



THE INDIAN PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

A Long Hard Look at the Greatest Tragedy of the Indian Economy



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project has taken up way more room in my mind than I had intended it to. I'm a curious person, but I suppose that most of my so called curiosity is just an attempt to disguise the fact that what I really am, is a sceptic. I question everything I see, I believe nothing. Instinct tells you when the answers are there, & when it does you find them.

I like knowing that I can. I like knowing things.

But of course not every answer is one that wants to be found. Some just aren't there, & you have to take solace in knowing that there is nothing to know.

That is of course unless you have a teacher.

See, the thing about having a teacher is you don't *have* to resign yourself to the constant throbbing ache in the back of your head that's hammering the walls of your skull with cold & unending *doubt*. You don't even have to *look* for answers, even if you know it's possible to find them. Because the thing about having a teacher is that you can just, ask. And she will tell you.

So, for this project, I'd like to thank my Economics teacher, Ms Rakhi Srivastava. For tolerating my questions & for answering them.

I'd like to thank The Nielsen India Book Market Report 2015, for being one of the very few extensive research studies focusing on & shedding light on part of the absolute behemoth that is the Publishing industry in India, the internet, for being a means for me to access relevant journals, business associations' data & interviews with the industry's insiders, the people writing in those forums, the journalists conducting those interviews, for asking the right questions.

And of course I'd like to thank the industry; for existing. Not because it helped me make this project in any manner whatsoever (it did *not*). But because I love it. There's many reasons I can think of that might make it seem justifiable to have chosen this world as the focus of my project, & yet I would be lying if I were to reason that the Publishing industry is, in entirety or in part, the backbone of the Indian economy. It's Not. Sure, it has the potential to be, but that's not something I discovered until after I'd made my choice.

I chose it because that's the only way I know how to thank the people behind the macroculture that has taught me half of everything I know. The authors, the artists, the musicians, the journalists, the editors, the production line, the printers, the distributors, the vendors, the sellers; the publishers. Studying the Publishing Industry wouldn't even be possible without the publishing industry. It *is knowledge*. Sourced & packaged & polished & distributed & delivered to the world. And I can't not thank them for that.

Because I like knowing things.

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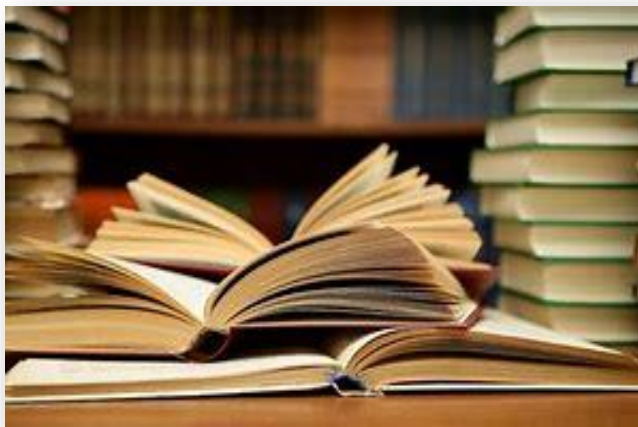
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INTRODUCTION

There are many things that the Indian economy is, brilliantly & confidently so, failing at. Of course, even as we speak the picture is changing. Because the economy is an organism. A monster among us, living & breathing, constantly evolving.

One of the things that it is, arguably *not* failing at, is publishing. But who's to say what not failing is? Who defines the optimum state of an economy, & is it even possible to ever reach a point where there isn't room for improvement? If yes, when? And how can we tell?

These are a few of the questions that prompted me to take up this industry as the focus of my project. The information covered here only barely scratches the rarely discussed surface of the vast unknown that is the publishing Industry of India. Barely any formal data, a mystery as large as it is intriguing. To say that the research I had to do to gain any amount of insight into any & every aspect of the sector was extensive, would be an overstatement, but it certainly took a little more than the surface level digging that will usually suffice for a high school level case study.



Almost everything that I did end up discovering has been a revelation. The information industry - as I like to call it because really, that's what it is - is so much more interesting than you'd think. And I had pretty high expectations as it were.

There is much to be said in the way of note-worthy observations when it comes to publishing, even if there isn't much to observe. Reiterating what I mentioned earlier, it is astounding just how little information is out there about the

very business of information itself. Nonetheless, what little there is, is worth knowing.

One of the very first & most interesting patterns I came across is that there is a stark contrast between the way the industry is perceived by insiders & outsiders. Professionals & laymen, so to speak. It is sort of a trend in interviews & public forums for the people working within the industry to be questioned with regard to its survival, when really, it's been doing pretty well & consistently so for a weirdly long time. And it takes very minimal effort to figure out that there is *nothing*, not a single shred of data relating to either sales or production that should suggest anything even a little to the left of that, much less that it is struggling to *survive*.

Even with the coronavirus, the major brunt of it has been taken up by airlines, recreational businesses, fast food chains, & restaurants.

Books are doing fine. Digital publications are *thriving*. Books & published media have become a major point of consumer demand with large numbers of people being quarantined. Of course, the production sector certainly has taken a hit, due to the government increasing the cess on raw materials. But all in all the performance is still pretty impressive (if not satisfactory considering its "tremendous potential").

I don't know where the perception comes from. It's a complete mystery, there's absolutely no reason for this to be a common belief at all. It's ridiculous.

WHAT CONSTITUTES PUBLISHING IN THE 21ST CENTURY?

It is important to establish exactly what is & isn't considered to be part of the publishing industry here in this project. And to do that, first we must understand what publishing is.

Publishing is the process of production and dissemination of literature, music, or information — the activity of making information available to the general public. ^[10]

In this project we're mostly dealing with the book-publishing industry, & traverse some parts of the digital info-space & mass-com journalism. But it is important to clarify that this is in fact not all that publishing is. As wide as the scope of publishing covered here is, the reality of it is *wider*, which makes all of it that much more impressive.

Dealing strictly with the intellectual property of authors – both fictional & non-fictional, publishing can be defined as the entire process of manufacturing, processing, packaging, distributing, & selling of informative media through pretty vaguely defined distribution channels (a major point of setback for the sector) on the physical end, & content selection, editing, censoring, licensing, verifying information & assigning intellectual property rights on the metaphysical end.

In the 21st century, this means having to accommodate & secure deals with visual media outlets, integrate print media with other forms of mass communication as well as the question of activism vs commercialism in the field of educational publication.

Digitally published media is just as - if not more - relevant in today's socio-political landscape. Of all the sources used in this project, 3 were print (2 newspaper interviews & the book quoted below), all of which I accessed digitally. Print & digital publications form rival media forms within the same industry, & the

success of one is seen as a threat to the other, & while some opine that the numbers speak for themselves: digital sales contributed barely 3-4% of literary revenue ^[2], & that the reality contradicts the assumption that digital media is a threat to print media at all, Jane Friedman, in "Literary Publishing in the 21st Century" (left), reminds us that it's not a competition & it never was.

Jane Friedman's essay, "The Future Value of a Literary Publisher," is the very last in the collection. This (right) is an excerpt from it. ^[12]



"Since the late 1990s, I have been educating writers about the publishing industry. For the first ten years, most conversations centered on how to write better, find an agent, and get a book published (and then another). The big question on every writer's mind was: Do I have what it takes? And I would retort with: Do you have grit? Because dogged persistence was the biggest commonality I saw among successful writers, at least those who could be said to make a "living" at it.

By 2008, the weight of the conversation had shifted to print versus digital challenges. Many of us, both inside and outside the industry, have become consumed by the question of how long print will last, how much we have to compromise our writing and editing time to cultivate an

online presence, and if it's the "most exciting time" to be in publishing or actually the worst.

We've all been in that conversation where we've made a proclamation about whether we favor print or digital, and when we favor it, and why we favor it. We muse on the difference in hand feel, smell, navigational memory, marginalia, and attention. And all of these things are intertwined with childhood associations, emotional milestones, and matters of personal identity.

But this talk is ultimately a distraction from the real challenges faced both by writers and publications—and especially by literary publishing. The problem is not whether print will survive, but how literary publishing adapts to a world where to publish something has lost value."

That's all that the print vs digital debate is: a distraction.

Contrary to what Friedman suggests I think the digital area of publishing *is* how the publishing industry has adapted to a world where literary publishing has lost value. Digital print media *is* the publishing industry, a younger & newer version of its which evolved as the times did. If it truly does happen, which at the moment seems unlikely, even the extinction of print media in its entirety won't necessarily be disruptive to the industry itself. Because by then the industry itself will also have migrated to the platforms that work, & the assimilation of both mediums will come naturally; one will dissolve into the other, & to say that the fitter industry survived would be like saying we rendered our ancestors obsolete.

So no, publishing in the 21st century may teeter on the verge of becoming something new, but change is not what threatens it. It never is.

THE SECTOR

"Currently the sector is witnessing a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 30%. The importance of the Indian market has been recognised the world over, to the extent that India was the market focus at the 2009 London Book Fair. From a humble start under British scrutiny, the sector presently produces 90,000 new books a year in 24 languages including English.

The Indian publishing market is non-homogenous and is structured according to region and language. The 24 Indian languages including English give ample scope and variety to the Indian publishing industry. More than half of the total titles published in India are in Hindi and English, with Hindi constituting about 26%, followed by English at 24%. The textbook market in India is dominated by the government. Prior to the setting up of the NCERT in 1961, the textbook market in India was dominated by a handful of foreign publishers. Currently, the government (NCERT, State Text Book Boards, NBT, and Publishing Division, combined) is the largest publisher in the country.

The Government allows 100 percent FDI to publishing houses across the country to make India a publishing hub, by utilising the vast English-speaking technical manpower. There is a huge scarcity of researched data on the publishing industry. Various estimates have been put forward as to the capacity of the sector. However, most fall short of providing the true potential of the sector. In view of this limitation and the fact that the knowledge sector in India is growing at an exponential rate, we can clearly opine that the Indian publishing industry in India is truly a colossus—a giant in slumber, which needs to be awakened and given its due status and identity" ^[1]

Though the data has changed over the years since it was written, FICCI's article provides a comprehensive analysis of the publishing sector in India. Every analyst describes the industry as one that is perceived as dying when in fact it is flourishing. Yet every single one of them is convinced that the industry's performance is nothing to be ecstatic about. Because the industry is overlooked. Its performance is *nothing* compared to the absolute magnanimity that is its unrealized potential.

So what is the problem?

Dyuti Mishra's article ^[2] in conversation with Meghna Pant (right) attempts to answer this question, & raises a few more. The major issues brought to light from a publishing expert's point-of-view, were lack of transparency b/w author & publisher, broken distribution channels, & the increase in uninnovative formulaic writing due to the rise of bestseller culture. This is explained comprehensively in the article.



Another surprising, & also consistent opinion maintained by the publishing experts in a number of interviews, is that the publisher's profit margin is lower than most think, & argues that digital adaptations, vendors & distributors take away a significant cut. This comes in contrast with FICCI's data that suggests that foreign publishing houses, which thrive in India, not only make large numbers & also keep the lion's share. Hence India forms a great i.e. profitable market for foreign publishing houses, yet it isn't for publishers, both big & small, in India itself. India's inadvertent tendency to be the golden goose for 1st world nations is perhaps the unsolved mystery the Indian economy most needs to unravel.

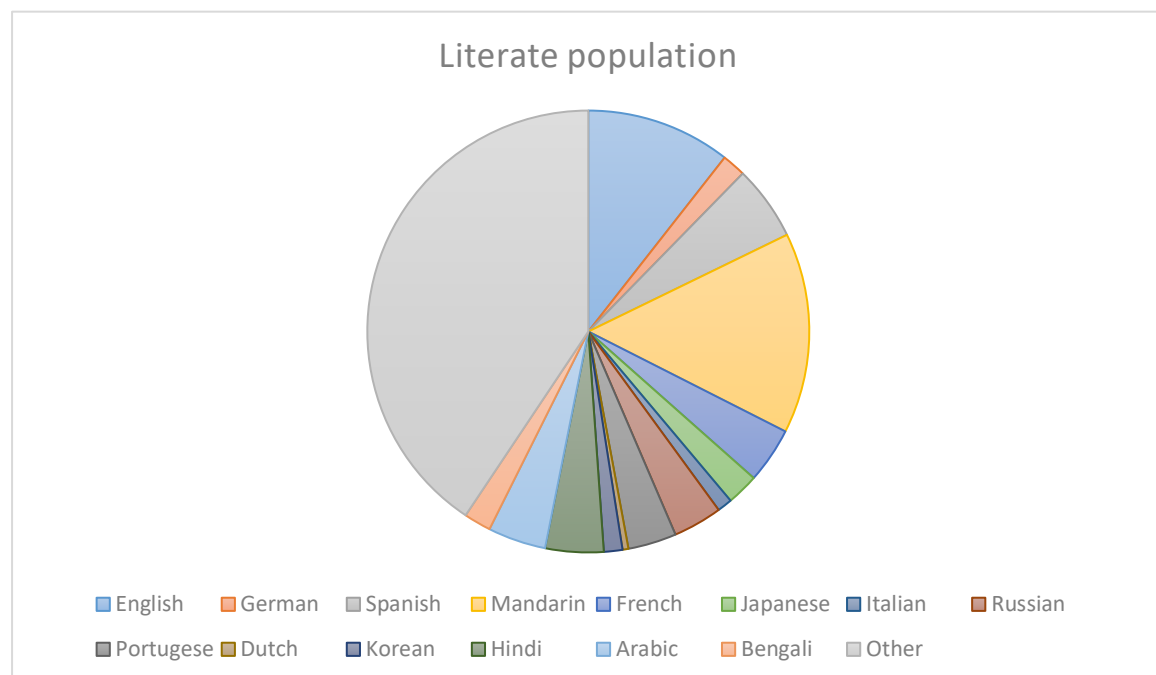
THE MARKET – SUPPLY & DEMAND

"Publishers are feeling the pressure to put out more books each year, but this has skewed the supply-demand ratio. Do you think this model is a sustainable way forward or will smaller publishers be affected?"

According to the India Book Market Report (2016), India is the sixth largest publisher in the world overall, and the second largest publisher in the world for English-language books. That's huge! Led by educational books, publishing is a \$6.76 billion sector expected to grow at an astounding 19.3% until 2020 (Nielsen Report, 2016). This means almost 250 books are published per day. 55% sales are of English books, 35% of Hindi, and the rest are regional-language books. 65% of English-language sales come from Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Also, contrary to popular perception, on an average, Indians read around 2.1 books a week. According to World Culture Score Index, Indians spend more time reading than their counterparts globally.

So I don't think supply-demand is an issue; smaller publishers are cropping up almost everywhere. A good book will find a good audience no matter who the publisher is." ^[2]

As hinted at in the earlier section, the overwhelming majority of books & informative media being produced all over the world is in English. A language-wise comparison (next page) of number of speakers vs amount of information available per language further highlights the disproportionality that widely spoken non-European (& for a large part, non-English) languages face in the production sector.



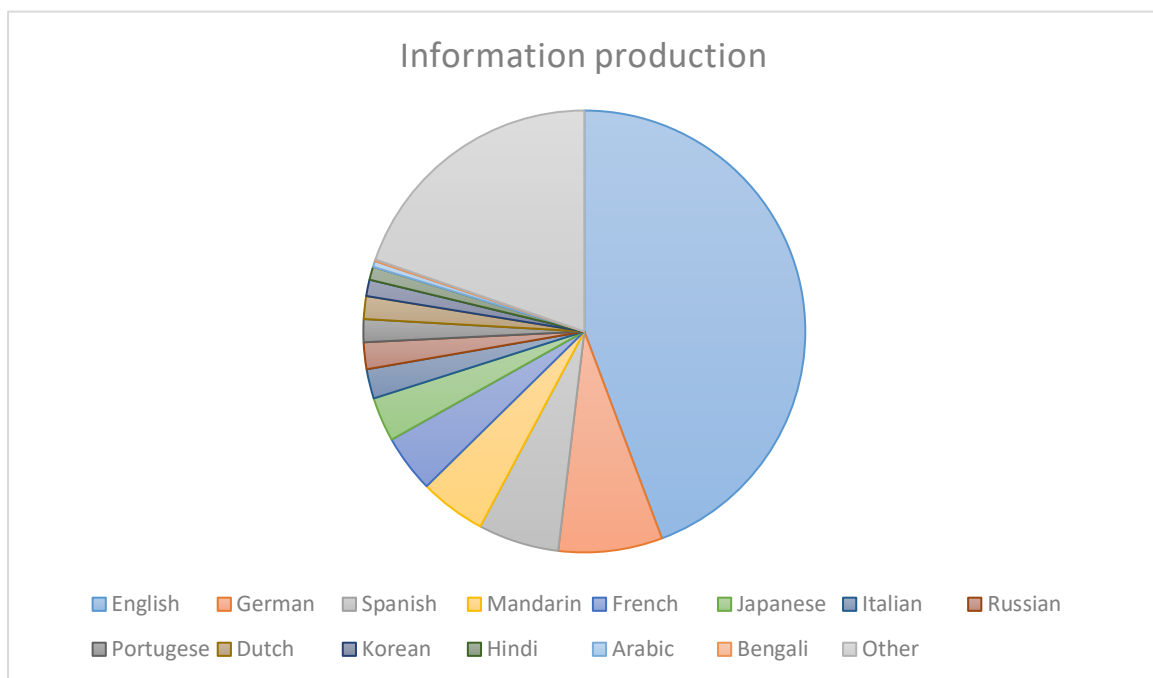
This population vs supply analysis was found already conducted in Sergey Lobache's paper, "Top languages in global information production" ^[12], which contains a medium as well a language wise analysis of information production.

With regard to what these numbers mean, here's the major conclusions drawn in the paper:

"First of all, they can measure the importance of a particular language. Its rank is not necessarily related to a percentage of the literate population, but rather depends upon the level of cultural and economic development of the countries where the language is used.

Secondly, they underline the gap between the users of information and available information resources. They clearly show how the "language divide" contributes to the exclusion of countries and peoples from universal knowledge. This primarily concerns countries with low literacy rates and poor education. At the same time, the educated community tends to view English as a universal language. Many countries have special programs which encourage citizens to achieve proficiency in English (Weber).⁶

Nevertheless, we need to realize that more than half of the world's information resources are produced in non-English languages. These resources will likely continue to grow in the near future. The "Global Trends 2025" report, recently released by the US National Intelligence Council, projected the increasing role of Brazil, Russia, China and India in the world economy (BBC News). If this forecast is true, we may expect the rise of information production in Portuguese, Russian and Chinese.



This trend must be taken seriously by publishers and vendors in English-speaking countries, where non-English resources are largely ignored. According to the Bowker publishing group, only 3 % of all books available for sale in the United States are new translations from other languages (English-Speaking Countries). The term "language divide" can be equally applied to the English-speaking world.

There are many opportunities for librarians to respond to the challenges of multilingualism in information production. One of them is by providing equal access to information resources regardless of the language of origin. Today, however, most widely-distributed indexing databases cover primarily English content. Non-English materials are not fully searchable, and access to full-text electronic articles from non-English periodicals is not always available."

The most bizarre aspect of this depressing, if understandable result of centuries worth of colonial imperialism & systemic dehumanization of non-European people & cultures is perhaps that the nations who speak languages that dominate information production in written format as well as all others, to put it mildly, aren't even the ones reading.

This is explained & discussed in detail later in the Audience subsection, which establishes that reading actually forms an intrinsic part of India's cultural identity, & so apparently does it for a lot more nations with pasts filled with colonial horrors as tragic (if not more) than ours.

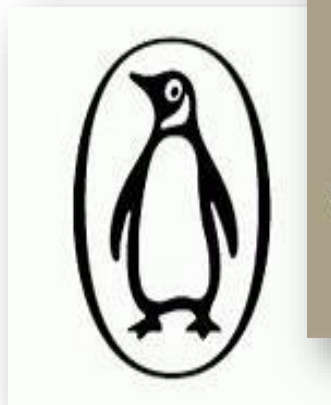
The Publishers – Rough time surviving in a business that's thriving

The Indian publishing market, when it comes to big names & bigger numbers, is dominated by foreign companies. It is telling that the top 5 of the 9 bestselling Indian publishing houses in 2020 are foreign companies. While the government allows 100% FDI to publishing houses, the Indian book industry itself receives no direct investment from the government, despite the industry not only being worth Rs. 261 billion (as of 2015), but also having emerged as an instrumental category for e-commerce business, accounting for 15 per cent of the overall e-commerce trade, just trailing behind electronics (34 per cent) and apparel and accessories (30 per cent).^[6]

The government's apparent unawareness of the publishing industry seems almost bizarre considering that the primary goals in its economic strategy- education & digitization- are both intrinsically linked with books.

The lack of investment from the government isn't the only hurdle faced by publishers; there is also a dearth of fresh content (elaborated in the next subsection), contorted distribution channels, piracy, the extension of a publisher's job to sales of rights to visual media producers, & a lot more. Most daunting, perhaps, is again the fact that there is a huge scarcity of researched data on the publishing industry. Even researching for this article, it was enormously difficult to find credible sources as there almost *are none*. The *only* formal study providing a comprehensive analysis of this sleeping giant along with credible figures this decade was the 2015 Nielson Book report, the data from which has been quoted by every expert thereafter paraphrased here.

Going back to the sectorial domination by multinational corporations & multi-media conglomerates, there is, I think, an intense hypocrisy to publishers complaining about formulaic fiction & the lack of originality in



through the last decade has been to turn the publishing industry into a monopolistic competition, where uniqueness goes to die.

A monopolistic competition is by definition (more or less) the kind of imperfect competition where variety both exists & doesn't. In 2013, Random House & Penguin Group merged to form the multinational conglomerate publishing company, Penguin Random House (1 of the 5

companies mentioned before). In July 2018, Penguin Random House acquired Hind Pocket Books, one of the oldest Hindi

language publishers in the country.

"The acquisition of Hind Pocket Books should give the company the access to an enviable backlist of titles. Penguin started its Hindi publishing programme in India in 2005, and has built a significant catalogue of titles over the years. Established in 1958, Hind Pocket Books is widely considered a pioneer in publishing Hindi and Urdu paperbacks in India, and has an impressive list of critically acclaimed and commercially successful titles."^[14] There is no reason to believe it will stop there.

Sooner than later the publishing industry in India is going to be structured no differently than the fast food market, or toiletries; 5 companies fighting it out for the top spot as thousands of others struggle to

survive. A monopolistic completion. And what is the identifying feature of a monopolistic completion? Products which are *differentiated* rather than *different*.

There are no words more perfect to describe this than tumblr user quoms' critique (below left) of unconventionally spelt names in upper class Caucasian families ^[15]:



quoms

The thing about Those White People Baby Names is the way they so poetically express the tension between individuality and rigid conformity. These parents all want to name their child something unique, because they value the *concept* of uniqueness, yet simultaneously they abhor it in practice... ergo, 30 different spelling variations on the most normative possible names. This homogeneity-masquerading-as-diversity is inseparable from capitalist consumer culture and in fact is directly analogous to the experience of walking into a grocery store and being asked to "choose" between 50 varieties of toothpaste with the same exact ingredients, 12 brands of laundry detergent, etc.

"This homogeneity-masquerading-as-diversity is inseparable from capitalist consumer culture and in fact is directly analogous to the experience of walking into a grocery store and being asked to "choose" between 50 varieties of toothpaste with the same exact ingredients, 12 brands of laundry detergent, etc."

The core of business structure & mode of competition in Publishing right now is what has made it impossible for unique content to thrive except in outlying cases. The very practices that have brought the industry this far (profit wise) are what prevent it from moving forward.

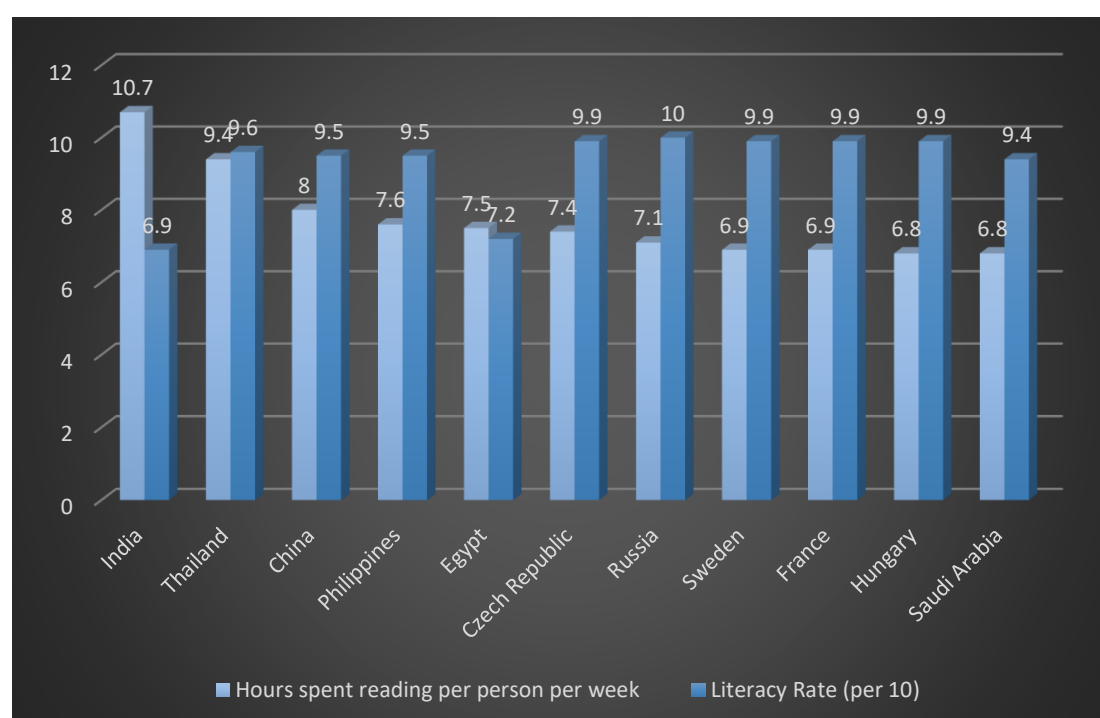
The Audience - who's reading?

The Indian readership reads more than anywhere else in the world, clocking in at over 10 hours per week according to the NOP World Culture Score Index, including all forms of reading. ^[3]

This in spite of the fact that India's literacy rate at 69% ^[4] is considerably below the world average (86.3% as of 2015. ^[5])

Further analysing the NOP World Culture Score Index, here's the top ten countries ranked on the basis of average time spent reading per week per citizen, juxtaposed with their respective literacy rates.

India — 10 hours, 42 minutes per week = 10.7hrs
Thailand — 9 hours, 24 minutes = 9.4hrs
China — 8 hours = 8hrs
Philippines — 7 hours, 36 minutes = 7.6hrs
Egypt — 7 hours, 30 minutes = 7.5hrs
Czech Republic — 7 hours, 24 minutes = 7.4hrs
Russia — 7 hours, 06 minutes = 7.1hrs
Sweden, France — 6 hours, 54 minutes = 6.9hrs
Hungary, Saudi Arabia — 6 hours, 48 minutes = 6.8hrs ^[11]



It is interesting to note that amongst an overwhelming majority of nations with excellent literacy rates ^[4], a country that decimates them in terms of actual reading, has one far below decent. This data might appear to validate the idea that there is some inherent correlation between literacy, & literary consumers, i.e. the ability to read, & the desire to, beyond the obvious.

But a closer look at the literacy rates all over the world, & the remaining 20 ranks on the NOP index reveals that while the absurdity of a country with the disdainful literacy rate of *sixty-nine per cent* winning the reading race is of way higher a degree than can or should be overlooked, a significantly more accurate conclusion to draw would be that the consumption of published media is not linked with

development so much as it is with culture (unlike the *production* of it, which can be overwhelmingly associated with the languages of 1st world countries) .

The nature vs nurture debate is pointless. Neither exists. But if it did, reading would be ingrained in the very nature of Indians, more of a paradox than they are a people, for the same culture that has allowed itself to be consumed by frivolous & shallow ideas of modernity & development, & in the name of those is complacent with depriving the poor of all the dignities it grants the rich; a system of oppression that thrives on ignorance, is the same one that has & continues to place insurmountable value in seeking knowledge.

Simply put, everyone in India who can read, is reading. Enough to make up for the 31% that can't. The Indian audience is hungry to read, devouring words faster than authors are able to create them. "A good book will find a good audience." Yet who decides what a good writer is, anyway. Views on whether or not there is a content crisis in India found in one source differ diametrically from another. Publisher's cry of an unending ocean of formulaic fiction & meaningless self-help garbage while struggling authors claim that publishing houses *choose* to favour uncreative work as it makes an easy bestseller.

As things are it seems as if the audience will read what they get, & what makes a good book is good numbers. The sheer amount of English language readers in particular is overwhelming, & hope for a literary resurgence of regional languages is little to none, so the trend is likely to grow.

THE HISTORY

India's love affair with publishing is as old as the country itself & just as romantic. As many revolutions here have been fought & won through the written word as with blood the world over. Because Indians, human as they are, have always rebelled. And they have always read.

But publishing, of all things, is rarely seen as a tool for revolution. For me, it is near impossible to see it as anything but. The unlikely pairing put its feet down on the ground in my mind & took root, a decade ago when we were taught a poem titled 'Vidroh Karo' a literal imploration to 'Revolt' as part of our Hindi curriculum, before I even understood what it was that I had managed to understand.

Think back to the last calendar you saw, & the one before that & the one before that. Go back far enough & you've probably seen enough Goddesses to bless your today. Something that would've been unimaginable little over a century ago. Something that would've gotten you cast out of society, your home burnt down & your family ostracized. And it did. Raja Ravi Varma's printing press went down in flames because he broke the rules. The religious elite liked to keep the temples to themselves; Varma brought the temples home.



Saraswati by Raja Ravi Varma^[7] (Left)



Lakshmi by Raja Ravi Varma^[7] (Right)

Varma's publishings were an act of defiance, his prints an answer to those rich & powerful, at the top of the social hierarchy deciding that those they saw as lesser didn't deserve the means or the right to worship. They were a reminder that the Gods weren't theirs to own.

The very nature of print culture is to transcend boundaries & *reach* the people. Accessibility is the cornerstone of publishing. Print came as an alternative to canvas paintings & manuscripts, it was cheaper, it was affordable & it was meant for the commoner in the beginnings of modern society where the commoner wasn't yet defined.

New Order Old Order



"Machine room. In the printing press in Mangalore (India)." [8]

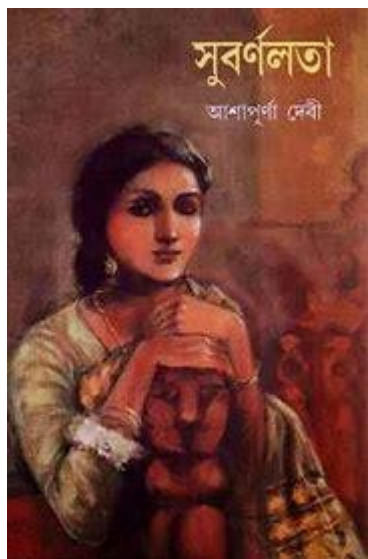


Ancient Manuscript Review 99: Antique Indian Pakistan Quran (1867 CE) [9]

But society's structure has evolved, & now publishing has become a part of the world it exists in. Mass communication is no longer a radical concept & publishing isn't a radical industry for being a medium of it. Interestingly enough, as the world around it evolved, so did the publishing industry so as to *not* be compatible with it. As it became acceptable to publish art in general the industry started looking for art that wasn't.

Saadat Hassan Manto, in his bitter & disturbing criticisms of the uglier facets of a people, was a writer who was accused of obscenity & vulgarity. His works were found to be *legally questionable*, & yet he not only found publishers for his collections but also regularly wrote stories for magazines & newspapers, everyday publishings read by everyday people. He fought those demanding censorship of his works that reached print *uncensored*, & were read by the commoner in all their vulgarity & truth.

Ismat Chughtai, a God among men, wrote of a freedom different from the one she & those around her were fighting for. One we're still searching for today. Rabindranath Tagore wrote with the privilege to empathize, Premchand reinvented the Hindi novel with stories of the pain & suffering of the people no



The second book in Ashapurna Devi's most famous trilogy (Satyavati Trilogy: Pratham Pratishruti - Subarnalata - Bakul Kotha), Subarnalata is the story of Satyavati's daughter, & of her lonely struggle in search of identity, amid overwhelmingly orthodox individuals and mindsets.

one should've cared about, Ashapurna Devi wrote of adversity in the mundane; deeming the lives shoved down the throats of women unacceptable when accepting them was the only thing allowed. These are some of the most celebrated authors of modern time, people that would not be allowed to exist today as they did then. All of them masters, all of them misfits.

Indian history is a rich & impossibly potent concentrate of people *revolutionizing* the idea of society over & over again through the power of art & literature that *reaches the masses*. Literature isn't just a part of Indian culture it's a limb. What makes books & stories & poetry & paintings a matter of pride & arrogance for it, & precisely what fascistic-patriots & the snub nosed gate keepers of learning fail to either realize or remember, is not the inherent *greatness* of Indian minds but their fierce refusal to comply with literary elitism. That is why mutiny is so deeply ingrained within publishing in India; its very existence is a rebellion against *itself*.

Because the dichotomy of publishing is that while it is the medium that connects the art to the viewer, it is also the only thing that can come between them. And every day it has to fight to be the former, against the part of itself that knows it has the power to become the latter.

Publishing has *always* gravitated towards doing the wrong (right) thing. It's the black sheep of the economy. And yet looking at it now neither structure nor content is revolutionary. Now people are disappointed in it because it isn't minting as much money as it might be capable of. Because it's not profiting enough. Like every other industry in existence. Like the driving force of our economy.

The question never was why the publishing industry is not pushing numbers bigger than 739 *billion* even if people suspect it can, because it doesn't matter if it does. The industry failed the day we decided it needed to, to matter.

And one might argue that critiquing an industry for wanting to be an industry, for wanting to make money is the kind of thought that stems from a righteousness that is both moronic & pretentious. Because isn't that just what an industry is? Making as much money off of as little resources as possible?

And one shouldn't, because no, it's not. That's what the definition of a business is, in a *capitalist* economy. An industry aims to maximise *production* at the cost of minimal resources. An industry it will be, so long as it is producing & we are consuming.

The issue is simply that by forcing this one of a kind industry to fit into this hilariously narrow & arguably inaccurate idea of what economic efficiency is, we are the ones who've ensured that it cannot possibly fulfil the enormous potential that we so want it to. We've limited the area of its performance down to just one, superficial, relatively meaningless criterion where it is already excelling. Of course that's not enough, profit never is.

Isn't it funny that in a country that is already fighting an uphill battle to hold on to its socialist roots, the *one* industry that has, through history, managed to define itself based on something other than capital returns, is only relevant because it might take over there, too? Isn't it funny that a people can look at a sector that forms a macrocosm within their culture, is skeletal to their identity, & is worth the numbers 7, 3, 9 followed by *nine zeroes*, & decide it would only be worth caring about if it brought in *more money*?

Isn't it funny that whenever we hear the words "unrealized potential" we assume it means "unrealized financial potential"? Because that is the only kind that is allowed to exist; the only kind that matters.

The greatest tragedy of the Indian Economy is not that all of one of its great many industries won't fit in. It's that after so, so many years of feeling the heat & refusing to conform, maybe today, it finally does.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions everything covered in the preceding sections & subsections have been drawn within the sections themselves. I have already said most everything that could be said with regard to the information in question, so this will be short.

I think publishing should be a state funded industry. "Funded" being key as I think production as well as content should continue to be monitored by the people who've been doing it thus far. State mandated censorship, or any form of censorship for that matter, should be out of the question.

Obviously, that's not happening.

The government is not investing in publishing & it expects the public to be complicit with that. And we are. We're okay with it.

"The government is doing its best", "There isn't enough money", "Informative media shouldn't be priority spending", "Corruption is rampant, progress is impractical", etc.

We come up with reasons as to why the government's inaction is either justifiable or unsurprising. Every single one of its impressively voluminous stockpile of failures is met with either diplomacy or indifference.



Gulshan Books in Jammu & Kashmir donated over a 1000 titles to the coronavirus quarantine facilities in the valley. [16]

The government *earns* off of the print industry. Though on the surface books face no GST, their raw materials do. So not only is there a direct revenue stream moving from the now largely corporatized publishing sector to the government, there is also the pretence that books are tax free.

Without investment in information production, the Right to Education is a joke, & the steady metamorphosis of the State to something less than democratic is highlighted by its inability to resist influencing & whitewashing curriculum where & when it makes it look bad.

With the covid-19 pandemic, as with any other human catastrophe, the general public were expected to reach out with cash & kindness, as they should've been. Among the various donations then, were books; donated to

the quarantined. But the government subscribes to no such niceties. Because the government isn't supposed to be kind. It's supposed to try to do the bare minimum & be provided with leniencies when it fails.

In a country where crores of people are still fighting for the right to eat, to defecate, to menstruate, to *live*, the entity responsible gets to pretend that denying a person the right to read is not the same as denying them the right to human dignity. Because so much else comes closer. And we have to ask ourselves why we revere that entity as more than the sum of us & still allow it to be less than human.

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