



Chow-Chow for God

By Philip Solomon

“Do you know the word chow-chow? It is a funny family word for masala, which is Hindi for a mixture of spices used to flavor food,” says Philip Solomon, founder and director of Humanitarian India Mission (HIM) in Bangalore, India. “Our ministry is like chow-chow. It has a little of everything!”

“I came to know the Lord in 1983 by doing publicity for a Christian organization,” says Solomon. “Ecclesiastes 11:9 says, ‘Young man, it’s wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it. Do everything you want to do; take it all in. But remember that you must give an account to God for everything you do.’”

“I realized,” says Solomon, “that I had to change my life. I was working in the film industry at the time and left to join Indian Evangelical Mission (IEM). They had a monthly outreach magazine with a print run of 50,000 copies. I was also asked to manage our book production. We published one book every six months, working in nine Indian languages. But a few years later, despite lots of sales, IEM’s leadership changed and the literature ministry was closed.”

Beginnings

“I’d worked with editors, proofreaders and composers,” says Solomon. “I had experience in design, printing, and distribution. So, after much prayer, I decided to buy the rights for the books IEM had produced.

“March 1, 2002, was the beginning of HIM Press. We had rights to 13 books and a few people on board. These included an English lecturer with Bible knowledge, a promotions manager, a fundraiser, a printer who is a believer, and myself as the publisher. I felt this was not my choice, but God’s call. There was a verse that God gave me when we began to guide our ministry. It is John 3:30: ‘He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less.’”

“We began with the smallest title in our inventory, Esther: A Shining Star, written by Esther Faulkner Williams, wife of IEM founder Dr. Theodore Williams. It is the story of a young girl who dies of leukemia. We hoped to produce additional books as well, but did not have much capital, so we switched strategies.”

From books to bookmarks

“I’d studied multimedia and television production,” recalls Solomon. “Television has 100 channels and I realized that children were attracted to dirty pictures and pornography. I wanted to offer something different.”

Solomon spent 100,000 rupees (one lakh, about U.S.\$2,000) and traveled “all over” as a nature photographer, taking pictures of nature to be used in labels HIM Press would offer to schools as fundraisers.

The investment paid off.

“We began with seven schools in 2002,” says Solomon. “A set of labels for textbooks—printed with the school’s name,

a beautiful photograph, and a Bible verse—sold for six rupees. We sold 7,000 sets the first year; 13,000 in 2003; 24,000 in 2004, and our sales just keep growing.”

HIM Press began producing Christmas cards, stickers, calendars, bookmarks, Bible promise cards, luggage tags, directories, and more.

“Each product has purpose,” says Solomon.

Bounty for blessing

HIM Press currently publishes material in English, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Hindi, and Kannada. Its profits generate half the income for Humanitarian India Mission (HIM), an indigenous Christian trust established by Solomon to minister “to the unreached and underprivileged of India.”

The other 50 percent of HIM’s income comes from donations. The organization aims to pray, publish God’s Word, provide education and emergency relief, and promote and initiate projects to help the lost and needy. HIM supports a primary school in Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh; a children’s home in Trivandram, Kerala; two institutes of technology—in Chengalpattu and

Peikulam in Tamil Nadu—to train youth whose parents were affected by leprosy; a counseling center at Katpadi, Tamil Nadu; and medical camps, meals, daycare, and other assistance for slum residents in Bangalore.

After the December 2004 tsunami struck, HIM Press published a calendar to raise funds for relief work. “If My People Pray has 450 quotations on prayer,” says Solomon. “We spent five lakhs (U.S.\$11,000) to research, print and sell this product, and raised eight lakhs (U.S.\$17,500). We sold the calendars at 50 rupees each (U.S.\$5).”

The calendar was so successful Solomon is working on next year’s version, titled Love, The Greatest Thing in the World.

“We still want to publish books,” says Solomon, “but we must have enough operating capital for the different parts of our work, our chow-chow ministry. This keeps life interesting,” he smiles, “just a little spicy.”

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