

CENTERNARY OF AN OUTSTANDING MAGAZINE “DOOT”

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In the history of Gujarati periodicals and literature “DOOT” has the unique distinction of being the second Gujarati magazine completing a centenary of uninterrupted publication. The first magazine to cross the centenary mark is Gujarat Vidyasabha’s 155 year old magazine “Buddhiprakash”.

The first issue of DOOT published in January 1911 was printed at the Examiner Press, Mumbai. The 12-page monthly magazine and subsequent issues with more pages, contained among other materials, a serialized translation of the “IMITATION OF CHRIST”, a classical book in many European and Indian languages. The book has seen two or three translations by different authors into Gujarati and is still going strong with the lovers of spiritual books. In the first 12 issues DOOT provided 172 pages of spiritual and religious literature to its readers.

According to the History of the Catholic Church in Gujarat by Fr. Carlos Suria, S.J., the German Jesuit mission superior, Fr. Herman Zurhansen, S.J. had started DOOT in Gujarati, similar to the Messengers of the Sacred Heart in 40 European languages.

As Fr. Suria in the 1986 Platinum Issue of DOOT says that “Before his transfer from the post of the Mission Superior at Anand, Fr. Carl Kroner, S.J. got the necessary permission and the money for starting DOOT from Archbishop Herman Jurgens, SJ of Mumbai in 1910.”

For the first few years the name of the editor was not printed in the magazine. Then, from 1915 an outstanding Swiss missionary Fr. Joseph Umbricht, S.J. was the editor of DOOT according to the historian, Fr. Suria.

We can say for sure that the founding-editor was either the then new Mission Superior, Fr. Zurhansen or a popular missionary Fr. Umbricht who was nick-named as “baradiya (loud mouthed) father”. Then, Fr. Thomas Fernandes, a diocesan priest of Bombay diocese succeeded the Jesuit priest, Fr. Umbricht.

During the last 100 years DOOT has had many distinguished personalities as its editor. Fr. Basil Lala Parmar, S.J. was the first son of the soil Editor from February 1956 to June 1969. Fr. Michael Rodriques, S.J. and Fr. Charles Gomes, S.J. have been the editors of DOOT before they were appointed bishops.

It is significant and noteworthy that an Indian Gujarati magazine DOOT had editors hailing from different countries like Switzerland, Spain and Germany. DOOT had also some editors who were Indians but non-Gujaratis.

DOOT was managed as a side job for many years by editors who had other main responsibilities as missionaries or educators. For the first time Fr. Varghese Paul, S.J. was appointed as a full-time editor in 1978. He has had the distinction of being the only professional trained editor of DOOT and also for being the Editor for the longest period of more than 15 years. Fr. Varghese

also transformed DOOT from being a small-size periodical to the present standard size magazine.

DOOT was originally started with its long name ATI PAVITRA ANTAKARANNO DOOT. Then, the magazine used to be edited from the bed room of its editors. Over the years the long name has been shortened to simply DOOT. With the many transfers of its editors and changes of its postal addresses DOOT lost its registration papers and it was reregistered in 2000 with the present modified name PAVAN DOOT.

Another unique thing about DOOT is that from the beginning DOOT reflected the people of Gujarat especially the Christian community, its life and culture, its growth and development over the years.

Here, it is also significant that a regular contributor to DOOT, Fr. Carlos Suria, SJ has contributed many words spoken in central Gujarat to the Gujarati dictionary. Then, a scholarly editor, Fr. Prakash Mundanthanam, SJ has contributed to Gujarati language by coining new words in Gujarati substituting words like 'Pope', 'laymen', 'archbishop', etc.

The special issues of DOOT during its golden jubilee in 1961 and its diamond jubilee in 1986 as well as a very special issue of the centenary of the Catholic Church in Gujarat in 1993 are outstanding documents of the people and the Christian community in Gujarat.

In the earlier times DOOT catered mainly to the Christians in central Gujarat and to those who have migrated from Anand and Kheda districts to other parts of Gujarat and to Mumbai. Over the years the people from other parts of Gujarat have also embraced Christianity and DOOT is spreading in big numbers to Christians and Christian institutions and libraries in Saurashtra, Kutch-Bhuj and to the tribal belts of Banaskantha, Sabarkantha, Panchmahal, Dahod, Narmada and Dangs. Today DOOT is poised to reach out to 10,000 paid subscribers in the entire Gujarat and beyond. (contact the author: ciss@satyam.net.in)

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