

ORGANIZED PHILATELY IN NEPAL

A BRIEF HISTORY OF NEPAL PHILATELIC SOCIETY

Philately, often referred to as the study or hobby of collecting postage stamps, is an engaging pursuit that attracts enthusiasts worldwide. Philately offers a diverse and rewarding hobby that combines elements of history, art, culture, education, and social interaction. Philatelists, those who engage in philately, typically collect stamps based on various themes. It appeals to individuals of all ages and backgrounds, fostering a sense of curiosity, creativity, and camaraderie among collectors worldwide.

First Postage Stamps

The first postage stamps of Nepal were issued on 13 April 1881 (1 Baisakh 1938) in three (anna) denominations. In 1906 to improve and modernize the postage stamps, Nepal took a significant turn in its philatelic history by assigning the production of its stamps to a foreign supplier, Perkins Bacon & Co. The first set of Shree Pashupati issue, were issued on 16 October 1907 (30 Asoj 1964). After 70 years since the first stamp was released, on 1 October 1949 (15 Asoj 2006), Nepal brought out its first pictorial issue of nine stamps. This was a turning point in Nepalese philately. The Himalaya Philatelic Club prepared cacheted First Day Covers. An extensive set of stamps was issued 14 April 1959 (1 Baisakh 2017), to commemorate Nepal's admission to the Universal Postal Union. Nepal started postal service to all the countries in the world.

First National Philatelic Exhibition

The first national philatelic exhibition took place in Kathmandu from 10 to 16 June 1966 (28 Jestha to 2 Ashad 2023) at the Department of Mines and Geology, Lainchour. Crown Prince Birendra inaugurated the exhibition displaying exhibits from Philatelic Bureau, individual collectors, and junior collectors. The Philatelic House published a booklet, Upahar, edited by Surendra Lal Shrestha. Outside of Kathmandu, Hari Shrestha organized the Philatelic Week in Biratnagar for one week in 1969. A philatelic exhibition was held in Pokhara from 13 – 19 June 1971 (30 Jestha - 5 Ashad 2028).

Establishment of Nepal Philatelic Society

After the successful organization of the First National Philatelic Exhibition, the philatelists decided to establish an organization to promote the interests of the stamp collectors. Nepal Philatelic Society was established on 10 July 1966 (23 Ashad 2023) and was registered on 22 July 1966 (7 Shrawan 2023) according to Organization Registration Act, 2023/03/26 BS. Kazi Madhusudan Rajbhandari was elected the first President of the Society. Other founder members were Bishnu Lal Shrestha, Hom Bahadur KC, Nanda Govinda Rajkarnikar, Sagar M Shrestha, Chandra K Sthapit, Shiva Raj Malla, Gyan D Tuladhar, Upendra J Rana, Toya B Dhakwa, and Riddhi H Bajarcharya.

Another information item mentions that Bishnu L Shrestha was the first Acting President, Hom Bahadur KC, General Secretary, Nanda Govinda Rajkarnikar, Publicity Secretary, Sagar Man Shrestha, Organization Secretary. Kazi Madhusudan Rajbhandari was the first President but as he was in the service in the Royal Palace, Bishnu L Shrestha was managing the affairs of the Society.

2016 marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Nepal Philatelic Society. A special function was organized on 10 July 2016 (26 Ashad 2073). A special commemorative cover and one commemorative stamp were issued on 28 December 2016. Nepal Rastra Bank issued one Rs.1000 silver coin and one Rs.100 copper-nickel coin.

The Nepal Philatelic Society is governed by an 11-member board, including nine elected members, serving two-year terms. The board appoints several advisors. Currently, the Society has 205 members, 179 of whom hold life memberships.

First Nepal Philatelic Club (later renamed Himalayan Hobby Home)

However, Nepal Philatelic Society was not the first such organization in Nepal. Going back in history there were several attempts to organize philatelic enthusiasts. The establishment of the Nepal Philatelic Club in 1946 was the initial step towards organized philately in Nepal. Later, it was renamed Himalayan Hobby Home (609 Juddha Sadak, Kathmandu). Khagendra Man Singh Pradhan was the first President, and Kumar Mani Dixit succeeded him. Ram Chandra Malhotra was responsible for publicity, Pratap Bahadur Shrestha was the organizer, and Prakash Man Singh Pradhan was the General Secretary. There were around 30 to 40 collectors. The Club was responsible for issuing the first day cover for the 1949 pictorial issue. The Club also published a magazine in English edited by Prakash Man Singh. It was printed at Bhagwati Press at Thahiti.

Another attempt was made in the early 1960's by some Nepalese philatelists who established Everest Philatelic Club. The annual membership fee was Rs.3 or US\$1.

First Nepalese Philatelist

It is unclear who was the first stamp collector and when stamp collecting started in Nepal. It is very interesting that over 130 years ago there was a collector in Nepal. A British Indian provisional postal card mailed from Nepal on 9 April 1892 (29 Chaitra 1948) to England, arrived on 2 May. Kishen Lal, the Post Master at the British Embassy Post Office in Nepal from 1891 to 1897, sent the following message on the postal card. "I am also a stamp collector & would prefer to send you used Indian & Nepal stamps, unused or used Indian Native state stamps if you send me your duplicate for selection with the values marked above." This letter signifies that Kishen Lal collected stamps and proves that the hobby of collecting stamps existed in Nepal as early as 1892.

First Philatelic Exhibition

One of the major activities of philatelic enthusiasts is to organize exhibitions of their collections. There is a report that Nepal's first philatelic exhibition was held in 1952 at Tri Chandra College. There were four participants. However, Prakash Man Singh writes that the first exhibition was

held at the American Library. The Nepal Philatelic Club organized this philatelic exhibition at the American Library, and Pratap Bahadur was the coordinator and principal financier.

Nepal Philatelic Bureau

On 14 June 1960, Nepal Philatelic Bureau was established for philatelic promotion and sales. The Bureau soon became a significant source of income for the Postal Services Department.

Publication: Nepal Stamp Album

Organizing their collection is an important activity of the philatelists. An album, titled S. L. Shrestha's NEPAL Stamp Album (1881-1971), was published in 1971. Another album for Nepal stamps was compiled by M. R. Rajbhandary and edited by Gyan Das Tuladhar. This bound album, dated 1973, was titled, The Stamp Album of Nepal - with the Portraits of Their Majesties of Nepal. Subsequently, parts II and III were published and compiled by M. R. Rajbhandary and edited by Nanda Govinda Rajkarnikar.

International Participation

Nepal Philatelic Society is a member of the Fédération Internationale de Philatélie (FIP) and Federation of Inter-Asian Philately (FIAP). Nepalese exhibitors have been participating in international philatelic exhibitions organized by FIP and FIAP as jury member, commissioners and exhibitors.

Hardayal Singh Gupta was invited as a member of the Jury at the 10th Asian Philatelic Exhibition 1996 (Taipei 1996) from 21 to 27 October. This was the first time a Nepali became a member of a jury in an international exhibition. Earlier, Singh was an apprentice jury member at Kuala Lumpur 92 and Bangkok 93. Nanda Govinda Rajkarnikar was the first Nepalese Commissioner appointed in 1983 (Bangkok).

Surendra Lal Shrestha and Nanda Govinda Rajkarnikar received Vermeil and Large Silver medals for their collection at the India International Philatelic Exhibition in November 1973. This was probably the first time Nepalese collectors participated in an international exhibition.

Since then, 69 Nepalese exhibitors have received 255 FIP/FIAP awards. Rishi Tulsyan holds distinction of receiving six Gold medals (JOBURG'10, Brasiliana 2013, Bandung 2017, China 2019, London 2022, Cape Town 2022, New Zealand 2023) and three Large Gold medals (China 2019, Cape Town 2022, EUROPHILA2025) for Nepal Classic and Postal Stationery collections. Ashok Rana has received three Gold medals for Medieval Period Nepal (EUROPHILA2025), Sri Pashupati (China 2024) and Perkins, Bacon Issues of Nepal 1907-1935 (Dubai 2026), Binod Krishna Shrestha has received three Gold medals for Postal Stationery (Ausvipex 2025), Aerogramme (Ausvipex 2025) and Registered Labels and Markings (five-nations Bandung 2025). In the Youth category Kavya Tulsyan received Gold medal (IBRA 2023) with special prize for her Postal Stationery collection. Bhavya Tulsyan received Gold medals (Indonesia 2023, Jakarta 2024) for The Classic Stamps of Nepal 1881-1930. Rishi Tulsyan and Dr. Ashok Rana are Fellows of the Royal Philatelic Society, London.

To End

Organized philately has nearly 80 years history in Nepal and the Nepal Philatelic Society was established 60 years ago. The first documented Nepali philatelist collected stamps as far back as 130 years ago while the first postage stamp was issued 143 years ago. The first philatelic exhibition has organized over 72 years ago. Nepalese collectors have been participating in international philatelic exhibitions for over 50 years and have received many awards including several Gold and Large Gold.

The Nepal Philatelic Society serves as a custodian of the nation's philatelic heritage, fostering a deep appreciation for Nepal's history, culture, and artistry through the study and collection of postage stamps. By continuing its activities, the society not only preserves this heritage but also promotes national pride and international awareness of Nepal's contributions to the philatelic world. Through exhibitions, publications, and educational initiatives, the society enriches the lives of collectors and the broader community, ensuring that the legacy of Nepali philately endures for generations to come. Moreover, fostering a vibrant philatelic community encourages collaboration, exchange of ideas, and the cultivation of new generations of enthusiasts, ensuring the longevity and relevance of this cherished hobby in Nepal.

Binod Krishna Shrestha
Life Member
Nepal Philatelic Society