

M D Gunasena: A Centenary Legacy



It was in 1913 that M D Gunasena took over the running of Victor Press. Gradually over the years M D Gunasena became an established household name that resonates in the hearts and minds of people as a trusted brand, even 100 years later.

By Prasadini Nanayakkara

M D Gunasena, a name that is easily associated with books amongst Sri Lankans, marks 100 years since the commencement of its first venture, a printing press that preceded book selling and publishing. Born into a farming family, M D Gunasena, the youngest of three sons was sent to a school in Colombo with the hopes of

benefitting from an English education. It was then that a young Gunasena found a fascination with printers at the various establishments. Financial constraints however, forced his return to the village and his schooling abruptly ended at third grade.

However it paved the way to pursue his budding interest in printing at the Boys' Industrial School, an orphanage attached to a printing press. It also afforded him the opportunity to continue his studies under English and Sinhala pundits and laid the foundation for his career. Since taking over the management of a printing press in 1913, M D Gunasena continues its legacy with the business remaining within the family.

Today M D Gunasena has 17 book stores around Colombo, suburbs and outstation. While book selling is its primary venture today, the company has diversified into printing, publishing and education as well. Marking its centenary milestone the branch in Bambalapitya has been revamped transforming the customer experience with books. "It is a state-of-the-art book shop and we are proud to say that it is probably the only one of its kind in South East Asia," says Rajiv Gunasena, Deputy Managing Director. The makeover implemented is with the impetus of moving away from traditional book shops, to allow customers to lounge, and take in the ambience as they browse through books. The Galle and Kandy branches are soon to be refurbished similarly as well.

Aside from the book stores M D Gunasena is armed with an extensive distribution network. "We believe the future is door-to-door delivery. In keeping with the pace of Sri Lankan lifestyle, we may not have customers coming into the stores and instead prefer to have books delivered straight to their door step," explains Rajiv Gunasena. It is with this foresight that the company is launching a comprehensive website mdgunasena.com, tying up with a logistics company to facilitate delivery to the doorstep. Customers may subscribe to the convenience of ordering books online and circumvent the hassle and congestion of a bookstore altogether. M D Gunasena also intends to tie up with international warehouses giving readers access to millions of titles through the website. The Booksellers have also introduced a platform for e-books in partnership with Microimage and Etisalat where all physical books are converted into e-publications. The ebooks can be accessed through thebookhub.lk and downloaded to any Android, Apple or Windows device. Taking

this concept further M D Gunasena hopes to introduce its own branded tablet that would have functions in addition to being an e-reader.

The bookhub would also serve to benefit publishing and upcoming authors. Where conventionally, thousands of manuscripts are rejected due to cost of print run, e-publishing merely requires a one-time conversion for an unlimited number of copies made available electronically. Furthermore, the bookhub will host Sinhala titles with conversion done for Sinhala text and stands to benefit Sri Lankans living abroad. While thus revolutionising its publishing arm with new technology, M D Gunasena hopes to further expand its list of published titles. With a versatile collection numbering over 500 at present, at its centenary juncture M D Gunasena aims to add another 100 publications to its catalogue.

“The Company, Was Established On The Founding Principles Of Love, Integrity, Responsibility, Humility And Gratitude And Continues To Function On Those Values To This Day,”

Adding further on its diversification Rajiv Gunasena says, “we hope to branch out to commercial printing as well instead of limiting to our own publications,” a venture that has already gained momentum. Education is another arm of M D Gunasena where the Oasis International School has been established to provide an education in English while preserving Sri Lankan values.

As it reaches its centenary milestone, M D Gunasena, while embracing innovations and expansions stands firmly on its founding principles. “The company, was established on the founding principles of love, integrity, responsibility, humility and gratitude and continues to function on those values to this day,” says Rajiv Gunasena.




100
REFLEXOLOG
MEDITATION

