AIR MAIL SOCIETY
INDIA FOUNDATION

What A Year for Indian Philately!

International Recognition, Scholarly Achievement and the Road Ahead

By The Air Mail Society India Foundation

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Executive Summary

As 2026 approaches its midpoint, Indian philately finds itself in an enviable position. The first five months of the year have already produced a series of notable achievements in competitive exhibiting, philatelic literature and specialised research. These successes are not isolated incidents but rather indicators of the growing maturity and international standing of Indian philately.

Participation at major international exhibitions has reached unprecedented levels, Indian philatelic literature continues to receive international recognition, and organisations devoted to the study of Indian postal history and philately remain active in publishing original research. Taken together, these developments suggest that Indian philately is entering a period of renewed growth and influence.

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1. Indian Participation at Major International Exhibitions

Two major international exhibitions have been held during the first half of 2026—Dubai 2026, FIP Patronage Specialised World (4-8 Feb. 2026) and Boston 2026, FIP General World (23-30 May 2026). Both attracted strong Indian participation. At Dubai 2026, India recorded the highest number of entries totaling 25, after the host nation and at Boston 2026, a total of 49 entries from India, the highest number after host country USA. Such participation reflects not only the enthusiasm of Indian exhibitors but also the increasing willingness of collectors and researchers to present their work before international juries.

Dubai 2026 - Quality Accompanies Quantity

The strong Indian presence at Dubai 2026 was matched by noteworthy competitive success. In the Traditional Philately class, Ramchandram M. achieved a Gold Medal for his exhibit Kingdom of Cochin.

Another notable success came through Prachi Sharma, whose exhibit British India King George VI Postal Stationery received a Special Prize. Such recognition is particularly encouraging as it demonstrates the emergence of newer exhibitors capable of competing successfully at the international level.

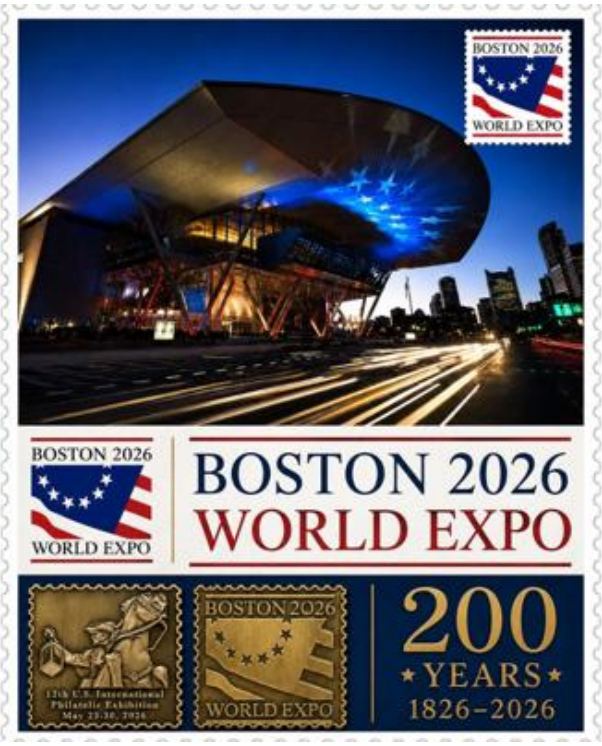
Ramchandram M.

Prachi Sharma

Piyush Khaitan

The One-Frame class, where Piyush Khaitan achieved 93 points and a Special Prize for his exhibit Indian Mail via Airship & Catapult Flight (1912-1938). The exhibit explores an important yet highly specialised chapter in the development of global airmail communications and demonstrates the depth of research currently being undertaken in the field of Indian aerophilately.

Boston 2026 - Sustained International Success



If Dubai demonstrated the strength of Indian participation, Boston 2026 World Expo confirmed that Indian exhibitors are increasingly capable of competing at the highest international levels. Indian exhibitors secured Gold Medal performances across multiple classes and subject areas.

A notable feature of these results is the diversity of philatelic disciplines represented. Aerophilately and thematic philately, both achieved success, demonstrating the breadth of expertise now present within Indian exhibiting.

Pratisad N.

Piyush Khaitan

M. S. Santhosh

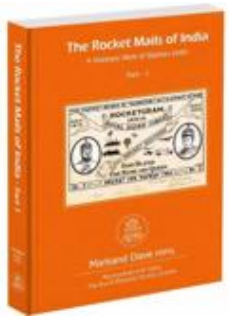
The One-Frame class, where Piyush Khaitan achieved 93 points and a Special Prize for his exhibit The Birth of Airmail The First Aerial Post at Allahabad, 18 February 1911. The exhibit explores the world's first officially sanctioned airmail flight, carried during the Allahabad Exhibition on 18 February 1911, and its significance in the development of global airmail services.

The repeated success of exhibits relating to Indian airmails is particularly noteworthy. India possesses one of the richest and most important aerophilatelic histories in the world, and recent international results suggest that this area continues to offer significant opportunities for both research and competitive exhibiting.

2. International Recognition for Indian Philatelic Research Literature

The achievements of Indian philately during 2026 extend well beyond the exhibition frame. Two major international literary recognitions have been awarded to works dealing with Indian philatelic subjects.

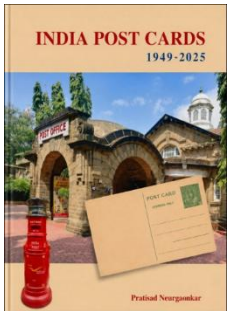
Author	Publication	International Recognition
Markand Dave FRPSL	The Rocket Mails of India - Part 1	George D. Kingdom Literature Award 2025 by American Air Mail Society
Pratisad Neurgaonkar	India Post Cards 1949-2025	2026 Lewandowski Award by United Postal Stationery Society



Cover page of book title
The Rocket Mails of India—Part 1

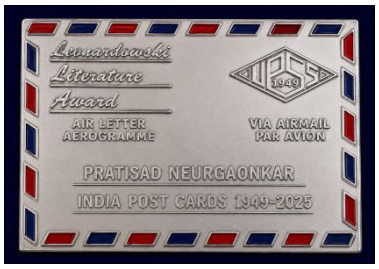
Mr. Dave receiving George D. Kingdom Literature Award 2025 by AAMS for Best Aerophilatelic Book. Receiving it from the from Mr. Kendal C. Sanford at Boston 2026

George D. Kingdom Literature Award 2025



Cover page of book title
India Post Cards 1949–2025

Mr. Pratisad Neurgaonkar receiving 2026 Lewandowski Award by United Postal Stationery Society from Mr. Didier LeGall FRPSL, Director of UPSS and Chair of the Award Committee & Wayne Menuz FRSPL, President of the UPSS.



2026 Lewandowski Award

These awards are important not simply because they recognise individual authors, but because they confirm that research relating to Indian philately is attracting international scholarly attention.
For many years, Indian philately has been rich in collecting opportunities but comparatively underrepresented in published research. The increasing appearance of specialised monographs, handbooks and studies suggests that this situation is changing.

3. Continuing Contributions from Philatelic Organisations

The vitality of any philatelic community depends upon the strength of its institutions.

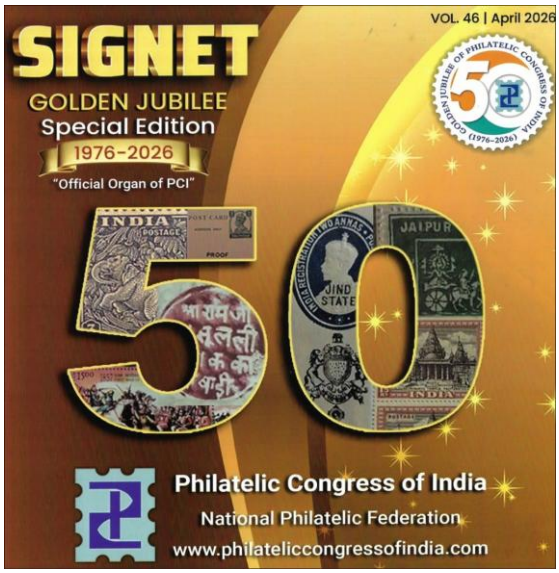
The India Study Circle for India and Indian States has already produced two substantial journal issues during 2026:

- Volume 60, No. 1, IP#238, Jan-Mar 2026
- Volume 60, No. 2, IP#239, Apr-Jun 2026

For six decades, the India Study Circle has played a crucial role in encouraging original research into Indian postal history, the Indian States, postal stationery, cancellations and other specialised fields.

Similarly, the Philatelic Congress of India marked an important milestone through the publication of the Golden Jubilee Issue of Signet. The special issue stands as both a celebration of PCI's history and a reminder of its continuing role in promoting organised philately in India.

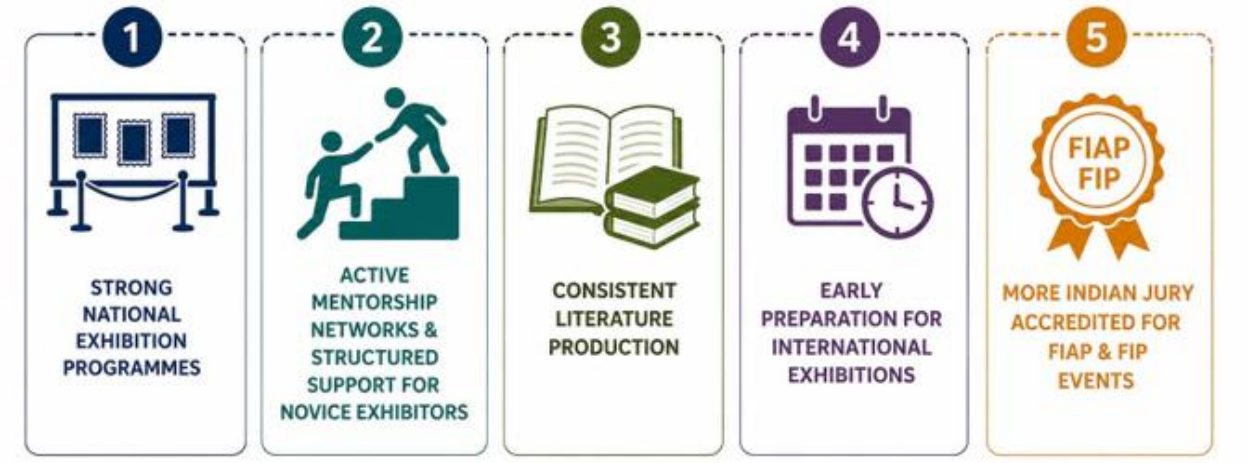
Equally significant is the manner in which these organisations continue to provide platforms for scholarship, discussion and the exchange of knowledge among collectors, exhibitors and researchers. Through their journals, publications, seminars and study activities, they help preserve the documentary heritage of Indian philately while fostering new generations of specialists. Their work provides an essential foundation for research, exhibiting and the continued advancement of Indian philately both nationally and internationally.



4. Strategic Framework & The Road Ahead

Areas Requiring Attention

While recent successes deserve celebration, they should also encourage reflection. Internationally successful philatelic nations typically share several characteristics:



India has made considerable progress in many of these areas but further development remains necessary. I am hopeful that these aspects will receive the required attention in future.

Planning for 2027-2028

MACAO 2026,
FIP Patronage Specialised World
26 Jun - 01 Jul 2026

BANDUNG 2026,
FIAP Asian International Stamp Exhibition
27-31 Aug 2026

PHILATAIPEI 2026,
FIP Patronage Specialised World
20-25 Nov 2026

THAILAND 2027,
FIAP Asian International
Stamp Exhibition
Apr 2027

SLOVPHILEX 2027,
FIP Patronage Specialised World
30 Jun - 04 Jul 2027

BELGRADE 2027,
FIP General World
30 Jun - 04 Jul 2027

MELBOURNE 2027,
FIAP Asian International
Stamp Exhibition
Sep/Oct 2027

Hong Kong 2027,
FIAP Asian International Stamp Exhibition
To Be Announced

BANGLADESH 2027,
FIAP Asian International
Stamp Exhibition
To Be Announced

PRAGA 2028,
FIP Patronage Specialised World
22-26 Mar 2028

IBRA 2028,
FIP General World
26-29 Oct 2028

The information above reflects the details available at the time the article was written.

Such an impressive line-up following the two FIP events already held this year is unprecedented. We should all plan ahead and use these opportunities to participate vigorously.

Experience shows that successful international participation is rarely the result of last-minute preparation. The strongest exhibits often undergo several years of refinement, research and evaluation before reaching their full potential. Exhibitors aspiring to achieve higher medal levels should view the coming two years as a structured development cycle. Material gaps can be identified and addressed, research can be expanded, and exhibit plans can be refined well before the next major international event. Regular participation at regional and national exhibitions also provides valuable feedback from judges and fellow exhibitors, helping exhibits evolve progressively towards international standards.

Equally important is the need for philatelic organisations at State and National levels to identify promising exhibits at an early stage and provide appropriate guidance, mentoring and opportunities for development. Strategic planning allows exhibitors, commissioners and national philatelic bodies to work together towards common objectives rather than reacting to exhibition deadlines as they arise.

The period leading to 2027-2028 should therefore be regarded not merely as preparation for a series of exhibitions, but as an opportunity to strengthen the overall quality of Indian exhibiting. The investments made today in research, exhibit development and exhibitor support will determine the level of success achieved on the international stage in the years ahead.

The Need for Mentorship

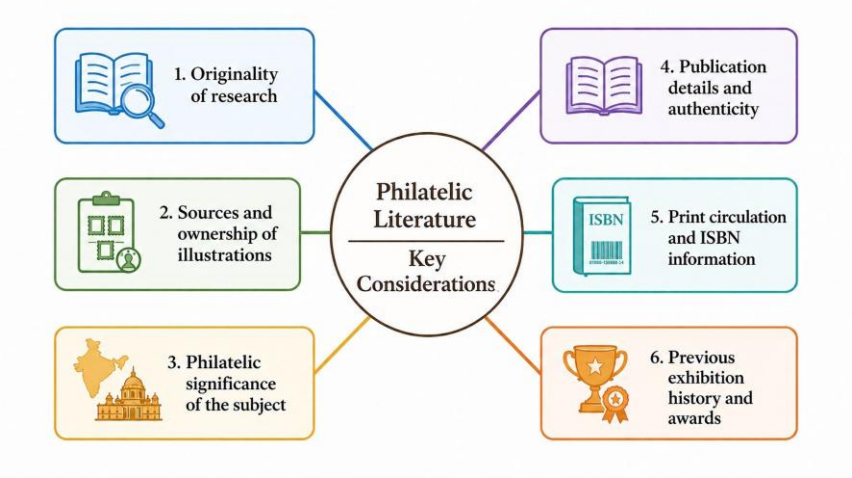
Perhaps the most important priority is the development of a comprehensive mentorship programme. Such a programme should extend beyond elite exhibitors and be available to all the stakeholder.

The objective should be to create a sustainable pipeline of future exhibitors capable of representing India successfully at international exhibitions. A strong mentorship culture benefits not only individual exhibitors but the entire philatelic community. It encourages the sharing of knowledge, promotes higher exhibiting standards and helps ensure that valuable experience is passed on to the next generation. By investing in mentorship today, India can build a broader and more competitive exhibitor base capable of achieving sustained success at national, regional and international exhibitions in the years ahead.

5. Raising Standards in Philatelic Literature

An important development during 2026 has been the decision of the Philatelic Congress of India to introduce mandatory screening of literature exhibits before they are forwarded to international exhibition organisers.

The initiative aims to ensure that literature entries meet accepted standards of originality, authenticity and philatelic relevance. The screening process will evaluate:



For digital publications, exhibitors will also be required to provide publication histories and details of revisions made in subsequent editions.

While some may view these requirements as additional administrative procedures, they would ultimately contribute to strengthening the quality and credibility of Indian literature exhibits at the international level.

Conclusion

The first five months of 2026 have already demonstrated that Indian philately is enjoying a period of remarkable vitality. Strong participation at major international exhibitions, Gold Medal performances in multiple competitive classes, international recognition for philatelic literature, continued publication of specialised research and renewed emphasis on quality standards all point towards a healthy and growing philatelic community. Yet success should not lead to complacency. The challenge now is to transform these individual achievements into a sustained national programme of exhibiting, research, publication and mentorship. If that can be achieved, then 2026 may be remembered not merely as a successful year, but as a turning point in the continuing development of Indian philately.

Jai Philately,
Jai Hind.