

## Scenario of Book Publishing and Trade in India

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Books and other printed material is a significant activity in any civilized society. These are important and rather indispensable source of preservation and dissemination of knowledge. These are the media through which knowledge can be spread in all parts of the country (world).

Books remain essential tools for preserving and diffusing the world's storehouse of knowledge. Books are also the simplest, readily accessible and most inexpensive means by which knowledge can be spread in all spheres of activity. To keep in touch with increasing knowledge, changing thoughts and culture it is essential that good books are published. As UNESCO describes, "A book is a non-periodical printed publication of at least 49 pages excluding the cover page, published in the country and made available to public".

Publication in Indian languages, especially religious literature, can be traced back to 17<sup>th</sup> century, but Indian publishing took place only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the early phase, the publishing industry in India was largely controlled by British publishers who concentrated on publishing school textbooks. In addition to this, there were some religious books and stray works of fiction and literary criticism. It is only after Independence the publishing industry in India was able to strengthen its base and grew from strength to strengths.

During 60's, a number of Publishing Houses in English language were established in India to follow the lead of Asia Publishing House of the 60's. Many publishers who were previously involved only in Indian languages or confined their activities to textbook publishing, started publishing in English and took up general publishing as well. American publishers also entered the Indian market in a big way after Independence. Many of these companies are now undertaking publication of books by Indian authors on a large scale.

Publishing is the activity that involves the selection, preparation and marketing of printed matter. It has grown from small and ancient beginnings into a vast and complex

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industry responsible for the dissemination of all manner of cultural material from the most lofty to the most tribal; its impact upon civilization is impossible to calculate.<sup>1</sup>

About 50,000 new books and 13,000 journals and magazines are being published in India every year by more than 13,000 publishers in English and other regional languages, both by the public and private sectors.<sup>2</sup> In 1973, India published a total of 15,802 books as stated by UNESCO. In fact, during the period 1984-1993, there were wide fluctuations in the number of subject-wise titles published in the country as can be seen from the table below:

**Table - 1**  
**Subject Book Production in India by Groups**  
**(Number of Titles)**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>1984</b>	<b>1986</b>	<b>1987</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1991</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>
Generalities	285	268	363	301	261	294	214	231	219	307	382
Philosophy	378	400	550	483	447	383	449	418	399	412	377
Religion	814	1057	1345	1242	1065	905	807	907	769	848	948
Social Sciences	2580	3264	4495	4160	3342	2805	3204	3254	3399	2188	2501
Philology	132	188	302	271	217	195	197	200	196	233	150
Pure Sciences	409	562	569	547	528	444	397	463	543	584	486
Applied Sciences	1114	1435	1459	1345	865	3367	3864	4747	1441	1183	1278
Arts	297	284	350	349	323	341	331	366	356	297	274
Literature	3161	4171	4193	4267	3591	3989	3746	3887	4309	4350	4078
Geography/ History	784	914	1239	1443	1212	1214	1229	1305	1040	1058	1169
<b>Total</b>	<b>9954</b>	<b>12543</b>	<b>14965</b>	<b>14408</b>	<b>11851</b>	<b>13937</b>	<b>14438</b>	<b>15778</b>	<b>12768</b>	<b>11460</b>	<b>11643</b>

Source : (a) United Nations Statistical Yearbooks 1986-1996.  
(b) UNESCO Statistical Yearbooks 1986-1997.

Note : Data do not include School textbooks, pamphlets, government publications and university theses.

India ranks third in the world as a producer of English language books after the United States and the United Kingdom. Germany, France, Japan, the United Kingdom

and the United States are among the top publishing countries in the world followed by China, Egypt, India, Russia, Spain. Several others are also accountable for a significant proportion of the world's book production.<sup>3</sup> Some leading book producing countries and India's place in it is given below:

**Table - 2**  
**Book Production of Selected Countries**  
**(Number of Titles by UDC Classes)**

Country	1984	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
USA	—	—	—	—	—	46743	48146	49276	49757	51863	62039
UK	51411	—	—	—	—	—	—	86573	—	95015	101764
India	9954	12543	14965	14408	11851	13937	14438	15778	12768	11460	11643
USSR	82790	83472	83011	—	76711	—	—	28716	26017	30390	33623
France	37189	32934	43505	39026	40115	41720	43682	45379	41234	45311	34766
F.R.G.	61015	63724	65670	68611	65980	61015	67890	67277	67206	70643	74174
Japan	—	44686	36346	—	—	—	—	35496	—	—	—
Spain	30764	38405	38302	35426	38353	36239	39082	41816	40758	44261	48467
Egypt	1277	141	1276	1451	—	—	—	—	3108	—	—

Source : (a) United Nations Statistical Yearbooks 1986-1996.  
(b) UNESCO Statistical Yearbooks 1986-1997.

Note : Data do not include School textbooks, pamphlets, government publications and university theses.

Like any other commodity, demand for books is expected to depend amongst other things, be on the demand and specially on price. The overall demand for books can be expected to vary with the level of education. The larger the number of educated people in society, the larger will be the demand for books.

### 1.1 Process of Book Publishing

Publishing has a key role in the economic growth and writing is the media for expression and development of the culture. The impact of publishing on writing is well

known as Per I. Gedin put it simply, “Without a publisher there is no book. The publisher can be seen as a conductor of a symphony orchestra. He doesn’t compose the music nor does he play it. But without him there is not a sound.”<sup>4</sup>

Publishers play an important role in book publishing while the author is producing the manuscript on which publishing depends, it is the publisher who undertakes the responsibility of publishing. “A publisher is one who brings out at least four titles a year.” (UNESCO definition)

Following three are the publisher’s activities :

1. Acquisition of manuscripts for publication,
2. Production of the manuscripts in book form, and
3. Distributing and selling them.

Editing of a manuscript is very important as the final quality of the book greatly depends on good editing. Editing of a manuscript is necessary to ascertain that the manuscript is factually correct and that it is according to diction and style. The editor has to see to it that the author has used a uniform style regarding to abbreviations, headings, figures and punctuation. He has to ensure that there is no inherent inconsistency in the manuscript and the flow is free and smooth.

After editing the manuscript, the second stage in publishing is the despatch of the manuscript to the press for printing. Today, the publishing industry’s basic problem is paper which is a necessary ingredient in publishing. Not that paper is not available, but that it is not available at reasonable price. Availability of cheaper paper can help in reducing the cost of book. Paper and printing together account for about three-fourths of the cost of book production. Listed below are the elements that contribute to the cost of producing a book :

- A. Preparation of the manuscript :
  - (i) Cost of obtaining the manuscript;
  - (ii) Cost of reviewing and editing.
- B. Cost of printing :
  - (i) Cost of design and illustration (including Jackets design);
  - (ii) Cost of composing and printing;
  - (iii) Cost of paper ;
  - (iv) Cost of binding.
- C. Cost of distribution :
  - (i) Advertising and sales promotion; and
  - (ii) Discount;
  - (iii) Royalty;
  - (iv) Publisher’s profit;
  - (v) Labour and cartage, etc.

The publisher's success is fully dependent on the sale of books. If the sale channels are not systematic and worked proper, books published cannot be sold in larger quantity because of a missing link between the client and publisher. Published books are sold through the following channels :

1. Libraries
2. Government agencies
3. Booksellers and wholesalers, and
4. Individuals and book clubs.

In the book trade, the library plays a very important role. Most of the publishers sell their books through the libraries. Libraries buy books for the general circulation to the public or to students, depending upon the type of library. It is an admitted fact that the majority of the books published and sold in India find their way to libraries. Sale to individual customers are very limited.

After the book is published, it is distributed either by the publisher himself or through wholesalers and retailers. A publisher may have his own distribution network as part of his publishing organization or have an independent unit. There are some cases where publishers even have their own retail selling depots. A much lesser quantity of books are being sold to the government agencies. Again, part of the books purchased by the government agencies are meant for libraries. Similarly, many booksellers and wholesalers also sell a good part of their stock to libraries. The Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has set up a sales emporium, where books published by all public sector agencies are displayed and sold. Now government has become an important publisher. Government publications forming a good proportion of the total number of books published annually.

Government of India has founded institutions in the field of publishing such as the National Book Trust (NBT), National Council of Education, Research and Training (NCERT), Publications Division, Publication and Information Directorate, Sahitya Akademi, Lalit Kala Akademi, Children's Book Trust and a large number of research institutions like the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), and Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI), etc. all have their publication programs. Each of them tries to promote its books through its own effective distribution system.

Book clubs have become new avenues for distributing books in India. They offer price concessions to individual buyers if they undertake to purchase a minimum number of books within fixed period. Some book clubs require its members to pay in fixed monthly instalments. Book clubs shall provide a very useful link in books distribution because they cover the entire country through postal system. In fact, many people in remote corners of the country get books regularly only because of their membership with book clubs.

## 1.2 Key Book Promoters

Any plan to promote the book industry has to be backed with the creation of agencies to implement a programme of book promotion in our country. No specific steps were taken either by the Government or by the private publishers. Mere lip service will not work.

In the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, a separate Book Promotion Division has been set up with the objective of promoting standard books issued by Indian publishers. This division within its limited capacity, has undertaken some commendable measures to promote books such as:

1. Arranging foreign collaboration for providing inexpensive University level books for students;
2. Setting up a text-book reference library;
3. Creating a desk for copyright clearance in the Ministry;
4. Assisting in the establishment of University level courses in publishing;
5. Organizing seminars on publishing;
6. Organizing World Book Fairs in India and other exhibitions;

National Book Development Board was set up by the Government of India in 1967 to lay down guidelines for the development of the Indian book publishing and trade in the context of the overall requirements of country. The board consists of representatives from different sectors of the book industry - viz., publishers, authors, printers, booksellers and representatives of the various government and non-government agencies dealing with the implementation of book programs. The Board is assigned with the following functions:

1. to lay down guidelines for the development of book industry in the context of the overall requirements of the country, including those in the field of higher education;
2. to advise measures for the promotion of the book industry and trade;
3. to assess and advise in undertaking, organising and carrying out research into writing, marketing problems particularly in export areas;
4. to act as a clearing house of information on the latest developments in the skills and techniques of book publishing and distribution in advanced countries.

The National Book Trust (NBT), an autonomous organization was set up in 1957 with the objective of producing and encouraging production of good reading materials at moderate pricing and fostering book mindedness amongst the people. The activities of the NBT broadly are: to publish books; provide assistance to authors, illustrators and publishers, and to promote books. The NBT publishes books for general readers, on a variety of subjects in Assamese, Bengali, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu at affordable prices. Over 6500 titles in different languages have been published by the NBT. The trust provides financial assistance to authors, illustrators and publishers for bringing out reasonably priced textbooks and reference books for diploma, graduate and postgraduate levels; and for

publication of books for children and neo-literates. It promotes books and book reading habit among individuals all over the country by:

- i) organizing book fairs, festivals and exhibitions;
- ii) holding seminars, symposia and workshops;
- iii) providing financial assistance for organizing book fairs and exhibitions; and
- iv) sponsoring celebration of National Book Week.

It also promotes Indian books abroad by organizing India's participation in International book fairs in different countries.

The Publication Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India is the leading publishing organization set up in 1941 as a branch of the Bureau of Public Information, it acquired its present name and identity in 1944. During the last fifty years of Independence, this Division has assumed an important role in the field of production and distribution of books and journals on matters of national importance. The Division aims at dissemination of information to common people and provides informative and educative literature at reasonable price to readers all over the country.

During the year, the Division intensified its sale efforts and participated in 40 Book exhibitions up to October 1993. It publicised the publications of the Division in multi-media campaigns organized in coordination with other media units in different states. The Division participated in the New Delhi World Book Fair and earned a revenue of over Rs.4.24 lakh from sale of books. The Division carries out marketing of its books and journals through its own sales-outlets located at New Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, Chennai, Patna, Lucknow, Thiruvananthapuram and Hyderabad and through agents and booksellers. It also sell books of Government and semi-government organizations through its sales-outlets.

This Division earned a total revenue of Rs.933.53 lakh during April 1993 to January 1994 through sale of books, journals and Employment News. Employment News itself accounted for Rs.802.95 lakh.

## **2. EXPORT AND IMPORT OF BOOKS**

### **2.1 Export and Import Policy for Books**

Ministry of Commerce, Government of India has announced a new export and import policy for a period of 5 years effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1997. Under the new policy, any organization/individual is free to import and export of books on educational, scientific and technical subjects without any restriction. Import of other books is allowed only against a licence.<sup>5</sup> I

Imported books significantly supplement the output of the domestic book industry, while India's exports of books are not substantial but however they are on the

increase. Among the sample publishers, only about 20 percent units export books. The following table shows the imports and exports of India.

**Table - 3**  
**India's Imports and Exports**  
**Value (in Rs.)**

Year	Imports	Exports
1988-89	454798686	165163484
1989-90	263743118	192286778
1990-91	194627011	173019801
1991-92	140411071	239242162
1992-93	331949887	325174475
1993-94	263117058	419534096
1994-95	393195476	537246939
1995-96	524450294	740035230
1996-97	429066146	843286185

**Source : Monthly Foreign Trade Statistics of India 1989-1997.**

Note: Data do not include the import and export of pamphlets, booklets, directories, encyclopaedias, journals and periodicals and newspapers also.

Imports are generally allowed by Government against licences issued to established importers on the basis of the previous year's performance. They get a credit of 90 to 120 days and even 180 days in some cases.

There is a general feeling that wholesalers reap large profits on imported books i.e. 40% discount, freight on an average swallows 10% to 15% depending on the bulkiness of imports, the area from which it comes and the mode of transportation, retailers are allowed on an average 20% discount, and overheads come to nearly 10%.

India's major sources of imports of printed books, newspapers, journals, etc. are: UK, USA, Germany, Singapore, Hong Kong, Japan, Netherlands, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, China, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Egypt, U.A.E., Germany, Spain, Korea, Philippines, Portugal, France, Australia, Thailand, etc.



## **2.2 Exports**

Compare to import of books, India's export of books are not substantial. During 1986-87, Indian books were being exported to over 80 countries throughout the world. Government of India has been taking tremendous efforts for the promotion of export of books and other printed material. At present India is exporting its books to 120 countries in the world.<sup>6</sup> One fourths part of books exports to USA and nearly a one tenth to the UK, the rest go mainly to Bangladesh, Canada, Singapore, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Australia, Philippines, France, Norway, South Africa, Switzerland, U.A.E., Venezuela, Uganda, Zambia, Spain, China, Netherlands, Zimbabwe, Malaysia, Denmark, Nigeria, Brazil, etc. While majority of books exported are in English, Tamil books are also exported in substantial numbers to Malaysia, Singapore and Ceylon. The subjects covered include philosophy, religion, science and the humanities.

No single method is followed in locating markets abroad. The Indian exporters prepare and periodically update the mailing list of potential buyers viz., Universities, booksellers and institutions. The Chemicals and Allied Products Export Promotion Council (CAPEXIL), also provides the list of potential importers.

Most books imported from India are on the basis of subject matters rather than on the reputation of its authors. Export discount varies from 40% to 50% and may go even up to 55%. Very few exporters allow less than 40% discount. The usual credit period allowed to the importer is between 120 and 180 days. The Reserve Bank of India stipulates that it should not exceed 180 days. The book is normally sent by sea. It may take about three months to reach its destination.

The Ministry of Education, Government of India has an Export Promotion Division. Among the main activities of this Division is the market survey information obtained from Embassies is being circulated to publishers through their Federations. Foreign buyers replace their orders to a great extent, on the basis of "Indian National Bibliography". Therefore, nearly 60% of the sales of "Indian National Bibliography" are in abroad.

Publishers in most Indian languages find it difficult to export the publications because their clientele in foreign countries comprises the Indian emigrants who are scattered over a number of countries. Publishers find it difficult to approach them and seeks export orders.

## **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that the book publishing industry of India faces numerous obstacles. The major problem behind the publishing industry is the inadequacy of financial investment. As Yusuf Tanko has said, "A permanent solution to book scarcity is not mass importation of books but investment and encouragement of the publishing business."<sup>7</sup> The development of publishing industry widely depends upon the population, literacy rates, income levels, the use of world language, existence of publishing infrastructure, etc.

Other problem of indigenous publishing in India is the lack of trained personnel in the publishing, book selling, printing and binding industries who can perhaps be sponsored to visit developed nations, particularly to study alternative for low cost

production methods. No doubt, Indian publishing industry has made efforts to improve the quality of its books and publications, but there is still a need to conduct the training courses in publishing and marketing of books and other publications. There is a need to make efforts to search for new markets for exports.

The innovation of new technologies like computers, desktop publishing, reprography, etc. have changed the ways and means of publication. These technologies have reduced the cost of producing books. The entrance of electronic media like Internet, fax, telex, e-mail, scanners etc. has brought a significant change in the publishing, marketing and distribution of books. To promote the trade of books and other publications it is necessary that we should keep ourselves acquainted with the latest technologies and economic activities of the country which are mainly responsible towards the growth and promotion of book production/book publishing.

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