



Publisher's Day

Sathyam for Souls

Freelance writer Praveena Balasundaram interviewed C.V. Vadavana, director of Sathyam Ministries (www.sathyam.org) in Tiruvalla, Kerala, India.

Our goal is to proclaim and promote the gospel of Jesus Christ with the cooperation of believers in India and abroad," says C.V. Vadavana. "Our aim is to win souls through God's Word."

Vadavana is the founder of Sathyam Literature Service (SLS), a two-decade old literature ministry that is part of Sathyam Ministries, an evangelistic agency in southwest India ("sathyam" is the Malayalam word for "truth").

"My day starts at 5:30 a.m. Until 7:30 a.m. I write and edit books," begins Vadavana. The SLS office is located in his house in Tiruvalla, which also serves as the headquarters of the ministry. Vadavana spends two hours, early in the morning, alone with his writing. He has authored several books in the Malayalam language on martyrs, cults, and the origin of the Bible. He is currently revising his quiz book on Catholicism and the Bible.

At 7:30 a.m., Vadavana goes back into his home to have breakfast with his wife and three sons. "This is the only time I have with my children before they go to school," he adds. "The next time I see them it is at 7:30 p.m. for dinner."

Vadavana returns to the office at 9:15 a.m. At this time, the place is bustling with staff. SLS employs 32 people, including translators, editors, and desktop publishing experts. "Of these, 11

were recently hired to work on the translation of the Dakes Bible into Malayalam, and on the revision of the translation of the King James Version of the Bible into Malayalam," clarifies Vadavana.

The staff gathers for a time of prayer and Vadavana likes to encourage and challenge them: "I share what we are doing to spread God's word," says Vadavana, "and why. During lunch I try to meet with indi-

vidual staff members and talk about the vision of SLS."

During the first half of the day, Vadavana works with editors and translators. "So far SLS has published 311 books. Most are by indigenous authors," he says. "Ninety-five percent of our authors are local."

Along with books on systematic theology, SLS has published a Bible encyclopedia and a commentary with contributions by "more than 100 Bible scholars from India and abroad."

SLS's latest venture is the publication of the Indian edition of the *Dakes Annotated Reference Bible*, known for its comprehensive notes. "I met with the publisher in the U.S. and got the copyright for the Indian edition in English, as well as the translation rights for Malayalam," explains Vadavana.

The Indian edition was released earlier this year. "On February 4, 2006, we were lucky to have Mr. Derrick Germaine, grandson of F.J. Dakes, here in India to release the Bible at a grand function," he notes. "Now we are working on the Malayalam translation." With this major project on the anvil,



C. V. Vadavana, as shown on the cover of his book *From Monastery to Mission Field*, was a Roman Catholic monk for 11 years. When he left the priesthood in 1985, he invested a gift of 153 rupees (about U.S.\$4) in publishing his first evangelistic tract. Sathyam now has about 300 Christian books in its catalog.

Vadavana's mornings are spent getting updates from translators and editors. A Hindi translation in partnership with another publisher is also being discussed.

Another facet of Sathyam's publishing is the Bible revision project. "The Malayalam Bible was first translated from the King James Version more than 100 years ago and is in serious need of revision," states Vadavana. The revision may be released December 2006.

The need for Bible translation came about when Sathyam Ministries started a wheelchair distribution program. "The people happily came to receive wheelchairs, but we wanted to provide for their souls too," says Vadavana. Therefore, Sathyam Bible Society was inaugurated on March 29, 2006. It will serve as the headquarters for all the translation, proofreading and editing work related to the Bible.

The work of Sathyam Ministries is reported via a bi-weekly magazine,—*Jeeva Vachanam* (Word of Life)—and Vadavana regularly updates the content.

"Mid-morning is the prime time for customers," reflects Vadavana, and therefore he also spends time in a bookstore. Akshara Khani is a large tent bookstore in Tiruvalla, and sells Bibles, SLS publications, and books from other noted publishers. Many Christian leaders, pastors, lay people, and Bible college students visit the bookstore and Vadavana likes to greet them. He also likes to observe how the sales staff deals with customers. "Sometimes sales people are shy and hesitate to talk to the customers, so I

exhort them. They are working with God's Word, so they need to be less reserved when talking about Christian books," he says. Vadavana works with the staff to implement new methods in sales and marketing.

Following lunch, Vadavana is out meeting people to promote sales of SLS publications and expanding SLS's book club membership. This is crucial because SLS publishing depends on the revenue generated from sales. "To print tracts we raise the money from local churches," says Vadavana. However, funds for books and Bible printing are generated by pre-publication sales to keep publishing self-sustained.

"December is convention season in Kerala, where we setup bookstalls and try to have maximum pre-publication sales that will pay for the printing and distribution of Bibles," explains Vadavana. He adds, "For example, six months in advance we will offer the Dakes Bible in Malayalam at a very reduced cost, so that we will have money for printing."

Many of Sathyam's resources are raised locally. "When we started our bookmobile project," says Vadavana, "Indian believers raised \$40,000. We are praying and looking for a bookmobile team in every state in India to make an enduring contribution in peoples' lives."

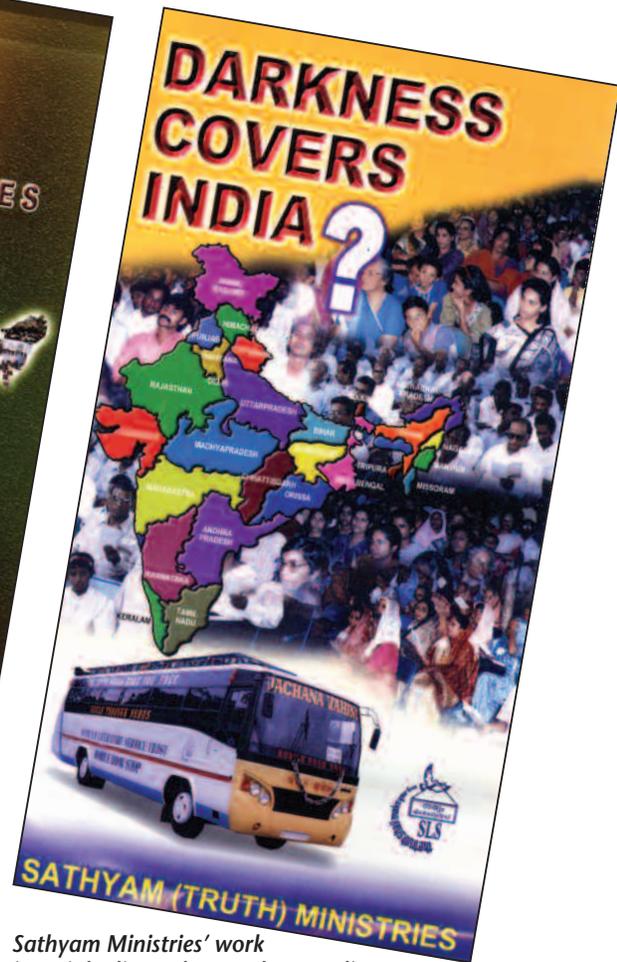
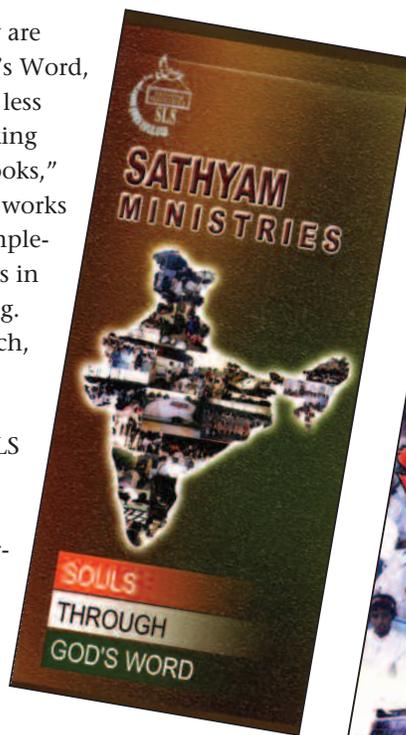
Vadavana's day is not without its challenges. "Some people have the attitude that

if publishing is Christian, it need not be the best." Therefore, Vadavana works to instill a professional attitude in his staff by conducting training, as well as hiring and offering competitive salaries to qualified personnel. He also hopes to develop a second line of leaders who will expand the vision of the organization.

On a different note, Vadavana observes, "there is sometimes an unhealthy competition in sales among Christian publishers." He says under-pricing of books results in loss of sales for regional and national publishers. Vadavana has taken several measures to address this problem: "In Kerala, we organize book fairs where we offer discounts to customers, and in towns where there are no bookstores we use our

bookmobile to reach the people. We also get books from Book Aid on credit and sell them at discounted rates." Vadavana regularly updates book club members about upcoming sales. However, he also hopes for better networking among Christian booksellers.

Despite the challenges, at the end of the day, Vadavana is optimistic: "Publishing of Christian literature in India is always profitable," he says, "because it is done with the perspective of winning souls." ❖



Sathyam Ministries' work is mainly directed toward evangelism. The organization, also known as Truth Ministries International, has offices in Tiruvalla, Kerala, India, and in La Mirada, California, U.S.A.