on a higher award, then it is recommended, that one should initially prepare a list of 3-4 themes of his interest and consult someone who has vast experience in thematics i. e., who has won a gold or at least a vermeil, because such a thematist has an idea regarding probalble themes, on which right type of material exist to develop them.

Before you want to select a theme one should gather information (1) Literature; (2) Handbooks; (3) Personal checklists; (4) Must have contact with specialist societies and Journals; (5) Folders and Auction Lists/Catalogues; (6) Join some local and National Clubs; (7) Storing the material A list of the items which are secondary to the theme, should be kept separately, for future use. To illustrate, if one's theme is 'INDIAN CIVILISATION' and one comes across material pertaining to other civilisations, it may be kept apart, and a separate list of such items should be prepared, for future expansion.

So let me tell you there are no hard and fast rules on selection of a theme and you will gain experience by seeing award winning collections, by discussing with your fellow collectors with similar interests.

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### PRESENTATION : **Shri G. BALAKRISHNADAS** Madras.

Today in an Exhibition only five points are awarded for the presentation. However to obtain these five points is very important. We should remember that the level of medals awarded changes precisely with each five points. Again the first impression created by excellent presentation is bound to influence the points awarded. Judges usually spend few minutes on a collection, presentation may attract them to give some time There may be judges who ignore presentation and are influenced by the presence of rare items and award high marks still others who may be influenced by poor presentation and award less marks, despite rare items. Thus it will be seen that it is all uncertain and subjective. So why take risk Poor presentation may create an impresslon that either the exhibitor has not done his homework or just bought the collection and exhibited it.

### PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES

As per FIP regulations, criterion of presentation requires an evaluation of the clarity of the display, the text as well as the overall easthetic balance of the exhibition. According to FIP guidelines; the efforts of

the exhibitor are demonstrated by the arrangement of the items and the text on appropriate exhibition pages. Presentation should be consistent and neat throughout the pages. Presentation includes general appearance, methods of write up, mounting balance and editing. Let us now examine each of these in detail.

**GENERAL APPEARANCE :** Your exhibit should give the impression of completeness, and should not look, as if disjointed pieces have bnen put together. The thematic order should not be changed for graphic justification. One has to exhibit clean, undamaged items, whatever their age or rarity is. Cut out pieces of stationery, cancellation other items will result in deduction of points. Artwork on album page should be avoided.

**MINT or USED :** Unused stamps gives an unimpeded view of themes of stamps are forbidden. When showing used stamps, They should be light cancelled. Although in traditional philately it is now permissable to show mint and used stamps on the same page, in

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thematics it is not tolerated. Ho ever the inclusion of postally used items on a page does not mean that every stamp on that page must be/in used condition.

**TEXT :** Text should communicate the theme In a simple, logical and acucurate manner It is a said that in developing theme, every stamp is a sentence, every page a paragraph and every fame a chapter. A difficultat task, but worth aiming at.

**METHODS OF WRITE UP :** This will include page selection, details of title/sub-titles letterings, handwritten vs typed pages adoption of decimal numbers for plan page, and abservance of regulations regarding drawings maps, use of arrows. I am not going into the details of each of the items listed as my subject for talk to day is **PRESENTATION**, and every exhibitor must be conversant with the General Regulations of the FIP for the Evaluation of Competitive Exhibits at FIP Exhibitions (GREVO) **ARTICLE 4:7** The criterion of "**PRESENTATION**" requires an evaluation of the clarity of the display, the text as well as the overall easthetic balance of the exhibit.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

1. India's Stamp Journal upto 1989.
2. Philatelic Journal of India upto May-June 1989.
3. North Post upto 1989.
4. Philatelic Reporter-1989.
5. USSR Books / Stamps Catalogue upto 1989.
6. Northern Philatelists upto 1989.
7. Top-phil upto 1989.
8. Stamps & Stamps upto 1989.
9. U-Phil 1989.
10. Bulletin of Jamshedpur Philetic Society 1989.
11. Bulletin of Bhilai Philatelic Society.
12. "Jampex-89" Jamshedpur Philatelic Society.
13. ISPC Indo-Soviet Philatelic Club 1989.
14. BHAGHCHAND SOMANI, 'India & States' Auction Catelogue 1-12-89.
15. Stamp Bulletin Australia No. 187 to 202 (from Nov. 86 to Dec. 89)
16. Bombay Philatelic Friends Club upto Jan / Mar 1990.
17. Belgian Post Office Bulletin upto Dec. 1989.