

PAULINE BOOKSHOP WITH VISION & MISSION

Fr. Varghese Paul, S.J.

Scores of bookshops dot Ahmedabad, the biggest city in Gujarat. There are big and small bookshops. Most of these bookshops sell only Gujarati books. Some others sell books in English and still others in Hindi. A few bookshops have books in more than one language like the Pauline International Book and Media Centre. It is a bookshop with a difference. The Pauline Centre has a unique vision and mission quite different from all other establishments.

Pauline International Books and Media Centre is an institution which is managed exclusively by women. They are Catholic religious nuns who have dedicated their whole life to the service of God and the people through the mass media communications.

As the name of their book shop indicates books of international repute on topics like religious and human values, spirituality, counselling, religion, self-help, youth, family life and formation are made available there.

Books by internationally and nationally known authors like Frs. Carlos Valles, Anthony de Mello, C. P. Varkey, J Maurus, Hedwig Lewis and Fr. Varghese Paul are sold in Pauline bookshops in Ahmedabad and 18 other outlets in India.

“Better Yourself Books”, “Insight Books” which are known for personality development, family life, socio-cultural awakening, human and religious values are readily available in Pauline Book and Media Centre. Then, you get Christian classical and spiritual books like the Imitation of Christ only in the Pauline Centre in Ahmedabad. The Bible and biblical literature in English, Hindi and Gujarati are also available in the shop.

Children’s books and story-books in multi-colour on value education and personal growth are a speciality of the Pauline bookshop. They stock, display and sell such quality books for children in large quantity. These books provide children’s stories, moral and ethical stories, ancient and classical stories to suit children of different age groups. Glossy books in multi-colour suitable for giving as gifts to children and adults on special occasions like birthdays, outstanding achievements, special feast-days are also available.

Greetings cards of all types and for all occasions are another speciality of the Pauline International Book and Media Centre. You will always find in their bookshop college girls and boys from the Gujarat University area and nearby colleges selecting greetings cards for memorable occasions and feast days like Diwali, Christmas, New Year and friendship day, etc.

Still another speciality in the Pauline Centre is audio and video CDs and cassettes. There are classical and modern music as well as vocal and instrumental music to suit different tastes and serves various moods. The CDs contain themes like value education, moral and religious teaching. The CDs are suitable for all for information, formation and entertainment and the whole family can watch together and enjoy them. There are also audio and video CDs with talks by experts in spirituality, psychology, religion and personality development. They are helps for religious and spiritual formation.

Pauline Book and Media Centre is comparatively a small shop. But it reaches out to larger audiences than many such ventures in the city as the Centre also reaches out to schools and other institutions.

As one of the Managers of the Centre, Sr. Sally said, Pauline Bookshop & Media Centre is a bookshop with a difference. “We are not business people just selling books and audio-visual materials. We are here to promote human dignity and spread ethical, moral and family values as well as religious and spiritual formation through diffusing our books and other materials,” Sr. Sally said.

Pauline Book and Media Centre through books and other mass media aims to uphold and spread human dignity and genuine human values as proclaimed by Jesus through his life and message. “Our founder Blessed Albarione wants us to spread the light and truth of Jesus Christ through the mass media,” Sr. Sally added.

Keeping this aim of spreading the message of Jesus Pauline Centre keeps and diffuses Bible and other literature on Jesus Christ, the Christian religion and spirituality. But they know that religious and spiritual books are not enough to attract customers and to promote human dignity and values. So Pauline Centre stores and sells also books on human psychology, philosophy, theology and religion.

The Sisters of Pauline Centre also know that a bookshop is not enough to reach out to all book-lovers. So some Sisters also carry books house to house. Homemakers and others too welcome them to their houses and appreciate their enthusiastic and joyful services. In fact, the Pauline Sisters tell me that they sell a good number of books and other materials through their door to door home visits.

The Pauline Sisters sell more books through their visits to schools and other institutions than through their bookshops and home visits. They have a special approach and methodology in diffusing books through schools and institutions. They carry a lot of books to schools which invite them. They organize book exhibitions and sale in school premises, and even visit class rooms and tell the children the importance of reading and the value of books. The Children as well as the parent-teachers’ associations make the best use of the sisters’ visits and buy books which catch their fancy and taste.

It is worth knowing this service minded Sisters and their noble mission of promoting value based literature and other mass media materials. They are the members of a religious congregation called Daughters of St. Paul in the Catholic Church. Their headquarters is at Bandra, Mumbai in India and they have 18 Pauline Book and Media Centres in various parts of India.

The Pauline Sisters also have a Pauline publication house at Mumbai. They publish “Insight books” of inspirational literature. They also publish original works in English as well as translations of famous books into English. They also publish books by well known authors from abroad.

The visitors to their Pauline Book and Media Centre in Ahmedabad do appreciate that they sell also books by well known authors published by many other publishers and book sellers. “We sell good books from other publishers. We are for communicating values”, said Sr. Jyoti in Pauline Centre at Ahmedabad.

A visitor to the Pauline book exhibition at Ahmedabad, Mr. Rohit Dave writes in the Visitors’ book: “I am delighted a lot to be here and I am of the opinion that the collection is very eye catching and some of the books here are not even found in Cross Word like outlets...”

Once I asked Sr. Rita Joseph, the Superior in Ahmedabad how their bookshop is different from other bookshops in the city which sell books and other mass media materials. “Father Varghese, many people do not see how we are different from others. But we are unique in many ways. We are not business people to sell books and make money. We do sell books and get some profit for our living. But we have a special mission and vision. We do not sell all and any type of books. We diffuse only specially selected books which contribute to human values and human dignity. Through our bookshops we promote the values and messages proclaimed by Jesus.”

Sr. Sally, always with a smiling face in their Centre in Ahmedabad, told me about their patron St. Paul and their mission. “Like the mission of St. Paul, we promote literature ‘that is true, noble, right, pure, lovely and honorable’ “ said Sr. Sally quoting St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians.

Since the Daughters of St. Paul opened their first bookshop in Ahmedabad on June 2, 1991 I as a book-lover had the opportunity to visit their Centre many times and meet many Sisters who come to serve at their Centre usually for a three-year period. A holy man James Alberione founded their religious congregation at Alba in Italy in 1915 with a specific mission with St. Paul as their patron saint. When newspapers and other mass media communication began to spread in the beginning of the 20th century Fr. Alberione wanted his followers to use the mass media for the spread of Jesus’ message throughout the world. Sr. Tecla Merlo was the co-founder with Fr. Alberione in starting the Congregation.

The Sisters of the Daughters of St. Paul first came to Mumbai in 1951. During the last 58 years the Pauline Sisters have extended their services to 18 centres in cities like Mumbai, Nagpur, Delhi, Shillong, Kolkata, Secunderabad, Thiruvanthampuram, Goa, etc.

I believe that through printed literature and other means of mass communication these Pauline Sisters have contributed immensely to forming the minds of youth in human and moral values and upholding human dignity. When these Sisters are organizing a book exhibition and sale, it is a wonderful opportunity to make the best of it by buying good books and other mass media materials of inspiring and uplifting nature. They will certainly enrich our minds and hearts. (contact the author: ciss@satyam.net.in)

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