

Vaishali Vijaykumar

When Dr MK Sudhakar is not busy attending to his patients in the clinic, he spends time with stamps. Earlier a professor with Ramachandra Medical College, he took up a voluntary retirement in 2015. Now, he is a general medical practitioner. What started out as a hobby in the 1980s has transformed his approach towards collection. The city-based doctor from Porur has 50 albums with hundreds of stamps. From the earliest 1947 India postage to the latest Sachin Tendulkar stamp, his theme revolves around Indians honoured abroad, Bharat Ratna awardees and stamps featuring armed forces of the post-independence era.

"I've learned a lot about our freedom fighters and unsung heroes during the process. The joy derived from collecting, segregating, arranging them in leaflets, and learning the history behind each of them is unmatched. It is a stress buster, a meditation that helps me concentrate better. I've lost some of my father's and grandfather's collection. My goal is to preserve the maximum of what I have," says Dr Sudhakar.

There is high demand for autographed postcards with stamps and first copies. Among the highlights is the Mother Teresa collection from over 70 countries including Albania, India, Serbia, and Nigeria. "I will slowly explain to my son about the collection. Youngsters must choose a theme to collect when they get into this hobby. It is impossible for an individual to have everything.

Preservation is tough. I'll exhibit my collection once they're ready. My plan is to put a board that will have an update on the latest stamp released and its background. Letter writing has gone down drastically and so has stamp collection. This is one way to spread awareness about the hobby among my patients," he says.

The latest addition is Mother Teresa at the Vatican with the Pope. This was couriered to him by his friend. Most of the stamps are stuck on an informative postcard. There is a small description on the postcard about the event, date and the place of printing. Sudhakar has albums named under specific themes. Each one can accommodate 25 leaflets arranged in alphabetical order of the country's name. The postcard is first slipped into a 50-micron plastic sheet and they're handled only using forceps because they are fragile. The speciality of this imported stationery is they don't fold and come with moisture proof and oleophobic coating.

"Every stamp has a denomination and currency of the particular country where it's printed. There are minute variations in designs, however, there are joint issues (two or more countries releasing a similar picture on a stamp) but quite rare. There is an active group called South Indian Philatelic Association for Stamps. Members from all walks of life share their collection and every person has a specific interest. There are people who collect butterflies, musical instruments, and FIFA has been trending now. It functions like a barter system where we give and receive stamps based on our theme. My dream is to add a stamp signed by Mother Teresa to my album," he shares.



THE DOCTOR'S STAMPS

Dr MK Sudhakar has an exclusive collection of Mother Teresa stamps curated from over 70 countries



One for India Sudhakar has an extensive album on Gandhi and incidents from the Quit India Movement. Stamps of Bharat Ratna awardees is his prized possession. To educate others, he has created a blog featuring illustrations of the stamp with key notes about the personalities.

PRIZED POSSESSIONS

- Beatification of Mother Teresa in 1977
10th death anniversary stamp
Nobel Prize for Mother Teresa in 1979
Canonisation of Mother Teresa in 2016
Pope with Mother Teresa in Calcutta, India
First day cover of Defense Research and Development Organisation autographed by APJ Abdul Kalam

The latest addition to his collection is Mother Teresa at the Vatican with the Pope