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# India literature and publishing sector study

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## Note from the authors

This research was undertaken on behalf of the literature team at the British Council, and has been presented in the form of a long report. This research summary containing an introduction to the study, key findings and recommendations has been prepared to accompany the longer report and may be shared with external partners. Some of the insights shared may require more context, and in such a case the reader may reach out to the British Council for access to the full 100-page report.

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## Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the British Council or of any organisation mentioned. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this paper, however the research is subject to uncertainties that are beyond the author's ability to control or estimate precisely. Neither the author nor the British Council assumes any warranty for the accuracy, completeness or use of the findings. Readers are responsible for assessing the relevance and accuracy of the content of this research.

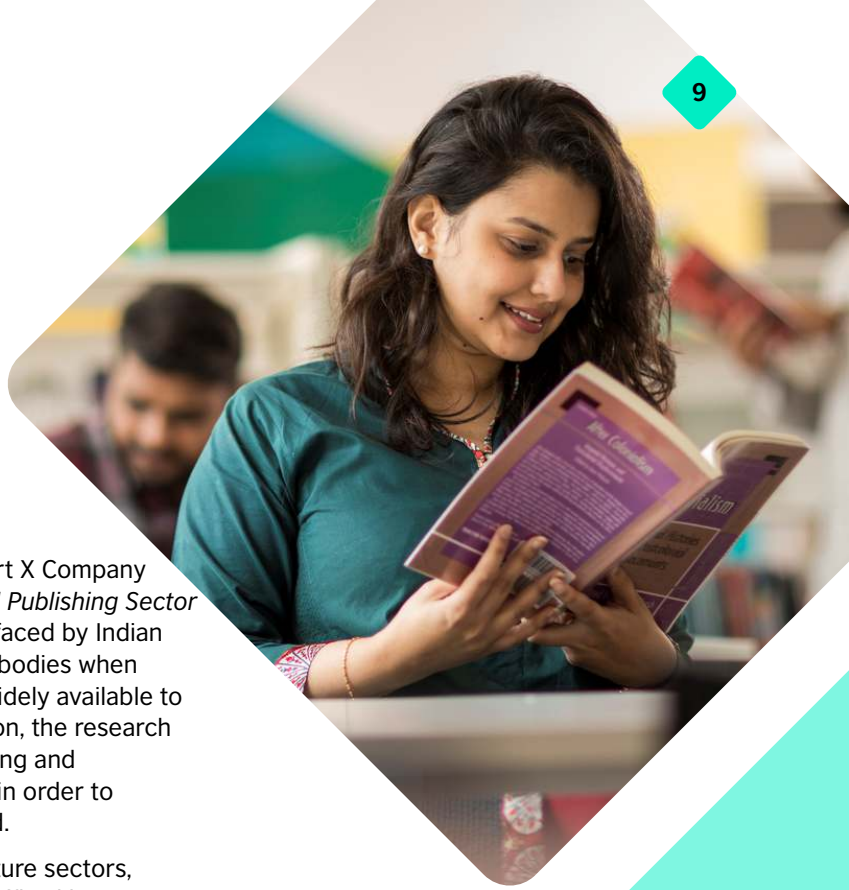
# Acronyms and key terminology

<b>AI</b>	Advance Information
<b>API</b>	Association of Publishers in India
<b>BAPASI</b>	Book Sellers and Publishers Association of South India
<b>CAPEXIL</b>	Chemical and Allied Export Promotion Council of India
<b>CIIL</b>	Central Institute of Indian Languages
<b>FGD</b>	Focus Group Discussion
<b>FIP</b>	Federation of Indian Publishers
<b>FPBAI</b>	Federation Publishers' & Booksellers Associations in India
<b>HEI</b>	Higher Education Institute
<b>ICCR</b>	Indian Council for Cultural Relations
<b>IITI</b>	Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation
<b>ILA</b>	Indian Literature Abroad
<b>ILET</b>	Indian Literature in English Translation
<b>INB</b>	Indian National Bibliography
<b>ITAINDIA</b>	Indian Translator's Association India
<b>ITPO</b>	International Trade Organization of India
<b>MHRD</b>	Ministry of Human Resources Development
<b>MNC</b>	Multinational Company
<b>NBT</b>	National Book Trust
<b>NBS</b>	National Book Stall
<b>NEP</b>	New Education Policy
<b>OTT</b>	Over The Top
<b>PBAB</b>	Publishers and Booksellers Association of Bengal
<b>PBG</b>	Publishers and Booksellers Guild
<b>PGDBP</b>	Post-Graduate Diploma in Book Publishing
<b>RRRLF</b>	Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation
<b>RTI</b>	Right to Information
<b>SA</b>	Sahitya Akademi
<b>SPCS</b>	Sahitya Pravarthaka Cooperative Society
<b>USP</b>	Unique Selling Proposition





# Executive summary



In late 2020, the British Council commissioned the Art X Company to undertake a research study — *India Literature and Publishing Sector Research* — aimed at understanding the challenges faced by Indian publishers, agents, authors, translators and industry bodies when making literature written in Indian languages more widely available to an international English-speaking audience. In addition, the research outcome included identifying opportunities for working and collaborating more globally, specifically with the UK, in order to promote Indian literature in translation going forward.

The study covered Indian trade publishing and literature sectors, particularly with stakeholders that work with India's official languages (excluding English), and included 100 respondents across in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). The aims of the project were:

1. To understand the challenges faced by Indian publishers, agents, authors, translators and industry bodies in making literature written in Indian languages more widely available to an international audience;
2. To identify opportunities for working and collaborating more globally, specifically with the UK, in order to promote Indian literature in translation.

The research covered ten target cities/States, namely, Delhi, Rajasthan, West Bengal (Kolkata), Orissa, Assam (Guwahati), Maharashtra, Kerala (Kochi), Karnataka (Bangalore), Chennai and Hyderabad. It also covered eight focus languages which were Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, Punjabi, Malayalam, Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada.



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1. To understand the challenges faced by Indian publishers, agents, authors, translators and industry bodies in making literature written in Indian languages more widely available to an international audience;
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The key findings that emerged from the study were as follows:

## On the publishing ecosystem

- The Indian publishing market is non-homogenous and is structured according to region and language. The publishing sector ecosystem continues to be a largely informal sector that consists of large, medium and small publishing houses.
- The nuances and modalities of publishing differ from language to language across India. These are further distinguishable from Multinational Companies (MNCs) operating in India, and the Indian, English publishing market in terms of marketing strategies, kind of books, relationships with bookstores, digital marketing etc.
- While it benefits from a variety of government initiatives, the Indian book industry receives no direct investment from the Central government.
- Indian language publishing does not distinguish as stringently between genres of fiction as the Anglophone industry tends to do: "literary fiction" doesn't exist as a category, though there has historically been a thriving pulp fiction industry in several Indian languages, such as Tamil and Hindi. There is a segment of publishers who focus on social issues as their mandate, including feminist publishing, writings from the marginalised and oppressed communities, and political publishing (including communist writings).
- Bookselling is done through independent, local bookshops, chain bookshops, and online. The notion of the bestseller is fairly foreign — algorithmically mediated when it comes to English language books due to Amazon and

other online booksellers, and bestseller lists in the literary press are a very recent development.

- Advances, even for well established authors, are not very lucrative and royalties amount to little, given the relatively low pricing of books in India. Many Indian language publishers do not sign contracts with their writers and hence do not own translation rights. As a result, they are unable to sell these rights internationally.
- There is a dearth of training and skills that enable such publishers to reach out to international markets. Moreover, publishers are not motivated to sell rights abroad since they are already comfortable and well-versed with domestic markets they serve, which they deem sufficient.
- A major challenge identified in the study is the lack of consistent and robust data and statistics about the sector, including the volume of books published by language, readership surveys, output of significant State-led and supported initiatives and market insight, that informs and aids economic growth for the sector.
- Lack of direct investment, difficult distribution, long credit cycles, and piracy are identified as the other major challenges to the industry.

## On the translation ecosystem

- Translation into and from Indian languages has existed long before the advent of the printing press. With a wealth of 19,569 languages or dialects spoken in India as mother tongues, there are several kinds of translation 'situations' in India. These range from multi-lingual usage in translation (we use two or three languages at a time, including the link languages of Hindi and English) and using language in the aid of nationalism and nation-building in both pre and post-Independent India (formation of linguistic states after Independence).
- It is this situation of the role of language, in nation and identity building, that has sustained the translation ecosystem in India, by way of various state initiatives and projects over 75 years.
- Sahitya Akademi (the National Academy of Letters) at the central and state government levels, the National Book Trust, the Publications Division (formerly under the Ministry of Human Resource Development or MHRD but now under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting), the Centre for Translation in Bengaluru, National Translation Mission, and India Literatures Abroad are some significant projects and organisations that have been working in the field of translations.



## India has a thriving culture of book fairs, literary conferences (sammelans) and book exhibitions which play an important role in the country's literary culture.

- Academic courses in Universities, publishing agencies involved in the work of business translation, the Indian Translators Association (ITAINdia), and thousands of independent translations make up for the rest of the translation ecosystem. Despite this seemingly vast set of organisations, these efforts are at best fragmented and do not add up to a robust ecosystem for translation in India, and consequently is not one which is able to fix both knowledge and operational gaps as it grows.
- While translation of Indian literature into English as well as translation between languages have long established traditions in India, resources for translators are fairly scant. Consequently, translation is considered less of a profession and more of an amateur undertaking or done out of “passion”.
- Indian trade publishers have begun to recognise the potential of translations, and are investing relatively more in its marketing and as well as in translators, though there are still no established market rates for what they can charge.
- Historically, translations have not received the same attention as other English books on a publishers' frontlist, though this is beginning to change. Features that draw attention to the fact that a book is a translation, such as a translator's note, or an interview with the translator, or even, at the very least, the translator's name on the front cover, are still less than commonplace.
- Like in many parts of the world, here too there is a shrinking space for literary criticism, the book reviews in mainstream publications along with closure of little magazines. Both of these have affected the visibility of translated works in the mainstream, along with reduced cross-pollination of translations and ideas between languages.
- Of late, however, translators and translations are less sidelined than they used to be on the festival circuit, and most major festivals have at least one or two events dedicated to translation.
- Translators are still at a considerable disadvantage while negotiating with publishers regarding rights and rates, and are often just given a lump sum for the translation work with no possibility of earning back royalties.

### Language specific insights

- Historically, translation between regional languages as well as into English has considerable precedent in India. However, some languages, such as Bengali and Tamil, have been translated more, relatively speaking, both into other Indian languages, as well as into English. Mini Krishnan's seminal Modern Indian Novels in Translation project in the 1990s, for five novels each from Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Hindi, Malayalam, Bengali, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Oriya, and Marathi, and the rise of Geeta Dharmarajan's initiative – the Katha Prize Short Stories – anthologies, showcasing translated fiction from all over the country, were watershed moments for Indian literature in translation.
- Publishing practices in Indian languages, due to their multivalent histories, differ considerably from the Anglophone publishing industry, where there are clear distinctions between different departments such as editorial, marketing, sales *et al*, whereas regional language publishing relies on informal networks and relationships between authors and publishers. Self publishing is also not uncommon in some languages such as Urdu, and intellectual property rights have only recently become significant in the Indian language publishing market. Even today, formal, enforceable contracts between authors and publishers are far from commonplace, though these developments are beginning to be embraced by regional language publishing.
- One very visible impact of the pandemic has been the adoption of social networking and digital spaces to continue publishing and

literary activities, pivoting to events online, as platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and WhatsApp were used by readers and publishers to facilitate conversations between authors and audiences, as well as performances and readings, across Indian languages.

- Due to lack of central government funding, the sustainability of regional language publishing is largely reliant on state governments, who play a significant role in sustaining the literary heritage and publishing culture of Indian languages, both through funding as well as institutional means, such as library distribution and inclusion in school and university curricula.
- As most major Indian languages have diasporic populations living outside India, this creates the potential for readerships abroad, though mechanisms of distribution are un-even across languages. For example, Punjabi books find a robust market in regular meets that are held in countries with a large diasporic population, such as Canada, whereas even languages that are widely spoken outside India, such as Bangla, don't have an organised distribution network outside India.
- Audiobooks in Indian languages are increasingly popular, both in some measure due to the pandemic, as well as to the waning populations of younger readers who are fluent in speaking and comprehending their mother tongue, but not necessarily that fluent in reading it.

## Role of literary culture and events

India has a thriving culture of book fairs, literary conferences (sammelans), and book exhibitions, which play an important role in the country's literary culture. Several of these have been in operation for many decades and find wide patronage of readers, booksellers and publishers across small and big towns in India. They provide opportunities for publishers all over the country to meet, and are often useful spaces for finding networks and starting conversations about translations between Indian languages. These domestic book fairs are to be distinguished from international book fairs such as the London or Frankfurt book fairs, which are trade fairs which focus largely on the buying and selling of rights. There is little to no formal support system to facilitate rights sales in either case.

- Literary festivals help with image building (of the author) and serve as a bridge to the reader and

are a great promotional opportunity for publishers. They also serve to create literary exchanges between authors, publishers and agents through programming or the development of an alternative platform on the sidelines.

- Unless a literary festival is single-language focused and not based in the major metros, it tends to be English-speaker centric, with little room for Indian language programming.
- Respondents, translators in particular, stressed on the under-representation of translators at these festivals. There are a few sessions on translation, but the tendency is to invite translators on a single panel instead of wider representation across sessions.
- There are specific language-focused festivals which play a crucial role in enabling a dialogue and exchange between audiences, authors and the publishing industry.

Examples include Jashn-e-Rekhta, Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob, Hindi Mahotsav, Akhil Bharatiya Sahitya Sammelan in Maharashtra (by Akhil Bharatiya Sahitya Sammelan Mahamandal) and Sahitya Sammelan in Karnataka, among others.

- Respondents also noted the increasing interest in Indian language in translation, endorsed by prestigious awards, some of which are initiated by or awarded at literature festivals.
- Literary conferences and conventions, on the other hand, tend to be more focused on issues around sector development and advocacy, and academic preoccupations.
- Book fairs in bigger cities help with rights sales between Indian languages, while consumer book fairs, particularly in smaller towns and cities, help with readership of Indian language books in translation. Respondents said that the latter have a much more readership-heavy focus with book fairs being called 'melas' (festivals) attended by lakhs of people.
- Indian participation in international book fairs is three-fold. One is when government agencies are invited to represent India at these fairs (opportunities such as India being the guest country). The second is when international book fairs invite Indian publishers, authors and translators through various instruments of engagement such as speaking sessions, workshops and fellowships. The third involves private visits by Indian publishers out of their own volition, but this is the least regular, given the considerable financial outlay required to attend these fairs abroad.

- The value of international book fairs was exhorting by the respondents by highlighting the advantages of attending them: the opportunity to network and establish relationships, have one-on-one meetings with literary agents and publishers across the world, and absorb intangible insights around publishing trends and conversations. The Frankfurt, London and Sharjah Book Fairs were most recommended in the said order of importance. Smaller Indian language publishers, however, experience both economic and linguistic barriers to access these fairs.
- Significant concerns were raised around the potential of its (book fairs') impact in terms of official representation of Indian languages and the skills and systems of publishers and agents in maximising this potential.

## Trends in digitisation

In India, digital versions of books — be it podcasts, e-books or audio books — have not gained the kind of anticipated market share as was expected.

- Publishers see digitisation as a complement to print publishing. Respondents pointed out that more recently digital rights have been included in rights sales and they include formats such as print, digital, audio and OTT rights as a single package, which makes it attractive for translation markets.
- While the penetration of these formats have been limited, analysts have pointed to positive trends during the pandemic that have changed reader behaviour.
- The pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital formats for reading, with an impact on both e-book and audiobook sales.
- Respondents also spoke of a slew of digital conferences, fairs and initiatives that led to meeting many more publishers, authors and expanding networks world over than would have been otherwise possible.
- Social media has been another frontier for respondents that COVID-19 has helped forge a path towards, with it being used by respondents to shore up their social media engagement and community building, and increase sales.
- There have been several technology start-ups centered around e-publishing, particularly catering to Indian languages. E-reading apps such as Pratilipi, e-Shabda, Matrubharati and MyLang jostle with Audible, Google Play Books and Storytel with their widening base of Indian language literature on these apps.

- The research points towards increasing potential for audiobooks and their impact on translated works. Most respondents emphasised the importance of audio books in creating accessibility of Indian literature in translation for a multilingual country where language proficiency varies when it comes to reading and comprehension (listening).
- Audiobook companies, on the other hand, seek content from these publishers both in the form of acquiring backlists as well as producing new content, including new writing. The former allows publishers to generate a second life for their earlier books that are out of circulation, while the latter creates new reader markets for their books thereby diversifying their investment risks.

## Perceptions of Indian literature in English translation abroad

The UK has significant South Asian diasporic populations with Punjabi (0.5%), Urdu and Bengali being the third, fourth and fifth most spoken languages in the country after English, Welsh and Polish as per the 2011 census. However, Indian literature in translation is yet to create a significant impact on the Anglophone publishing industry.

- There is a lack of awareness of what is available in translation from India, due to lack of proactive research, including a lack of knowledge with regards to the variety of languages and their literary outputs in India. Only niche publishers make a concerted effort to look beyond established perceptions.
- India's strong tradition of writing in English also, to some extent, has contributed to limiting the market for literature in translation. Indian writing in English is often created very much with an international audience in mind, and therefore more accessible to foreign audiences than translations which might be very strongly rooted in local contexts, humour, and concerns which readers might find difficult to relate to. Indian writing in English thus often 'ticks the box' for Indian literature and camouflages literature in translation.
- The "Imagined India": International publishers tend to reject stories that do not conform to certain stereotypical ideas of India.
- Some Indian languages are more represented in translation than others. E.g. Bengali, Hindi, Malayalam and Tamil as opposed to Assamese, Gujarati, Kannada and Telugu.

Challenges in internationalisation include lack of government support for promoting Indian literature abroad (despite recent efforts) and lack of agency representation for translators.

## Skill gaps and needs

- **Agenting:** There have been one-off training initiatives such as those organised by the German Book Office but no other institutional courses or sustained efforts exist to train literary agents in India. Some suggestions which emerged include the art of pitching, presenting a catalogue, training in communication and marketing strategies.
- **Publishing:** This continues to be a profession that is mostly learnt on-the-job as there exist very few quality training courses that focus on publishing. The well known publishing courses in the country include:
  - The Seagull School of Publishing
  - Editing and Publishing at Jadavpur University
  - Publishing skills training by the National Book Trust
  - A post-graduate course initiated by IGNOU & FIP
- **Translating:** The opportunity to upskill for translators is equally fraught with systemic challenges stemming from the nature of translation studies and the limited room for well-paying professional opportunities.
- Even though the Sahitya Akademi conducts annual training workshops for translators, the outcomes of these workshops are unknown. One or two of the respondents interviewed alluded to these workshops but none of them have attended or been called to conduct any of these training sessions.
- While there seem to exist multiple courses on 'translation' as a theoretical domain of inquiry, there exist only a handful of practical courses that offer training and skilling opportunities for upcoming translators. This reflects a major gap in the translation support ecosystem in the sector.
- Recommended and few well-known translation courses in India include:
  - Ashoka University, Sonapat | A Graduate Course in Translation Theories and Multilingual Contexts is offered.
  - Jadavpur University, Kolkata | The Centre for Translation of Indian Literatures (CENTIL), housed in the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, offers a certificate course in Translation as a Skill.
  - Indira Gandhi National Open University, Mumbai: A PG Diploma in Translation is offered.
- **Marketing:** Translation in isolation is not enough to make the text palatable for an international audience; a context setting is required. This specialised expertise required to package, market, and contextualise a book in translation is missing.
- Skills required for selling into international markets include:
  - Negotiating rights: For selling literatures in translation, related territorial rights, and subsidiary rights
  - Pitching: Advance information (AI) sheets, catalogues, potential for cross-marketing
- A significant area of concern was the lack of a guild or association for translators that could look out for their interests.

## Recommendations

The accompanying recommendations in the main report represent a mix of recommendations made by study respondents as well as those suggested by the research team at the Art X Company. These are broken down with filters for i) recommendations for the sector, ii) recommendations pertaining to proposals as under the publishing and translation programme strands by the British Council, and iii) those that may require an 'internal strategic review and revision' with the support of other teams and collaborators.



# Introduction

## i. Background

The initiation and growth of the Indian publishing industry has been inextricably linked with colonisation and its impact on the market for books. While the Indian sub-continent boasts of a rich literary and linguistic, oral and written culture, the introduction of the printing press by the colonisers and missionaries laid the ground for creation, consumption and mass distribution of the written word. Responding to the national events of the times, the pre-Independence 1947 publishing industry and print media also played a critical role in forging and consolidating a sense of nationhood. The post-independence period saw establishment of various literary institutions by the State in a nation building attempt, alongside the flourishing of a private Indian literature and publishing sector that provided for the needs of an increasingly literate nation and the demand for literature in various regional languages.

The last 70 years have seen the emergence of significant government bodies such as the Sahitya Akademi, National Book Trust, quasi-government organisations such as CAPEXIL, and associations and advocacy bodies ranging from several language-focused publishers and booksellers associations to literary festivals and conference platforms such as the Federation of Indian Publishers (FIP), Publishers Exchange, Publishers and Booksellers Association of Bengal et al. The division of state boundaries on linguistic lines has also led to the introduction of state and language-specific bodies and initiatives.

There have been several policies and laws enacted both at the union and state levels that have dictated the course of the promotion of the language and its publishing. For instance, The Delivery of Books Act 1954 mandated that publishers must send a copy

of each book published to the Indian National Bibliography in Kolkata and three other libraries in India. The West Bengal Library Act 1979 led to the establishment of several aided and government-owned libraries in India. In the private sector, several publishing houses, including those with multinational presence, established themselves in India.

## ii. At present

In the 21st century, several hundred literary festivals, fairs and events are organised which have given a fillip to the presence of the literary and publishing sector in the cultural landscape as well as mainstream public conversations. New technological forms, of both consumption and distribution ranging from e-book, audiobooks, podcasts to online bookselling have further diversified the market for publishing. All of these interventions and structures have shaped the market for translations of Indian language literature in unique ways. According to the Federation of Indian Publishers (FIP) 2007 publication, covering the landscape of India's publishing sector, 80% of publishing in India is in Indian languages.<sup>2</sup>

The Indian literature and publishing sector is still relatively informal and structured quite differently from western publishing markets. Data, especially on Indian language publishing, is not readily available (and has limited presence on databases such as the Nielsen Bookscan). Organisations tasked with keeping a record of publications, such as the National Bibliography that is an authoritative bibliographical record of current Indian publications received in the National Library, Kolkata under the Delivery of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act, 1954 (Act No. 27 of 1954 as amended by Act No. 99 of 1956), have bibliographical data of only 14 Indian languages. The regularity and frequency has varied over the years.<sup>3</sup> The last

2. D. N. Malhotra. 60 Years of Book Publishing in India, 1947-2007. (New Delhi: Federation of Indian Publishers, 2007), pp.10.

3. Indian National Bibliography, 'Frequency', Official Website of the Central Reference Library. Available [here](#).

set of available annual publications on the INB website is for seven languages and available downloadable PDFs range from 2010-2018. Most industry reports often omit important contributions such as little magazine publishing, which are significant stalwarts contributing to regional literary culture in several languages.

Inter-regional language translation is an established practice but waxes and wanes in volume, and is often uneven — some languages are far more translated than others, and it can often be a one way trajectory. While translation is largely represented in academia by comparative literature and translation studies courses, there are scant opportunities for training individuals in the practice of literary translation. There is no umbrella flagship organisation representing authors' rights, such as the Society of Authors in the UK or the Authors Guild in the US, though there are again, local initiatives, which often are also instrumental in organising events and opportunities to promote books and reading. Rights sales into international markets are mostly done by publishers, not agents, and significant events like the Kolkata and the Delhi Book Fairs are spaces for national sales. Subsidiary rights are not as lucrative a market as they are in English language markets; while there are film adaptations based on literary texts, these are more often reworkings of established classics rather than a possible route for more mainstream fiction, though this is beginning to change with the coming of OTT channels.

The penetration of dedicated reading devices is low, though mobile phone reading is on the rise, as is the phenomenon of the audiobook. Interestingly, one of the most digitally sophisticated and popular platforms for multilingual literature is the Pratham Books initiative, Storyweaver — a platform for children's books. There is definitely space for innovation, both in terms of how content is packaged and delivered. The Indian publishing market is not as reliant on genre differentiation and imprints as a means to create market segmentation as it is in the UK — but nevertheless its useful to understand how segmentation works with

algorithms to make books visible online.

While Indian literature often receives recognition internationally, as a focus country at book fairs and festivals, the idea of what is showcased as Indian literary culture is often fairly narrow and focuses largely on Indian writing in English, with some major authors in translation. There is very little focus on oral and indigenous traditions, which form a significant part of a country's relationship with narrative and storytelling. There has been important work done by the Sahitya Akademi via its Indian Literature Abroad initiative, but its trajectory has been uneven. With regards to the UK sector, there have been initiatives such as the DSC South Asian Literature Festival and an increasing interest in diversity in the publishing sector, though the latter is largely focused on diasporic authorship and these developments, coupled with the emerging popularity of the discourse of decolonisation, can be leveraged usefully to create an effective ecosystem for internationalising the Indian translation market. Moreover, within the rights-related conversation, the South Asia region is looked at as a single territory for international publishers.

### The research scope included:

1. Providing a contextual overview of India's literature and publishing sector landscape, cultural-education landscape; and the socio-economic landscape;
2. Identifying market demand through the study of trends since 2017 in the sector;
3. Identifying skill gaps and labour shortages in the sector and provide a needs-based analysis for the British Council literature programme development in India;
4. Identifying market demand and potential partners;
5. Identifying barriers to internationalisation faced by Indian literature and publishing professionals.



# Research methodology

A mixed methods approach has been taken for this study comprising of a review of secondary data, focus group discussions (FGDs) and a large number of interviews. The research was divided into three phases:

preparation and desk research; fieldwork (comprising of one-on-one interviews and FGDs); and finally analysis and write-up, including a final focus group for feedback from key stakeholders.

## i. Desk research

Secondary research has been informed by publisher catalogues, rights reports from international book fairs and media coverage of rights sales from publications such as *The Bookseller* and *Publishing Perspectives*. Data from various magazines and journals that report on the Indian literature and publishing sector have been included from sources such as *All About Book Publishing*, *Scroll.in*, *Mint*, *PrintWeek* and *The Caravan* to name a few. Many of these articles are primarily qualitative and investigative in nature and have helped understand how the sector works, current challenges, trends and innovations. Books and compendiums on publishing, other existing data from reports of governmental and non-governmental organisations, research agencies and international bodies have also been included.



## ii. Interviews

The interviews were planned in two blocks. The first set of preliminary interviews, with 15 shortlisted individuals from across the literature and publishing sector, was undertaken to gain a broad overview of the sector, and better understand key areas to probe and focus on. In the second set of deeper sector interviews, respondents were selected based on desk research and insights from the preliminary interviews. In addition, there was a certain amount of snowball sampling above and beyond our initial list. In total, 77 respondents from across diverse sectors such as Indian and international publishers, agents, authors, translators and stakeholders from industry and government bodies, were interviewed. The interviews were semi-structured.





### iii. Focus group discussions

Five FGDs were organised with 23 participants spanning booksellers, literature festival representatives, UK publishers, translators (Indian languages) and stakeholders working with the Urdu language. The FGDs were undertaken to target specific groups of stakeholders, to get a deeper understanding and multiple perspectives on a particular aspect of relevance to the study.

A sixth and final consultative FGD was held with internal stakeholders from various British Council teams along with experts and commentators from the sector, both in India and the UK. This session presented the key insights that emerged from the fieldwork to garner comments, feedback and further suggestions from the experts.

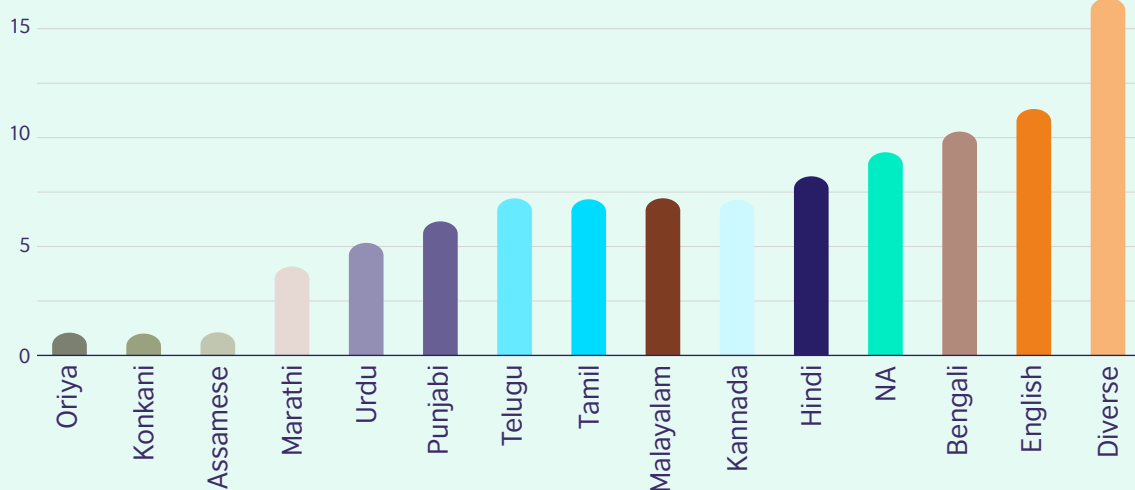
An information sheet covering all aspects of the study and the rights of respondents was provided while inviting the respondents to participate in the study. Written consent of respondents was taken before starting the interview/discussion, and notes and transcripts of the recorded interviews (with permission from the interviewees) were provided to the respondents after, for verification and edits, if any.

# Representation of respondents

In selecting the study respondents, we ensured a balanced approach not only across the range of ecosystem stakeholders but also the eight focus languages: Bengali, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. In terms of regions and cities, the priority areas identified were Assam

(Guwahati), Delhi, Karnataka (Bengaluru), Kerala (Kochi), Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan (Jaipur), Tamil Nadu (Chennai), Telangana (Hyderabad), West Bengal (Kolkata), and the UK which included respondents from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**Image 1. Representation by language**

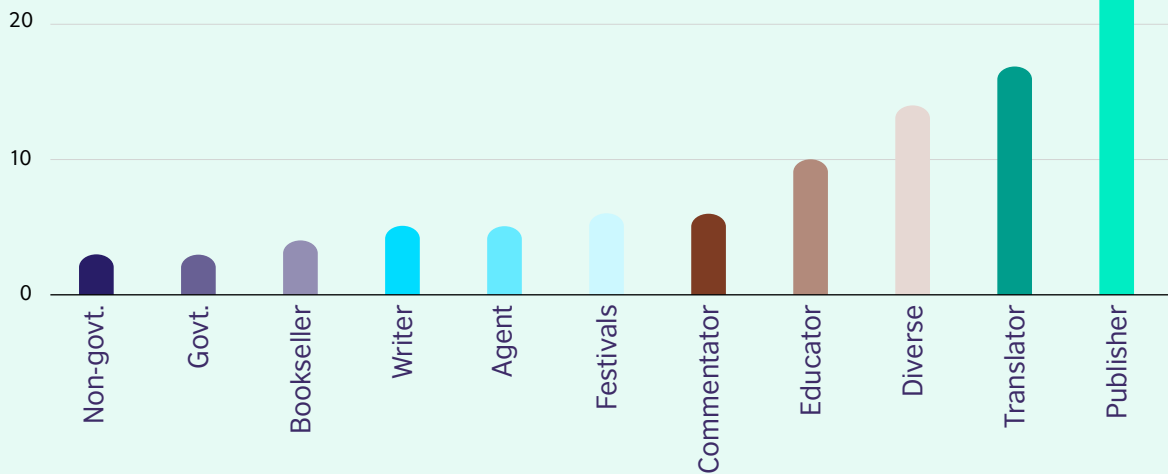


**The respondent profile was broken down by gender, region (East, South, West, North and the North East), language and the category of stakeholders.**

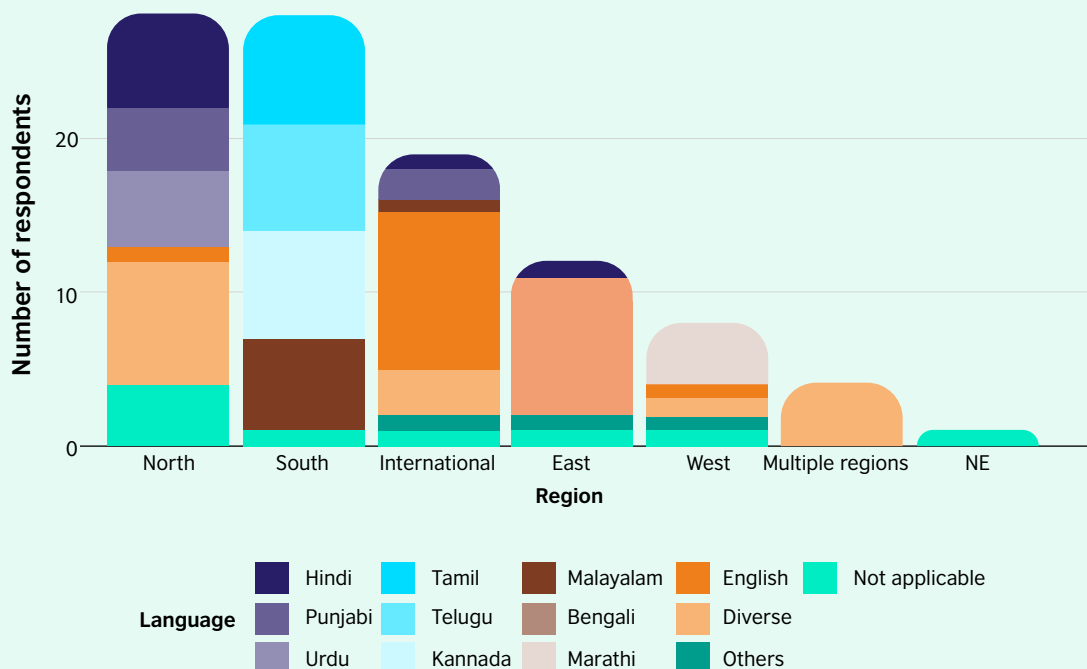
The respondent profile was broken down by gender, region (East, South, West, North and the North East), language and the category of stakeholders. The 24 categories included Indian regional language publishers and editors, the self publishing sector/organisations, international publishers (those with a branch office in India and part of an MNC network), commentators, writers,

authors, poets, translators, government and non-government literature organisations, literature festivals, book fairs, rights fairs, online and offline booksellers, literary agents and agencies, rights managers, literary associations, industry bodies, educational and research institutes, new media arts/digital businesses, arts services, diverse/queer spaces among many others.

**Image 2. Representation by sector**



**A consolidated representation of the above two aspects is depicted below.**



# Limitations of the study

## Outlined below are some key limitations of the study:

1. For the purposes of this report, we have adhered to the markets and voices from within the territorial boundaries of the Union of India and the UK, and we have not investigated the market dynamics or potential for these languages outside of the geographical territory of India. However, data collected sheds some light on the market dynamics of markets elsewhere and will be included as findings if found to have veracity and buoyed by related evidence.
2. As mentioned earlier, India's culture sector is a relatively informal sector without a central policy guiding its growth and evolution. By extension, the Central Statistics Office, the governmental agency in India under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation responsible for coordination of statistical activities in India, and evolving and maintaining statistical standards, does not document cultural statistics. These data points include culture-related education, cultural employment and enterprises, international trade in cultural goods, cultural participation and household expenditure on culture. This means that there isn't any existing robust, publicly available data or statistics on India's literature and publishing sector. While several key government organisations such as the Sahitya Akademi or the National Book Trust (NBT) collect some form of relevant data, it is either inadequate or too sporadic to be fully relied upon. RTI (Right to Information) applications need to be made to access this data, which may not always give us what we are looking for because of variegated methodologies of data collection, archiving and retrieval.
3. While several data points are based on official journal articles and reports, the completeness and robustness of these has often been questioned, even during several of our FGDs and interviews. Data, especially on Indian language publishing, is not readily available (and not under the remit of databases such as the Nielsen Bookscan), and often omits important aspects such as independent, informal bookselling enterprises, important stakeholders *et al.* This is mostly due to the informal nature of the sector in India, which in turn is difficult to quantify and record. Thus, many of the existing quantitative data sources do not always accurately reflect the whole picture of the industry.
4. With respect to investigations under skill development for stakeholders in the translation and publishing ecosystem, adequate representation of translation programmes and support systems in the country has been a challenge despite the large number of courses on translation and language studies. While there seem to exist multiple courses on 'translation' as a theoretical domain of inquiry, there exist only a handful of practical courses that offer training and skilling opportunities for upcoming translators, publishers, and practically nothing for agents.
5. One of the key aims of the study was identifying market demand and potential partners for India's literature and publishing sector landscape, which in itself is a challenging exercise. This is due to the fact that the linguistic legacy of the country extends into the South Asian region, and that many of these languages in the country are also spoken in other parts of the world.

# Key insights from the research

## i. The publishing ecosystem

The Indian publishing market is non-homogenous and is structured according to region and language. The 22 scheduled languages<sup>4</sup>, 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%.<sup>5</sup> The FIP estimated that 82,537 titles were published in India in 2004<sup>6</sup>. Both these key data points come from reports published in 2007 and 2015 respectively which demonstrates the sporadic sector tracking observation made earlier. Furthermore, the data is not inclusive and representative of the sector, as observed in this newspaper article,



**“Besides, other books published in India, in various Indian languages on subjects like folk literature and religion (which do not have ISBN numbers) may be around another 25,000 or so.”<sup>7</sup>**

The Nielsen India Book Market Report 2015<sup>8</sup>, conducted in association with the Association of Publishers in India (API) and the FIP estimated the Indian book market to be worth USD 3.9 billion, and growing by around 20% a year.<sup>9</sup> “*The Indian book industry benefits from a variety of government initiatives*” states the report. “*However, the Indian book industry receives no direct investment from the government – a serious roadblock for publishers*”. Lack

of direct investment, difficult distribution, long credit cycles, direct cost increases, and piracy, are identified as the other major challenges to the industry. However, several study respondents criticised the Nielsen report for its accuracy as it only considers booksellers at the digital point of sale, leaving a large part of the informal industry comprising booksellers and independent publishers unaccounted for. Hence, it cannot claim to fully represent the size of India’s publishing and literature sector.

The study also stated that books account for 15% of e-commerce in the country and highlighted a “synergy: between terrestrial and online retailers”.<sup>10</sup> Dedicated e-reading devices have not found many buyers in India, according to the report, which also listed PCs, smart phones, or tablets as preferred devices for reading e-books. The subsequent five years since the publishing of the report have seen major changes in India’s digital landscape with the inclusion of industry-transforming behemoths such as Jio, Netflix and Amazon; changes to India’s laws on digital content creation and distribution; and the COVID-19 pandemic, which has undoubtedly changed the relationship between e-commerce and retail book publishing thereby further diluting the relevance of this study in this context.

### a. Publishing

The Indian publishing sector continues to be a largely informal sector that consists of large, medium and small publishing houses. The nuances and modalities of publishing differ from language to language across India. These are further distinguishable from the Indian ‘English publishing market’ in terms of contractual formalities, marketing strategies, kind of books published, relationships with bookstores, digital marketing and so on. There are two key industry associations focused on the publishing industry, along with several regional bodies that focus on Indian language, and a number of organisations that represent publishers and booksellers (see *appendices iv. & v. on Government organisations and Not-for-profit associations*). Local language publishers are less likely

4. As per [official government sources](#), The Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution lists 22 languages, which have been referred to as scheduled languages and given recognition, status and official encouragement.
5. FICCI. (undated). Publishing: Sector Profile. Available [here](#).
6. Dina N Malhotra, 60 Years of Book Publishing in India, 1947-2007. (New Delhi: Federation of Indian Publishers, 2007), pp.12
7. S. N. Sahai, ‘Publishing industry on a roll’, Business Standard, 20 January 2013. Available [here](#).
8. Nielsen Book, Nielsen India Book Market Report 2015: Understanding the India Book Market, (London, New York and New Delhi: 12 October 2015).
9. Som Sapru. ‘An overview on the state of Indian publishing’, PrintWeek. (29 November, 2016). Available [here](#).
10. Rahul Kumar. ‘Nielsen’s India Book Market Report offers estimates of a complex market’, PrintWeek, 17 October 2015. Available [here](#).

to have differentiated departmental responsibilities, with employees often performing a variety of roles – whereas editorial, marketing, and sales, tend to have more formal divisions at MNCs.

The pandemic has led to new ways of working for the sector. For instance, it led to the creation of the Publishers' Exchange, a space for exchanging ideas, rights, resources and networking, between publishers, authors, editors, translators, graphic designers and service providers who work closely with the publishing industry, especially those working with Indian languages, including – but not limited to – Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Tamil and Telugu.

Indian language publishing does not distinguish as stringently between genres of fiction as the Anglophone industry tends to do: “literary fiction” doesn't exist as a category, though there has historically been a thriving pulp fiction industry in several Indian languages, such as Tamil and Hindi. There is a segment of publishers who focus on social issues as their mandate: Kali for Women, founded in 1984 was one of the first feminist presses in the country, and eventually branched into two separate imprints: Zubaan and Women Unlimited. There is a recent increased focus on publishing work from marginalised and oppressed communities: Navayana, Stree-Samyak and Panther's Paw Publishing focus on publishing literature and narratives from the Dalit community, persecuted and ignored by mainstream savarna<sup>11</sup> literary culture, both in English and in translation. The Hyderabad Book Trust, a not-for-profit publishing collective, also publishes politically radical work in Telugu, and launched the first Dalit little magazine, *Nalupu*. Adivaani is one of the few publishing houses that focuses on the writings of individuals from indigenous and Adivasi communities, publishing a range of non-fiction and children's books.

Publishing Indian literature translated into English falls under the mandate of the Sahitya Akademi (as well as between languages) but academic presses, both in India and abroad, have traditionally been visible venues for publishing these works, often with annotations or editorial apparatus. However, there are also some notable commercial publishers in the space: Seagull Books, Eka (an imprint of Amazon-owned Westland Books), Perennial (an imprint of HarperCollins) as well as other major publishers such as Penguin Random House, Pan Macmillan, Simon and Schuster, have all been responsible for furthering the possibilities of Indian literature in translation.

## b. Bookselling

Bookselling is done through independent, local bookshops, chain bookshops, and online. The notion of the bestseller is fairly foreign — algorithmically mediated when it comes to English language books due to Amazon and other online booksellers. Word of mouth and reviews in journals, magazines and newspapers play a larger part in popularising the sales of Indian language authors writing in languages other than English. While digital players such as Amazon can help increase visibility of books through bestseller lists and its recommendations, it can sometimes also work against booksellers. Some feel that its algorithmically determined offerings can often obscure quality work because it tends to prioritise what is already popular. Booksellers and bookstore owners stressed on the differences between an online marketplace and a traditional bookstore in the bookselling ecosystem. While the former creates wide distribution for books both digital and physical, brick and mortar book stores offer both access and discoverability to readers. To solve for ease of access, particularly during the pandemic, respondents from the book stores and the problem of spaces have created spaces for online bookselling on their own websites.



**“The earlier challenge was to make the books visible in a retail store. Now you can put it up there (Amazon), but then you have to get readers to find it.”**

– An industry commentator

Several respondents pointed to online bookselling as a positive trend in terms of distribution to new markets and reaching readers. Publishers tend to benefit.

11. Savarna is a term used to refer to the dominant or the oppressor castes, who have dominated intellectual discourse in the country due to their social and cultural location.



**“... levels the playing ground for many smaller publishers...They're not able to connect to retail stores, in the way they could have, but because of the presence of Amazon and Flipkart, it has helped them put their books out there.”– A publisher**

However, nearly all respondents pointed to specific challenges of the online marketplace, dominated by players such as Amazon and Flipkart, in the areas of curation of lists and terms of sale. The first of these is the issue of algorithmic curation, where the ‘bestsellers’ are prioritised. To take Amazon as an example, the online marketplace doesn't clearly state



**“If you're looking at Amazon for trends, I think that's absolutely the wrong place to go. They may not be bestsellers, but because Amazon says they're best sellers, they become best sellers. It's not a place to go for genres. If you're looking for a book that you do not know about, Amazon is not the place to go. Booksellers do all the hard work.”– An independent bookstore owner**

how this rating is calculated, various reports and analysis point to a combination of the number of recent sales of the product (while also taking into account historical sales data), relative to the other products in that category and country. It does not take into account reviews and ratings, prompting several respondents to highlight the detrimental nature of these companies in cultivating quality rankings of available literature.

The second is the issue of terms of sale. Bookstores complained that publishers give them the same terms as they do to Amazon despite their models being vastly different. Bookstores work on inventory and the high expense of a brick-and-mortar retail store, and hence deal with larger cash flow risks than Amazon. It is interesting to note that Amazon started out as an online bookstore, and in fact the first purchase ever made on Amazon.com was that of a book.

### c. Marketing

Lack of statistics make it difficult for publishers to make informed judgements as to who their target audience might be, or how to access them. There are no readership surveys, for example, to make it easier for publishers to identify who might be engaging with their books. Nielsen Bookscan is fairly limited in its reach, especially since the informal bookselling sector (small local bookshops, for example) do not collect data at point of sale.

Marketing books, therefore, can be a challenge: in the face of the pandemic, when brick and mortar bookselling has taken a huge hit, even the returns promised by the visibility of books in bookstores can no longer play a role in persuading readers to make impulse buys. Social media is increasingly being used to reach customers. Most publishers and booksellers have some form of digital presence — be that a Facebook or Instagram page (which is more likely than their own website) or using WhatsApp for direct sales and updates. Indian language publishing traditionally relied heavily on live events and local book fairs to enhance visibility, which has obviously been adversely affected by the pandemic.

Distribution is a challenge, especially for smaller publishers as the supply chain for English books is completely governed by two MNCs. The academic and institutional library network is weak, and cannot be relied upon to buy books in bulk with regularity, largely

12. Press Trust of India, ‘More Than 19,500 Languages Spoken In India: Census’, NDTV, 01 July 2018. Available [here](#).
13. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, ‘Data on Language and Mother Tongue’, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. Available [here](#).
14. Indra Nath Choudhuri, ‘Publishing Translation: Its National Importance’ in 60 Years of Book Publishing in India, 1947-2007. (New Delhi: Federation of Indian Publishers, 2007), pp.208.
15. Indra Nath Choudhuri, ‘Publishing Translation: Its National Importance’ in 60 Years of Book Publishing in India, 1947-2007. (New Delhi: Federation of Indian Publishers, 2007), pp.208.





**“I think promotions are easy these days because people are connected to communities on Facebook. We have a massive community on Facebook, and that's how people get to know what's happening. People will turn up and show up at these events and the book sales will happen, but I think it's just fast facilitating the availability of the books.”**

– A stakeholder from an NGO

due to budget constraints, though neighbourhood libraries still thrive in some parts of the country, and support communities of readers.

#### d. Rights and contracts

Many Indian language publishers do not sign contracts with their writers and hence do not own translation rights. As a result, they are unable to sell these rights internationally. This is allied to the reason that there is a dearth of training and skills that enable such publishers to reach out to international markets. Moreover, publishers are not motivated to sell rights abroad since they are already comfortable and well-versed with domestic markets they serve which they deem sufficient. Advances, even for well established authors, are not very lucrative, and royalties amount to little given the relatively low pricing of books in India.

## ii. The translation ecosystem

Translation into and from Indian languages has existed long before the advent of the printing press. Its wealth of 19,569 languages or dialects are spoken in India as a mother tongue, 22 of which are listed as major languages (or Scheduled languages) and also recognised as State languages whereas 99 of these languages are spoken by more than 10,000 people (and are called Non-scheduled languages). Four of them are also counted as Classical languages.<sup>12,13</sup> This espouses a complexity that involves several kinds of translation situations.<sup>14</sup>

One such situation is that of India being a ‘translation area’, as highlighted by former Secretary of Sahitya Akademi, Indra Nath Choudhuri, where we use two or three languages at a time, including the link languages of Hindi and English.<sup>15</sup> The other situation is that of language being used in the growth of nationalism before 1947, and for the formation of linguistic States after independence. Both of these fostered a consciousness and assertion of linguistic regionalism, contrasted against the idea of pan-Indianness.<sup>16</sup> It is this situation of the role of language in nation and identity building that sustained the translation ecosystem in India by way of various state initiatives and projects over 75 years.

Sahitya Akademi (the National Academy of Letters) at the central and state government levels, the National Book Trust, the Publications Division (formerly under the Ministry of Human Resource Development or MHRD but now under Ministry of Information and Broadcasting), Centre for Translation in Bengaluru, National Translation Mission, and India Literatures Abroad are some significant projects and organisations working in the field of translations. This is supplemented by several academic courses in Universities (refer to Ch.6 of this report), private publishers and initiatives which provide a market for translations and translators. Non-literary translation operates almost independently of this ecosystem, and comprises several other publishing agencies involved in the work of business translation. On the state side, the Central Translation Bureau functioning under the Department of Official Languages, is entrusted with the responsibilities of translating work of non-statutory procedural literature of the ministries, departments, offices, undertakings, etc. of the Central Government.<sup>17</sup> There is one association of translators, the Indian Translators Association (ITAINdia), a non-profit body which is a member of the world apex body of translators, the International Federation of Translators (Fédération Internationale Des Traducteurs (FIT) with its headquarters in France. FIT has been sparsely active since 2015, with the last event being organised in 2012.<sup>18</sup> Despite this seemingly vast set of organisations, these efforts are at best fragmented and do not add up to a robust ecosystem for translation in India, one which is able to fix both knowledge and operational gaps as it grows. At one extreme of this ecosystem is the independent translator, who is often made to contend with an environment that is informal at best, a context of work with long gestation periods, scarce formal training and upskilling options, and limited opportunities for finding new and sustained work.

16. Indra Nath Choudhuri, ‘Publishing Translation: Its National Importance’ in 60 Years of Book Publishing in India, 1947-2007. (New Delhi: Federation of Indian Publishers, 2007), pp.208.

17. For more information, visit the website of the Central Translation Bureau. Available [here](#).

18. For more information, visit the website of the Indian Translator’s Association. Available [here](#).

### The current scenario

While translation of Indian literature into English as well as between languages have long established traditions in India, resources for translators are fairly scant. Consequently, translation is considered less of a profession and more of an amateur undertaking (what one respondent described as “vanity translation”), though recent developments in the sector signal a gradual shift. Indian trade publishers have begun to recognise the potential of translations, and are investing more in its marketing and as well as in translators, though there are still no established market rates for what they can charge. However, commissioning for translated fiction, like other genres, is increasingly dictated by sales potential rather than editorial tastes.



**“For some kinds of writers, I know that for instance, Perumal Murugan’s writings, now translators are able to make demands on the publishers. It is still not anything fabulous, but it is not insubstantial.”**

– A translator

An interesting aspect of translating into English in India, is that most translators are looking to the domestic reader, rather than readers in the Anglophone world as their primary audience. The role of English as a bridge language between India’s vast variety of languages allows these works to travel beyond their linguistic regions – though increasingly, as some respondents commented, many readers cannot read fluently in their own language, and the rendering into English increases access for these readers. Historically, translations have not received the same attention as other English books on a publisher’s frontlist, though this is beginning to change. Features that draw attention to the fact that a book is a translation, such as a translator’s note, or an interview with the translator, or at the very least, the translator’s name on the front cover, are still less than commonplace. Respondents felt that this needs to be rectified, even for the domestic market, as readers from a different region of India might very well lack the context for a book coming from a different linguistic and cultural setting.

In many parts of the world, respondents lamented the shrinking space for literary criticism, book reviews in mainstream publications and closure of little magazines. Both of these have affected the visibility of translated works in the mainstream, along with reduced cross-pollination of translations and ideas in between languages.



**“That magazine (Maya Mausi) is doing very good work in Marathi. And, unfortunately, again, it is bringing in all good literature from other languages to Marathi, but it's not happening the other way though. It's not going outside Marathi.”**– A writer

Respondents emphasised the importance of trade magazines and press reviews in getting translated works or original writing in Indian languages noticed.

Some translators mentioned that due to the internet and a burgeoning interest in translation, being a translator no longer felt like a solitary undertaking – that there was an increasing sense of community of networks that can be tapped into through virtual and online platforms, as well as visibility through reviews. Translators and translations are less sidelined than they used to be on the festival circuit, and most major festivals have at least one or two events dedicated to translation. However, translators are still



**“They play a huge role because the traders read them and editors and publishers interested in translation read Words Without Borders or Asymptote or the other literary magazines that occasionally work with translations.”**– A publisher

at a considerable disadvantage while negotiating with publishers regarding rights and rates, and are often just given a lump sum for the translation work with no possibility of earning back royalties. Consequently most of the translators we spoke to felt the urgency of some sort of an association similar to the Society of the Authors in the UK, which can represent the interests of translators and further foster a sense of community between translators working in Indian languages, both in India and abroad.

### iii. Focus-language specific insights

The following covers the eight focus languages of the study. Each language is prefaced with relevant statistics, a short background of the language and its related regional publishing industry, and specific insights as have emerged from our research. Much of this information comes from *60 Years of Book Publishing in India, 1947-2007* (New Delhi: Federation of Indian Publishers, 2007). This is followed by two additional regions and related languages that were at the periphery of the study.

#### a. Bengali/Bangla

No. of speakers <sup>19</sup>			No. of edu. institutes		Literacy rate of State <sup>20</sup>	% of total population
First language	Second language	Third language	Schools <sup>21</sup>	Higher Edu		
97,237,669	9,037,222	1,008,088	79,816		77.08%	8.85%

Bengali is the mother tongue of residents of the State of West Bengal in India and Bangladesh in South Asia. It was also one of the first languages to get a printing press in India in 1800 when the Fort William College and the Srirampur Baptist Mission Press was established. Ganga Kishore Bhattacharya was the first Bengali publisher to start an independent press and set up the first Indian newspaper, *The Bengal Gazette*, in 1816. The Publishers and Booksellers Association of Bengal was started 1912. While the language produced both a steady output of rich literature in several genres over the 20th Century, the language also saw a rich exchange of translations from different parts of the world. The post-Independence period saw a slew of changes, both political and economic in the state of West Bengal in India, impacting everything from the scale of publishing, reader trends and choices of what got translated.<sup>22</sup> For instance, West Bengal's Leftist orientations led to welcoming authors from languages of the Soviet as well as Nobel Prize awardees into the Bengali language over this century. The 1970s saw a tumultuous period in the publishing industry with the printers' and binders' strike which dented the growth of the Bengali publishing landscape. 1975 also saw the establishment of the Publishers and Booksellers Guild by Bimal Dhar, which started the first ever Calcutta

Book Fair in 1976. The Bengali language publishing and literature sector has also benefited from State intervention through policy introductions and ongoing support. A significant policy introduction of the decade was the West Bengal Library Act 1979, which led to a slew of other government-initiated promotional activities such as financial support to authors, initiating publishing of books and initiating or supporting libraries. To date, West Bengal has the largest number of Libraries. The district book fairs are also organised by the State.

#### Research insights

Historically, Bengali has been widely published in translation across India — to such an extent that readers from other linguistic communities often mistook Bengali authors as being one of their own — while translation from other Indian languages into Bengali has been quite sparse. This trend is also observable with regards to English, with Bengali being the most translated Indian language by far between 2000-2013 (see Box on pg. 60 of this report) in the UK. Some of this might be attributed to the large diasporic Bengali population in the UK, and Bengali being one of the most spoken languages in London, though this demographic includes both Indian and Bangladeshi

19. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 'C-17 Population by Bilingualism and Trilingualism', (Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2012). Available [here](#).

20. Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India, 'State of Literacy', (Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2012) pp.116. Available [here](#).

21. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), 'All India School Education Survey (7th ed.)', Available [here](#).

22. Muhul Guha, 'Bengali' in *60 Years of Book Publishing in India, 1947-2007*. (New Delhi: Federation of Indian Publishers, 2007), pp.41-42.

Bengali speakers. Diasporic Bengali readers find that the availability of Bengali books online is fairly limited:

Like Malayalam, the Bengali publishing industry is still relatively informal, and translators and translation receive scant attention.

“

**“Now, if you're coming down to Kolkata, then I would rather pick up a Bengali version and that's what most of us end up doing, but if I'm in London and if I see a English translation, I would pick that up.”**– Representative of a language association

“

**“There is very little oversight (from agents, if any, and publishing houses) over how translations take place. So that is something which has been completely lacking in the world of Bengali letters.”**

– A publisher and educator

Many first and second generation immigrants are keen for their children and grandchildren to learn more about Bengali culture, and this might very well provide a useful impetus for English translations to be made more readily available in the UK.

While there have been some figures such as translator Arunava Sinha, who almost single-handedly has transformed the market for Bengali literature translated into English, due to his prolific output (Sinha has published over fifty translations), only a fraction of those have been sold into international markets.

## b. Hindi

No. of speakers			No. of edu. institutes		Literacy rate of State	% of total population
First language	Second language	Third language	Schools	Higher Edu		
528,347,193	139,207,180	24,160,696	6,33,231		Not applicable since it is spoken in multiple States	57.09%

As a language, Hindi has significant political mandates. Besides being widely spoken in several states in Northern India, and being in close proximity to the national capital, Hindi brings with itself enormous cultural capital. At the time of India's independence, Hindi was given the status of *'rashtra bhasha'* or national language and then graded down to *'raj bhasha'* i.e. language of governance. Hindi is spoken in some of the most populated States in India – Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and the Union Territory of Delhi – making it the most prominent among regional languages in India. This is reflected in book publishing with almost 25% of total books published each year being in Hindi.<sup>23</sup>

Some of the most prominent book publishers are in Delhi, and include Bharatiya Jnanpith, Rajpal & Sons, Rajkamal Prakashan, National Publishing House, Radhakrishna Prakashan, Saraswati Vihar, Kitab Mahal, Kitab Ghar, Vani Prakashan, Prabhat Prakashan. Publishers in other key cities include Hindi Pracharak Sansthan in Varanasi and in Allahabad, Lok Bharati. Among textbook publishers some of the names are, S. Chand & Co. in Delhi; Bharati Bhawan in Patna; and Shivalal Agarwal and Sons, Ramprasad and Sons, Upkar Prakashan, etc in Agra. Hindi also has a wide pocket book movement with publishers such as Hind Pocket Books, Diamond Pocket Books, Anand Paperbacks, Subodh Pocket Books, Major Pocket Books, Sadhana Pocket Books, Pracharak etc.<sup>24</sup>

23. Vishwa Nath, 'Hindi' in 60 Years of Book Publishing in India, 1947-2007. (New Delhi: Federation of Indian Publishers, 2007), pp.70.

24. More about Hindi pocketbooks in India can be found [here](#).

There are several publishing bodies functioning independently in the public sector. At the Centre, there are the Publications Division, National Book Trust and the Sahitya Akademi. In the Hindi speaking States, which are half a dozen, there are Hindi *samitis* or *grantha* Academies. The Ministries at the Centre have their independent publishing units, many of which are quite large..

### Research insights

While Hindi is widely spoken all over the country, the majority of Hindi language speakers are located in northern India. Its status as one of India's official languages means that it is very visible across bureaucracy and the media, although it lacks a strong support base in academic institutions with regards to sustaining its literary heritage. As one of our respondents commented:



**"Academic institutions in the Hindi belt, (which) should have played an important role in spreading awareness and creating love for language and literature have miserably failed."-**  
A writer and former civil servant

There are a few biographies of major authors in Hindi available, but still a scarcity of material chronicling its literary history. Hindi literary culture, while no longer as visibly vibrant as Malayalam or Bengali, has been shaped by publishing innovations that allowed Hindi fiction to reach a range of audiences. Hind Pocket Books, founded in 1958, ushered in the paperback revolution in India, and its founder, Dinanath Rajpal capitalised on this success by launching the 'Gharelu Library Yojana', a direct mail order scheme that delivered a set of eight paperbacks to their

subscribers (which numbered approximately 65000 at its peak) every month. The 'Nayi Kahani' movement, dating from the 1950s, reflected the issues and experiences of the newly emergent middle class, especially reflecting on the tensions and the dynamics created by women moving into the workplace.

However, commentators bemoan the fact that Hindi has failed to hold onto its status as a language that contributes significantly to Indian intellectual life, noting that most publishers don't make much of an effort with regards to editorial care or intervention. Much of this can be attributed to the lack of money in Hindi publishing; which is somewhat ironic, given that Hindi titles outsell English books considerably. The publishing space largely lacks professionalism with a few notable exceptions of outfits such as Vani Prakashan, making a concerted effort to bring the Hindi publishing industry into the 21st century by exploring new possibilities, such as buying the rights to Marjane Satrapi's graphic novel *Persepolis*, and publishing it in Hindi translation. Books in Hindi translation that have an audience outside the country tend to be classics, such as Premchand, but these are largely for academic and scholarly audiences.

One very visible impact of the pandemic has been the adoption of social networking and digital spaces to continue publishing and literary activities, pivoting to events such as the Vani Online Goshthi, an online literary festival and Karona Charcha, a virtual reading monthly event, with sixty new platforms springing up on Facebook alone. Brick and mortar bookselling, however, like their counterparts the world over, are badly affected by the crisis, with some having to permanently shut shop. On the other hand, audiobook consumption rose sharply over the past year, and even consumption of digital books experienced a small uptick in sales. However, as Aditi Maheshwari Goyal points out, an obstacle for Hindi e-book production is the incompatibility of mainstream digital publishing applications such as Adobe with Hindi fonts, thus hindering the widespread adoption of digital by publishers.

## c. Kannada

No. of speakers			No. of edu. institutes		Literacy rate of State	% of total population
First language	Second language	Third language	Schools	Higher Edu		
43,706,512	14,076,355	993,989	76,242		75.6%	4.84%

The history of Kannada publishing can be traced back to 1817 with the publishing of 'A Grammar of the

Kurnata Language' by William Carey which was published by Srirampur Press in Bengal. The first

printing press in the region was set up in 1827 at Bellary. Other presses in the region gained fame over the 19th Century for their scale and ability to produce quality publications. These included Wesleyan Mission Press, the Basel Mission Press in Mangalore and the Government Press in Bangalore. These presses were used by the Governments of Bombay and Madras at the time to print their books. The region also saw a slew of other presses started in Mysore, Dharwad, Sunavur and other places.

Several book promotion agencies emerged in the 19th century including the Tract and Book Society and the School Book Society which attempted to promote books and publishing. Several university presses, both pre-and post independence, created the crucial bridge between publishing industry and readers.<sup>25</sup> Institutions like the Mysore University (1915), the Kannada Sahitya Parishat (1916), Karnataka VidyaVardhaka Sangha (1980), and Karnataka Book Authority (1993) have worked towards promoting both the language and its publishing industry. The Karnataka Public Libraries Act, 1965, provided for the establishment and maintenance of public libraries in the State. The name of the Mysore State was changed to Karnataka in 1973, and it led to consolidation of several literary initiatives under this language. For instance the Mysore State Sahitya Akademi, set up in 1961, was renamed as Karnataka Sahitya Akademi.

In 2017, the Karnataka Book Authority initiated a project, a series of books on the history of the Kannada printing and publishing industry.<sup>26</sup>

### Research insights

Kannada has a long literary history, but is not a language readily recognised by international audiences, and lacks visibility outside the country. Even within India, Kannada literature is comparatively less translated into other Indian languages. One respondent pointed out that having a book translated into English has actually helped to increase the visibility of Kannada texts. The current publishing infrastructure and distribution networks in Karnataka put publishers at a considerable disadvantage, as there are no mechanisms to ensure their books reach libraries or schools. Despite there being approximately 8 crore people who speak Kannada, books have a limited readership and initial print runs don't number more than a thousand copies: and the industry publishes around 10,000 books a year. Books are also priced very low, especially when compared to English books. There is a lack of editorial standards, and much of what is published is not vetted beforehand. While Kannada doesn't have a

vast book buying public, performance of literary works such as poetry and readings are popular. Literary events, such as book festivals and launches are very well attended, and often help to sell 400-500 copies of the book being launched. The Kannada Sahitya Sammelana is a gathering of writers and poets held almost every year celebrating Kannada culture, and still attracts a large audience. Despite the diminishing interest in reading Kannada literature, there is still an appetite for local stories and narratives:



**“Our next generation, so what we're talking about are [all] the youngsters 16, 20 years, 25 years, their mother tongue is Kannada, but they can't read and write Kannada. Yet, they can understand Kannada. So, they also like to listen to our stories. Life is not different for them, right? Though they learn English, it doesn't mean that they are living in America. So, they want to listen to our stories and for them audio books are the right choice.”– A publisher**

There is however, a high volume of English books being translated into Kannada: some of these titles are translations themselves, for example, from Latin American literature. Karnataka has a State government centre for translation, a branch of the Sahitya Akademi, called Shabdana, founded by Dr. U R Ananthamurthy during his tenure as president of Sahitya Akademi. Consequent directors were also famous translators, and the centre caters to all the languages recognised by the Indian constitution, including Kannada, and publishes around forty books a year. Books selected for translation include classics, and books recommended by the governing council, and authors can self nominate their works as

25. HR Dasegowda, 'Kannada' in 60 Years of Book Publishing in India, 1947-2007. (New Delhi: Federation of Indian Publishers, 2007), pp.80-85.

26. Special Correspondent, 'Book authority to document Kannada publishing history', The Hindu, 22 November 2017. Available [here](#).

well. The mandate of the centre encourages translation between Indian languages into Kannada, but increasingly there is a reliance on English as a bridge language for some languages, such as Punjabi. Authors have the options to either receive 10% royalty on the books sold, or to go for a fixed advance and fee. Translators are paid by word, and again have the choice between royalties or a fixed lump sum. Distribution is through the Akademi's own networks, who have shops in every state, but are also exploring the possibility of selling through Amazon.

The current director of Shabdana spoke of how they are trying to inculcate a love of the Kannada classics in younger children through workshops and events, as young people are less and less motivated to enter the world of literary translation. Those who do receive training in translation end up working for

government organisations, translating for bureaucratic needs. However, there have been a few recent significant translations from Kannada to English apart from Vivek Shanbhag's *Ghachar Ghochar*, and Tejaswini Niranjana's translation of Jayant Kaikini's *No Presents Please* which was the first book in translation to win the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. Seagull Books has published Krishna Manavalli's translation of Jnanpith awardee Chandrashekhara Kambar's *Karimayi*. According to a translator who works in Kannada, Sahitya Parishad, Basha Bharati, the Central Institute of Indian Languages are working towards raising the profile of Kannada translation - as well as the Kannada University at Hampi which has a project focusing on mutual translation between Kannada and other languages.

#### d. Malayalam

No. of speakers			No. of edu. institutes		Literacy rate of State	% of total population
First language	Second language	Third language	Schools	Higher Edu.		
534,838,819	499,188	195,885	16,860+X <sup>27</sup>		93.91%	2.93%

Ever since the first printing press was set up in Kottayam in 1821 by Benjamin Bailey, publishing in Kerala has been steadily progressing. Thiruvananthapuram (Trivandrum), Kollam (Quilon), Thrissur (Trichur) and Kozhikode (Calicut) were the main centres of publishing in the pre-Independence period. Realising the scope of printing and publishing in educating the common man, Maharaja Swathi Tirunal Rama Varma of Travancore Dynasty, established a Government Press in Thiruvananthapuram in 1835-36. A similar press was established by the Maharaja of Cochin at Ernakulam in 1845-46. The Reverend Chavara Kuriakose Elias of the Syrian Catholic Church of Kerala established Saint Joseph's Press in Mannanam near Kottayam in 1844. These printing presses were instrumental in propagating knowledge among the masses.

The present Kerala State was formed on November 1, 1956. Earlier, this State was divided into three regions – Travancore, Cochin and Malabar. Malayalam publishing, which was hitherto a religious and educational centre, rapidly branched out into a business activity in the latter half of the 19th century.

The emergence of three major organisations in 1945 paved the way for the cultural renaissance of Kerala.

They were Kerala Granthasala Sangam, Sahitya Pravarthaka Cooperative Society (SPCS) and National Book Stall (NBS). Kerala has the distinction of setting up the first-ever writers' co-operative, SPCS in 1945, at Kottayam. Kerala Granthasala Sangam, a movement initiated from Ambalappuzha, was instrumental in setting up thousands of libraries and reading rooms across the state. Since 1970, however, about 75 per cent of the books are published from Kottayam, the city that is also the first to register 100 per cent literacy in India. Some of India's largest circulated newspapers and weeklies are printed and published here.

Publishing had enjoyed government patronage from the early royal period just as in the present democratic period.<sup>28</sup> Apart from direct publication, the government had helped publishing by direct grants, grants through different bodies, organisations, various cultural/literary associations, awards, etc. Kerala State Institute of Languages and the Cultural Department directly bring out a number of the titles every year. The government has got a full-fledged press at Thrikkakara, Kochi which brings out some government publications, besides textbooks. Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Sangeeta Nataka Akademi, Lalitakala Akademi, Folklore Akademi,

27. As per this article, in 2017 the Govt. of Kerala made it mandatory for all schools in the state to teach Malayalam till Class X. This is possibly why Malayalam is not specified as a language at the Higher Secondary level (Classes XI and XII), and is not a widely taught language at this level. Thus, it is not possible to ascertain the total number of schools teaching Malayalam in Kerala.

Kerala Kalamandalam, State Institute of Children's Literature, etc., are different organisations set up by the government and publishing is one of their lesson activities.

### Research insights

Kerala, where Malayalam is the local language, has a rich literary culture. Unlike other parts of the country, literary fiction titles are more likely to be popular bestsellers rather than more commercial works. In the past five to seven years, there has been a sharp increase in translation into English from Malayalam, of which around 80% have been produced by academics working in the field of translation. Obtaining the rights to translate into English is relatively easy. Despite this, as a translator pointed out, some books might be “untranslatable” due to their idiom – they cite the example of prominent award-winning Malayalam author Muhammad Basheer, who despite his immense talent hadn't traveled easily into English due to his use of colloquialisms and slang. Even a contemporary mega success such as Benyamin's *Goat Days*, whose translation by Joseph Koyippally was shortlisted for both the Man Asian Literary Prize 2012 and in the short list of the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature 2013, only found an international audience through an Indian publisher, Seagull Books, who brought it out as a co-edition with Chicago University Press.

Despite a handful of Malayalam books in translation that have gained prominence in translation such as JCB Prize winners *Jasmine Days* by Benyamin (2018) and *Moustache* by S Hareesh (2020), international rights sales are still elusive for Malayalam publishers. One translator attributes this to the fact that Malayalam books tend not to go through a rigorous editorial process: authors might share the manuscript with a

coterie of fellow authors for suggestions, but it is rare for there to be a significant editorial intervention by a publisher.



**“I think if you put in a little more editing of the original text, if the text that is brought to you for translation is a much more edited text, maybe a programmed text, it will work better in English.”**

– A translator

The commissioning of translations tends to be fairly haphazard – mostly based on networks and personal connections. Publishers often rush to get recent bestsellers translated into Malayalam. Industry leader DeeCee Books publishes around 50-60 translations a year as there is a lucrative market in Kerala. Despite this, translators are often paid a meagre, one-time fee for their work, based on a rate per page, with no opportunity to benefit from royalties, and are incredibly under-recognised for their work. Unfortunately, the speed with which these translated works are put out into the market results in mediocre quality translations.

## e. Punjabi

No. of speakers			No. of edu. institutes		Literacy rate of State	% of total population
First language	Second language	Third language	Schools	Higher Edu		
534,838,819	499,188	720,000	25,572		76.68%	2.97%

Punjabi is the lingua franca, in Indian Punjab as well as the Punjab in Pakistan. Hindi, Urdu and English are the link languages. While the Gurmukhi script is the main script for Punjabi, Devanagari and Arabic scripts have been used extensively in Punjabi publishing. The first Punjabi printing press (using Gurmukhi font) was established through a Christian mission at Ludhiana in

1835, and the first Punjabi dictionary was published by Reverend J. Newton in 1854.<sup>29</sup> The Singh Sabha Movement in the 1870s in reaction to the proselytising activities of Christians, Hindu reform movements (Brahmo Samajis, Arya Samaj) and Muslims (Aligarh movement and Ahmadiyah)<sup>30</sup>, was also instrumental in enhancing Punjabi publishing in

29. Wikipedia, 'Punjabi Literature', 11 April 2021. Available [here](#).

30. N. Gerald Barrier and Nazer Singh, 'Singh Sabha Movement', in *Encyclopedia of Sikhism Volume IV (4th ed.)* ed. by Harbans Singh (Patiala, Punjab, India: Punjab University, Patiala, 2002) pp. 205–212



the Gurmukhi script on aspects of Sikh religion, Sikh tradition and Sikh way of life.<sup>31</sup>

The Punjabi publishing sector has evolved and been shaped by challenging socio-political dynamics of the region, of which the partition of India, the further division of the Indian state of Punjab, and the Khalistan movement have had a significant impact. The partition of India led to the division of Punjab, and West Punjab (in Pakistan) chose Urdu as its main language of administration and instruction. East Punjab, on the India side, comprising Sikh and Hindu populations, faced another reorganisation under the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966, leading to the formation of the states of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh, with Hindi as their main language<sup>32</sup>. Furthermore, the Khalistan movement of the 1980s, a secessionist movement seeking to create a homeland for Sikhs, created a volatile situation in the region affecting the state's economy. All these movements led to migration of Punjabi-speaking people, leading to huge diasporic populations residing in the UK, Canada, Australia and the US. These movements have led Punjab-resident and Punjabi-speaking writers and editors to choose Hindi, Urdu and English to write in.

Today, the bulk of Punjabi publishing is carried out by government agencies. The Language Department of the Punjab Government, the Punjab State University Textbook Board, the Punjabi Akademi, the National Book Trust and the Sahitya Akademi undertake to publish a sizable volume of books in Punjabi annually.<sup>33</sup> Outstanding classics by the Sahitya Akademi Award-winners have been translated into Punjabi. There are a small number of private publishers in Punjab, publishing in Punjabi. Punjabi diaspora literature has developed through writers in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and the United States.

### Research insights

Similar to the other Indian languages covered in this study, Punjabi translates far more prolifically from English into Punjabi. However some prominent Punjabi writers, such as Amrita Pritam have a considerable audience in English translation. However, as the CEO of a long established Punjabi publishing house said regretfully, there is very little investment and opportunity for translating Punjabi literature into English. Yet it would definitely benefit if there was a platform that could showcase texts that might work well in translation for potential publishers who could then undertake the translation. While the formal audiobook sector is not yet flourishing, amateur performances and readings of Punjabi literature can be

widely found on the web on sites such as YouTube. While these are obviously unauthorised, they do help popularise Punjabi literary culture.

Punjabi speakers have a large diasporic population, spread across the UK, America, Canada, New Zealand and Australia, and many first and second generation immigrants are keen for their children and grandchildren to be more familiar with the historical circumstances that have shaped Punjabi and Sikh culture. This demographic is keen to see more Punjabi writing in translation to encourage their children's interest, and there are schools in Canada (such as the Khalsa Schools) and the UK, which now offer Punjabi as a language to be studied. Some respondents spoke of how they felt the trend towards decolonisation might revive the interest of younger generations in their own culture. Initiatives such as Shadow Heroes, an educational initiative in the UK, seeks to connect young people with their own linguistic and cultural heritage (Punjabi is one of the featured languages) providing conducive spaces for potential translators of colour who might want to work in their heritage language.

The wealth and size of the immigrant population ensures that Punjabi books are bought for libraries in the USA, UK, Canada, and some European countries. Events such as the World Punjabi Meet has publishers travelling from Punjab. They will manage to sell thousands of copies during those 15-20 days of the conference along with visiting colleges and universities, as well as some private functions organised, where writers are invited to talk about the work displayed, which also provides a venue for book sales. Kashi House, founded by three British born Punjabis, is an independent publisher which operates as a not-for-profit based in the UK, and creates beautifully produced books that celebrate Sikh and Punjabi heritage. However, they operate rather differently from conventional publishers, commissioning authors to work on a rich repository of archival material that they have access to, due to their location in the UK. Some of their books can be considered collector's items, due to their high production value and quality of historical research, which includes facsimiles of archival material. There is a very promising diasporic market for Punjabi that writers and publishers can capitalise on:

Punjabi publishing in India has moved from being largely informal to more regulated by contracts and royalties, though the editorial vetting process is still rather relaxed - with publishers accepting most manuscripts that they are approached with. Self-publishing also still plays a large role in the Punjabi

31. KS Duggal, 'Punjabi' in 60 Years of Book Publishing in India, 1947-2007. (New Delhi: Federation of Indian Publishers, 2007), pp.129-136.

32. Anon., 'The Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966', IndianKanoon, (undated). Available [here](#).

33. KS Duggal, 'Punjabi' in 60 Years of Book Publishing in India, 1947-2007. (New Delhi: Federation of Indian Publishers, 2007), pp.129-136.



**“See, there is a huge international market for Punjabi writing. It's almost a captive market. A writer who has published two books in Punjabi, reasonably good books — he goes to Canada, he's pampered and he comes back richer by 15-20 lakhs.”**

– An academic translator

publishing industry, in keeping with the trend seen across a range of Indian languages. Social media does increasingly play a role in popularising

published work, especially since these networks and communities can also extend outside the country.

Lack of institutional support for translation has meant the quality of translations from Punjabi to English has been fairly inadequate, but academics, such as Rajesh Sharma based at Punjab University are working towards embedding literary translation of modern poetry and fiction from Punjabi to English in their departments, thus setting standards for a certain benchmark of quality translation. Such initiatives are sorely needed, as most major works of Punjabi literature have yet to be translated into quality English translations. Punjabi itself has approximately fifty two dialects, as well as two distinct scripts: Gurumukhi and Shahmukhi, which can make translation, even between Indian languages, challenging.

## f. Tamil

No. of speakers			No. of edu. institutes		Literacy rate of State	% of total population
First language	Second language	Third language	Schools	Higher Edu		
69,026,881	6,992,253	956,335	62,329		80.33%	6.36%

The Tamil language boasts of one of the oldest publishing histories in the subcontinent. It was in Quilon in Kerala in 1578 that the first Tamil press came up and then at Punnaikayal in Tamil Nadu. The state has also been a pioneer in the areas of policy<sup>34</sup>. The Tamil Nadu government was the first to pass the Public Libraries Act in India in 1948, which led to the establishment of several libraries and emphasis on education of the population of a young nation. By 1960, the Tamil Writers' Cooperative Society was formed, which led to the establishment of literary magazines and publishing support for books written by its members. The Anti-Hindi agitations of 1965 in Tamil Nadu against the move to make Hindi the official language of India, led to major political changes in Tamil Nadu. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) came into power in the State and formed a government on the back of the language agitations in 1967. In 2004, Tamil was declared a classical language of India by the Indian Government, meaning that it met three criteria: its origins are

ancient; it has an independent tradition; and it possesses a considerable body of ancient literature. Most recently, the Tamil Nadu Textbook and Educational Services Corporation's translation initiative, set up in 2017, plans to bring out three books every four months. Till February 2021, six books have been published in collaboration with leading private publishers.<sup>35</sup>

Some prominent organisations and initiatives include the International Institute of Tamil Studies, Central Institute of Indian Languages, the Hindu media group, BookSellers and Publishers Association of South India (BAPASI), Tamil Nadu Magazine Publishers Association, Tamil Literature Society, Chennai Book Fair and Tamil Sangam clubs in various parts of the country. There are currently 4,600 public libraries.<sup>36</sup>

### Research insights

Like most other Indian languages, Tamil is spoken less and less by younger generations.

34. Akilan Kannan, 'Tamil' in 60 Years of Book Publishing in India, 1947-2007. (New Delhi: Federation of Indian Publishers, 2007), pp.146-152.

35. Akila Kannadasan, 'Famous titles of Tamil literature to reach more readers through translation project', The Hindu, 15 February 2021. Available [here](#).

36. Special Correspondent, 'Magazine publishers appeal to Tamil Nadu CM for funds', The Hindu, 23 October 2020. Available [here](#).



**“English is a high-status language in India, all Indian languages are low-status.” – A publisher**

However, institutional mechanisms to ensure the spread of the language are fairly robust, such as state governments buying a certain number of books for distribution in colleges and libraries, and commissioning translations of Tamil classics, though less so for contemporary literature. English continues to be a bridge language for translation, even for other South Indian languages such as Malayalam. Tamil has a considerable diasporic audience: speakers of the language are spread across Canada, USA, UK, other European countries – and is a major language in Singapore, Sri Lanka and Malaysia, though there may be variations in vocabularies. Tamil Nadu’s capital city, Chennai has approximately 5000 publishing houses, but only 20-25 of them are actively involved in translation. While the Chennai Book Fair boosts book sales, a stall for selling English books, (even in translation from Tamil) costs far more than one for Tamil books, thus effectively undermining translation sales at the event.

Tamil publishing does not have a system of agents, and while Tamil filmmakers liberally borrow from literary works, there is no way for authors to safeguard their intellectual property. Commissioning is straightforward, with publishers approaching authors for their recent works. With regards to translation from Tamil into English, there were limited opportunities supporting this sort of work till the 1990s: apart from Longman, the only alternative was state-owned publishing houses like the Sahitya Akademi. However, in the 90s, Mini Krishnan started a seminal Modern Indian Novels in Translation project which she helmed while at Macmillan – for five novels



**“I’ll just tell a story from 2009...the only time that we visited the Frankfurt book fair, right after we’d started. I had three different Europeans come by our stall and look at the Tamil pulp fiction book. Their reaction was like, ‘But I thought Tamil was from Sri Lanka!’ If you’re starting with that, like if that’s your level of understanding, then I think it’s really hard. It’s really hard for somebody to dive in and pick up an Indian book in translation and understand where it’s coming from.”– A publisher**

each from Tamil, Kannada, Telugu, Hindi, Malayalam, Bengali, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Oriya, and Marathi. Her work coincided with the rise of the Katha Prize Short Stories, an initiative by Geeta Dharmarajan, anthologies showcasing translated fiction from all over the country. Both these developments had a positive impact on Tamil translation. However, there are other limitations: one publisher spoke of how despite his company’s considerable output of Tamil into English translations, the success of the books were hampered by distribution. The two major distributors of English books in the country largely cater to Penguin and Harper Collins, and smaller publishers get sidelined as a consequence.

## g. Telugu

No. of speakers			No. of edu. institutes		Literacy rate of State	% of total population
First language	Second language	Third language	Schools	Higher Edu		
81,127,740	11,946,414	1,001,498	1,09,628		67.66%	7.77%

The first Telugu press was established in 1812 at Madras, followed by Bellary and Visakhapatnam. However, as a written language, the first classical book in Telugu dates back to 11th century AD, and printing

of Telugu books took places outside of India in Germany (followed by a dictionary in 1807 and a grammar book called ‘Telinga Grammar’ in 1812 in Serampore Press in Bengal). The important



personalities who nourished Telugu literature were Charles Philip Brown, Vavilla Ramaswamy Sastrulu and Vedam Ventastarya Sastry.<sup>37</sup> Brown collected the manuscripts of Telugu classics, got them edited, printed, brought out outstanding dictionaries prepared on modern lines and published a grammar book. He got Telugu and Sanskrit classics ably edited by competent scholars and also English translations of the Telugu works of Vavilla and printed them with attractive typefaces on good paper. These early publishers played a major role in popularising the Telugu classics. Along with the above forerunners, a few enterprising publishers entered the field in the first half of the present century and made notable contributions in literary and reference works. A wide variety of literary works were written and published during the post-Independence era which witnessed unprecedented expansion in Telugu publishing. There were several non-profit voluntary institutions that contributed significantly to the cause of Telugu publishing and literature. Andhra Pradesh Sahitya Akademi, Telugu Academy (Hyderabad) and other such State agencies took up publishing. During the early post-Independence era, literature with a social and political background was published. However, the female writers in Telugu, who have inculcated the habit of reading novels among the middle-class housewives and neo-literates which have given life to the publishing industry, stand out as a category worthy of special mention.

In 2014, after years of the Telangana movement which owes some of its evolution to literary inequity, led to the creation of a new state, Telangana, from the pre-existing state of Andhra Pradesh in India. Forms of Telugu chosen for education and official purposes are drawn from general coastal Andhra dialect, and while the undivided Andhra Pradesh had three regional distinct literary identities, only one was recognised till the bifurcation of the State.<sup>38</sup> The Telugu literary scene was also strongly shaped by the Naxalite movement, which fostered the popularity of certain forms of revolutionary writing, though to the detriment of other genres. The cause of Telugu literature is also hampered by the fact that, despite the role played by political conditions in the making of Telugu linguistic culture, it lacks government support.

### Research insights

There seems to be a sense of crisis in contemporary Telugu literature — often overshadowed by more widely spoken languages, Telugu is perceived as “low status” — as shared by a prominent Telugu translator:

**“We have been pained by the fact that Telugu has been underappreciated in the Indian circle or outside the country. We were very happy to see Telugu as one of the languages that you were looking into.” “English is a high-status language in India, all Indian languages are low-status.(...) As far as I know - I've been in publishing for 40 years — Telugu is like low, low, status. You really have no bargaining point with English language publishers sitting in Delhi.” – A publisher**

This particular publisher translates their own books into English, but the English language rights are retained by their Delhi counterparts, who do not make any pro-active effort to sell these in international markets. However, in the South, the situation is slightly more hopeful, as translation between the major South Indian literature and Telugu is more frequent and an established practice. To improve the conditions for Telugu translation, respondents suggested that it must be taught and supported by educational institutions such as the Dravidian and Telugu Universities, that move beyond the disciplinary approaches of comparative literature and translation studies, and train translators to undertake the act of translation. Telugu has actually found a larger audience in translation when published in academic contexts: the work of Velcheru Narayana Rao, who has translated a number of classical Telugu works into English, is celebrated, though not marketed to a general readership. There are some attempts to ensure that future generations are exposed to the richness of Telugu literature, some making use of digital platforms to ensure a wider audience - a recent innovation being the work of Shanmukha Sunnapuralla, who has compiled a literature kit entitled *Telugu Sahitimoorthulu*<sup>39</sup>, that comprises photographs and

37. J Bhagyalakshmi, 'Telugu' in 60 Years of Book Publishing in India, 1947-2007. (New Delhi: Federation of Indian Publishers, 2007), pp.153-60.

38. Amar Tejaswi, 'Separate states good for Telugu', Deccan Chronicle, 22 December 2013. Available [here](#).

39. Neeraja Murthy, 'Unique literature kit 'Telugu Sahitimoorthulu' introduces Telugu authors to the next generation', The Hindu, 12 June 2021. Available [here](#).

biographies of a 111 eminent Telugu writers. Katha Nilayam, the library founded by the eminent and beloved Telugu short story writer Kalipatnam Ramarao, is a treasure trove of modern Telugu

literature, mostly collecting anthologies of short stories from 1930 onwards, as well as providing research resources and works of literary criticism.

## h. Urdu

No. of speakers			No. of edu. institutes		Literacy rate of State	% of total population
First language	Second language	Third language	Schools	Higher Edu.		
50,772,631	11,055,287	1,096,428	30,355		Not applicable since it is spoken in multiple States	5.18%

Historically, the language that came to be known as Urdu in India in the late 19th century, placed great emphasis on the materiality of the book itself — the culture's illustrated manuscripts written in elaborate calligraphy — both of which were impossible for early printing processes to emulate<sup>40</sup>. However, the arrival of Urdu type (in the 1700s) and publishers, who dedicated their lives to bringing out giant volumes of classics and various means and ways of promoting the language, changed Urdu's relationship with publishing. Urdu also has a rich tradition of journalism, with periodicals and newspapers flourishing at the turn of the century, some of which are still being published today.

The language suffered tremendously during the partition of India, with publishing houses and markets split between two young nations and even destroyed during the riots. However, several post-partition government initiatives and quasi-government organisations helped the language to emerge. The National Council for the Promotion of Urdu, which receives grants from the MHRD, has brought out books on literature, social science, history, biographies and more. The Publications Division of the MHRD and the National Book Trust have brought out 600+ titles on literature, history, biography, books for children, and science and health-related books. The Anjuman Taraqqi Urdu (Society for the Promotion of Urdu), founded by Maulvi Abdul Haq, has published 600 valuable volumes. The Maktaba Jamia Limited has been printing Urdu classics and contemporary literature. As a promoting measure of Urdu language, the various State governments of India established Urdu Academies in 14 provinces, which promote the Urdu language, publish books and sponsor authors. The two foremost Academies in Delhi and Lucknow have so far produced and sponsored over 1000 books each respectively. The Urdu publishing sector has distributors in India spread over the length and

breadth of the country, most of them based in Delhi, Lucknow, Hyderabad and Mumbai.

### Research insights

However, the formal publishing industry in Urdu is increasingly threatened with questions of obsolescence, heavily relying on self-publishing, lacking professionalism and editorial intervention. Modern notions of intellectual property are not exercised in the industry, and authors are rarely compensated for their work by way of royalties. A respondent describes the current Urdu publishing scene thus:



**“I think a great deal of books are actually self-published so marketing is very far away from the scene. Let's say, and this is even for big writers, I mean, Zakiya Mashhadi, major writer, award-winning writer from Patna has told me how she's had to pay... a publisher to do that. Actually the print run will then not be very large and it will be limited to her gifting, her book to friends, acquaintances, and so on, and a very small number will be left for actual sale and distribution. The numbers are, I think, really small and in comparison to English, don't really make sense.”**

40. Syed Humayun Zafar Zaidi, 'Urdu' in 60 Years of Book Publishing in India, 1947-2007. (New Delhi: Federation of Indian Publishers, 2007), pp.161-66.



Some younger publishers, such as Arshia Publications and Kitabdaar have been bringing out high quality editions of contemporary Urdu authors, but have been affected badly by the pandemic. Distribution networks for Urdu books are not well developed, though digital platforms might be the way forward: with recent entrant Urdu Bazaar using their online shopfront to connect to audiences, and now diversifying into publishing their own imprint. The industry does need to professionalise in order to succeed financially and sustain itself into the future.

Despite the close affinity between Urdu and Hindi, while 80-90% of Urdu literature has been translated into Hindi, less than 10 % of Hindi literature has been published into Urdu. Urdu does have some significant translators working between Urdu and English -Daisy Rockwell's translations, for example. Translators who have a strong sense of "Urdu connotations, Urdu nuances, Urdu culture and capable of conveying Urdu's musicality, as well as retain the vitality of its context and politics", as one respondent described it, are increasingly difficult to find. Urdu speakers are also scattered all across the country, which means that the local flavour of the language varies from place to place, absorbing other dialects and vocabularies, meaning that there is no "standard" Urdu. With the exception of a few publishers - Ritu Menon's Women Unlimited for example, has been publishing and commissioning translations from Urdu into English since the company's inception — publishers are not motivated to commission translations, and most translations that do go forward are largely initiated by the translators themselves.

In academic and institutional contexts, there is still a tendency to denigrate the more regionally inflected versions of Urdu in favour of a more "pure" classical Urdu. Despite the academic interest in translating Urdu works for use in South Asian studies departments, for example, this doesn't have a real impact on the commercial publishing industry as a whole.

**“It is very difficult to market, promote and sell a translated text, no matter how good it is, no matter how well done the translation is. It's just not easy. Some awards have been instituted for translations, and it's a good thing. What I'm saying is that's the icing on the cake, but where's the cake. We need to have something that will allow us to bake the cake in the first place. And that foundational work does not exist... It's been a labor of love done by some very committed, very dedicated individuals, translators and publishers. It is not something that has had support from anywhere, certainly not from the market, not from institutions, not from donors, not from any corporate, not a single one has ventured into this field on their own.”**

## Others based on focus regions

### i. Assamese

No. of speakers	No. of edu. institutes		Literacy rate of State	% of total population
	Schools	Higher Edu.		
15,311,351	36,172		73.18%	1.26%

Like several Indic languages, Assamese has a long literary history dating back to the 9th century. However, it has also seen challenges emerging from political annexations and colonial decisions of the 19th century. Bengali was imposed as the official

language in the state to be employed as the medium of instruction, admin and education from 1836 until 1873, when Assamese was reinstated as the state language. Modern publishing in Assam started with the establishment of the first printing press in

Sibsagar in 1836 by the Missionaries. In 1917 the Assam Sahitya Sabha was formed as the forum for the development of Assamese language and literature. Today, some of the major publishers include Dutta

Barua & Co (Guwahati), Students' Store, Granth Pith and Bonolata.<sup>41</sup> Key organisations in the State include the Publication Board Assam, Assam Sahitya Sabha and All Assam Publishers and BookSellers Association.

## j. Gujarati

No. of speakers			No. of edu. institutes		Literacy rate of State	% of total population
First language	Second language	Third language	Schools	Higher Edu.		
55,492,554	4,035,489	1,007,912	75,862		79.31%	4.99%

The Gujarati language was widely spoken in the erstwhile Bombay Presidency. Modern Gujarati publishing began in Bombay in 1812. The first printed book published was the Gujarati translation of Dabestan-e-Mazaheb prepared and printed by Parsi priest Fardunjee Marzban in 1815. The Gujarati publishing and literature landscape can be defined by some of its unique features including the role of institutional publishers and the collectivising efforts of its Associations. Some of the most important institutional publishers include the Sastu Sahitya Vardhak Karyalay, Navjivan Trust by Mahatma Gandhi, Parichay Trust and Vishvakosh Trust, each of whom continue to support the sector. Gujarati Sahitya Parishad (Gujarati Literary Council) is a literary organisation for the promotion of Gujarati literature

located in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. While Gujarat has several publishers' associations in the past, one of the most important ones was Gujarati Sahitya Parishad Vikreta Mandal i.e. Gujarati Literary Publishers and Booksellers Association, that initiated an experiment similar to the 'Net Book Agreement'. Publishers decided the code of conduct for publication, fixed the rate of discount to be given to institutions and libraries, and the standards of pricing of books<sup>42</sup>. Eventually the Mandal became dormant and in its place came the Gujarati Prakashak Mandal in 2007. Other significant organisations include the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad, and book fairs such as Gujarat Book Fair, Commercial Book Fair and Amdavad National Book Fair.

## k. Marathi

No. of speakers			No. of edu. institutes		Literacy rate of State	% of total population
First language	Second language	Third language	Schools	Higher Edu.		
83,026,680	12,923,626	2,966,019	1,12,759		82.91%	8.18%

## l. Odia

No. of speakers			No. of edu. institutes		Literacy rate of State	% of total population
First language	Second language	Third language	Schools	Higher Edu.		
37,521,324	4,972,151	31,525	62,169		73.45%	3.51%

41. Hiren Gohain, 'Assamese', in 60 Years of Book Publishing in India, 1947-2007 (New Delhi: Federation of Indian Publishers, 2007).

42. Jitendra Desai, 'Gujarati', in 60 Years of Book Publishing in India, 1947-2007 (New Delhi: Federation of Indian Publishers, 2007).

## iv. Role of literary culture and events

India has a thriving culture of book fairs, literary conferences (*sammelans*) and book exhibitions which play an important role in the country's literary culture. Several of these have been in operation for many decades and find wide patronage by readers, booksellers and publishers across small and big towns in India. They provide opportunities for publishers all over the country to meet, and are often useful spaces for finding networks and starting conversations about translations between Indian languages. These domestic book fairs are to be distinguished from international book fairs such as London and Frankfurt, which are trade fairs which focus largely on the buying and selling of rights. There is little to no formal support system to facilitate rights sales.

India has seen a proliferation of literature festivals and related events across its towns, small and big, since the mid-2000s. While there is no reliable set of statistics documenting the initiation and closure of these festivals, at the last count, there were 70+ literature festivals in a pre-pandemic India.<sup>43</sup>

Respondents cited the following as significant literary events in India:

Major book fairs	Major literature festivals
Chennai Book Fair	Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival, since 2010
Delhi Book Fair	Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob, since 2015
Kolkata Book Fair	Bengaluru Literature Festival
Patna Book Fair	Bookaroo festival of Children's literature, since 2008
World Book Fair	Goa Arts and Literature Festival, since 2010
	Hyderabad Literature Festival
	Jaipur Literature Festival, since 2005
	Jashn-e-Rekhta (December), since 2015
	Kalinga Literary Festival
	Kerala Literature Festival
	The Hindu Lit for Life Festival, since 2010 Tata Lit Live!
	Valley of Words

### a. Literary festivals and conferences

Literary festivals help with image building (of the author), serve as a bridge to the reader and are great promotional opportunities for publishers. They also serve to create literary exchanges between authors, publishers and agents through programming or the development of an alternative platform on the sidelines. Examples include the language focus at Hyderabad Literature Festival and the initiation of the Jaipur BookMark as part of JLF.



**“...Image building is the catch word now. But you have to make sure that unknown names get invited to festivals.”**– A literary agent

Unless a literary festival is single-language focused and not based in the major metros, it tends to be English-speaker centric with little room for Indian language programming. The audience in the bigger metros is attuned to English, and hence there is a preference for bilingual and trilingual authors (from Indian languages) with English as one of the languages so as to not require a translator for the session



**“While programming for literature festivals, we first look at the audience (local, migrants) and programme accordingly... (There is a) significant ‘bhasha’ (language) component in the programming... and about 20-25%... (it’s) hard to pack the venue when it is a language-focused discussion except when it is a famous/controversial author.”**– A literary festival director

43. Vani, ‘Does India really need so many literature festivals?’, Scroll.in, 29 February 2016. Available [here](#).



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**“Literature Festivals are two-edged swords. Wonderfully invigorating for writer panelists and their audiences though they are, these platforms tend to invite the writer of the moment (Perumal Murugan, KR Meera, Vivek Shanbhag, Bama Faustina) repeatedly. Less confident writers who have not been noticed outside their language islands rarely get a chance. And they are the ones who need it most!”**– A translator

Respondents, translators in particular, stressed on the under-representation of translators at these festivals. There are a few sessions on translation, but the tendency is to invite translators on a single panel for sessions.

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**“It calls for slightly more investment to curate panels in a more interesting way, not just let's get three translators and put them in one panel.”**– A translator

There are specific language-focused festivals which play a crucial role in enabling dialogue and exchange between audiences, authors and the publishing industry. They also serve as a bridge for contemporary writers to get translated into other languages, including English. Such festivals include Jashn-e-Rekhta, Apeejay Bangla Sahitya Utsob, Hindi Mahotsav, Akhil Bharatiya Sahitya Sammelan in Maharashtra (by Akhil Bharatiya Sahitya Sammelan Mahamandal) and Sahitya Sammelan in Karnataka among others, and they see vast attendance and interaction. Several of these languages find support from the State governments owing to the legacy of linguistic boundaries on the basis of which state lines were drawn in post-Independence India.

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**“We also arrange for buyers and sellers to meet in India in what is known as reverse meets, where we invite the possible buyers from different countries to meet publishers here in India.”**– An industry body representative

There are also publishing sector focused events such as the Publishing Next conference in Goa, and the Jaipur BookMark as mentioned earlier.

Respondents also noted the increasing interest in Indian language in translation, endorsed by prestigious awards, some of which are initiated by or awarded at literature festivals. For instance, the JCB Prize for Literature — which is a 25-lakh award presented each year to a distinguished work of fiction by an Indian author, with an additional 10 lakh awarded to the translator — had two of the three awards it has presented so far to Indian language authors. Examples include Benyamin for Jasmine Days (translated from Malayalam by Shahnaz Habib) in 2018 and S. Hareesh's Moustache (translated from Malayalam by Jayasree Kalathil) in 2020. The DSC Prize for South Asian Literature for 2018 was awarded to Jayant Kaikini's No Presents Please (Translated by Tejaswini Niranjana). The Crossword Books award also has a dedicated prize for translated fiction works from Indian languages. The 2019 award went to N. Prabhakaran's Diary of a Malayali Madman (translated from Malayalam by Jayasree Kalathil).

Literary conferences and conventions, on the other hand, tend to be more focused on issues around sector development and advocacy, and academic preoccupations. Respondents said that there is a more concerted effort to foreground publishers from as many languages as possible at such events. There are several important organisations that organise national conventions on Indian language publishing in different States of India. Some important organisations include the quasi-Government Export Council of India, Capexil and Federation of Indian Publishers.

### b. Domestic book fairs

Domestic book fairs and festivals are valuable for different reasons. Book fairs in bigger cities, help with rights sales, while consumer book fairs, particularly in smaller towns and cities help with readership of Indian language books in translation. Respondents said that the latter has a much more readership-heavy focus with book fairs being called '*melas*' (festivals) attended by lakhs of people.



**“I’ve actually found that very often Bengali book fairs in the districts of West Bengal end up selling more of my translations into English, than the big book shops do in the big cities.”**

– A translator



**“It’s a conglomeration of different sects of people with different interests...it’s a confluence of mindset and polarisation of ideas. All this is very important for me because that helps me to bring out what the market really wants.”**

– A publisher

Book fairs, along with conventions, are attended by several sector stakeholders with government and quasi government agencies seeing high levels of participation. The Sahitya Akademi participates in 175 book exhibitions annually, while the NBT has been the lead organiser of six book fairs themselves in non-metros (participation in domestic book fairs is unknown, but NBT has participated in 14 international book fairs in 2018-19).

The FIP has been organising the Delhi Book Fair for 25 years, while the NBT, in association with the International Trade Organization of India (ITPO), has organised the World Book Fair in Delhi for 29 years. The latter is also a rights fair.

Respondents highlighted book fairs as places where one scouts for regional reader trends. This kind of trend spotting has been affected by online bookselling.



**“Certain authors and certain topics sell more in certain regions – this was more pronounced earlier when the market was dominated by booksellers.”**– An agent

Book fairs also serve to become a space for the publishing sector to meet and engage in dialogue on issues around the sector. However, book fairs dedicated to the translation market are non-existent.

### c. International book fairs

The Indian participation in international book fairs is three-fold. One is when government agencies are invited to represent India at these fairs (opportunities such as India being the guest country). The NBT is the nodal agency for representing India at international fora. Sahitya Akademi attends these book fairs under the aegis of the NBT and is tasked with handling requests for local connections (connecting publishers and authors with each other), and generating reports on the output of such participation by these agencies. The Sahitya Akademi also takes with it a delegation comprising Indian authors, publishers and government officials. The international book fair may also engage with Indian embassies in their respective countries for engagement. Related to these are quasi-Government organisations and sector associations that offer grants and subsidies to their members to visit these book fairs. For instance, CAPEXIL offers limited travel subsidies for internal book fair participation.

The second is when international book fairs invite Indian publishers, authors and translators through various instruments of engagement such as speaking sessions, workshops and fellowships. This allows for a larger representation on the Indian side as funding and selection is handled by that book fair. The third involves private visits by Indian publishers out of their own volition.

The value of international book fairs was exhorted by the respondents who highlighted the advantages of attending them: the opportunity to network and establish relationships, have one-on-one meetings with

literary agents and publishers across the world, and absorb intangible insights around publishing trends and conversations. Frankfurt, London and Sharjah book fairs were most recommended in the said order of importance.

However, respondents pointed out, these fairs are attended by those who have the social and economic capital to do so. Small regional language publishers experience both economic and linguistic barriers to access these fairs.

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**“When you have the India year happening in France or wherever else, we have noticed that it ultimately comes down to that same circle of English-speaking publishers (in India) who get to go walk the talk... A lot of other people are just not represented.”**— An academic

Significant concerns were raised around the potential of its (book fairs’) impact in terms of official representation of Indian languages and the skills and systems of publishers and agents in maximising this potential.

An international book fair or festival will invite India as a guest nation and will need to liaise with the NBT, whose consistency of planning and presentation is dependent on who is at the helm and the internal rota system within the bureaucracy.

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**“A lot of the impact (of India being the guest country at the book fair), whether it remains lasting or not, depends on how it's followed up. And, a translation support programme is a very integral part of the follow-up to so many countries.”**  
— A publisher

Related organisations such as FIP will organise related networking and relationship building sessions at these fairs. Most publishers who find value in these book fairs are limited by budgets and can only afford to go to one or two each year. The pandemic has created new opportunities for publishers that don’t require physical presence, creating potential opportunities for networking.

## v. Trends in digitisation

In India, digital versions of books — be it podcasts, e-books or audio books — have not gained the kind of anticipated market share as was expected. This hasn’t stopped the industry responding with enthusiasm in their own way with the entry of global players such as Storytel in 2017, Audible in 2018 and music apps such as Gaana in 2010 and Spotify in 2019.

These companies are using reader trends and data analytics to predict future trends, while also driving AI-driven recommendations in this space, thereby playing the role of a traditional bookstore in aspects of discovery.

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**“50% of what users place in their bookshelf is based on our recommendations.”** — An audio book publisher

Publishers see digitisation as a complement to print publishing. Respondents pointed out that more recently digital rights have been included in rights sales and they include formats such print, digital, audio and OTT rights as a single package, which makes it attractive for translation markets.

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**“So, if a book is available in all three formats, I think it works as an advantage when it comes to pitching translation rights.”**— A literary agent

While the penetration of these formats have been limited, analysts have pointed to positive trends during the pandemic that have changed reader behaviour.

With closure of bookstores and challenges in distribution for physical books, the pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital formats for reading, and e-book and audio book sales increased significantly during the pandemic, as noted by the Bound India report. However, much of this data responds to English-language readership trends. In contrast, several research respondents from the Indian language organisations spoke of a marginal growth in digital adoption, with relatively healthier trends in audiobook consumption.

The Nielsen Book India report tracing the impact of COVID-19 on the 'India Book Consumer' stated that there's a 50% uptake in the ebook and audiobook consumption, with women readers leading the way. However, since this report was based only on an online survey and without diversified research methodologies, this data needs to be seen skeptically. Inputs from the respondents are covered in much detail later in this section, corroborating some claims made in this Nielsen report, with respect to migration to digital by publishers.

Respondents also spoke of a slew of digital conferences, fairs and initiatives that led to meeting many more publishers, authors and expanding networks world over than would have been otherwise possible. How this interaction has translated to actual sales and business is yet to be seen.

Social media has been another frontier for respondents that COVID-19 has helped forge a path towards. While several respondents reported using this time to shore up their social media engagement and community building, some have also reported increased sales.



**“My translations have reached more people through social media.”**– A translator

**“The problem in the translation space in the past was that there was no readers’ community (sic)... If you liked Tagore's stuff, there was no space to come and ask for similar works... This community conversation became very important during the pandemic that was one of the unintended consequences of it.”**  
– An educator

**“I think if the pandemic has one silver lining, it is this transformation, the forced migration into digital first off of all kinds of content and with great benefit for, I think, ecology and the environment.”**  
– A representative from a cultural organisation



**“I just think these new technology platforms of entertainment or technologies of pop culture have hugely contributed to the popularity of the translation as a genre and as a social experience. Over time you will find that a lot of minor languages become popular.”**  
– An educator

#### a. Role of e-books

E-books are usually the first port of call while talking about digitisation. As per the Bound India report, E-books contribute to under 10% of the total publishing industry sales. In the Indian publishing market, which continues to buck global trends, Indian language reading on e-readers is fairly nascent. The pandemic, though, has impacted reader trends in this space, and forced the market and publishers to look at e-book sales more seriously.

The study also highlighted technology start-ups centered around e-publishing, particularly catering to Indian languages. E-reading apps such as Pratilipi, e-Shabda, Matrubarati and MyLang jostle with Audible, Google Play Books and Storytel with their widening base of Indian language literature on these apps.

Respondents also pointed to concerns around piracy with the e-book publication for Indian language

publishers who may not have the wherewithal to fight lengthy legal battles. This acts as a deterrent for smaller publishers who may have the rights to several translated works to seek digitalisation of their books.

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**“Now digital printing has come, print on demand has come. Now any book you ask, whatever I have published, you will get it. There's no question that a copy of a book is not available.”**

– A publisher

**“So, on Google playbooks, we are selling it. Second, there are two companies that have come forward in Kannada itself... MyLang and Rutumana. I give them the files and they publish on that (platform).”**– A publisher

#### b. Role of audio books

The research points towards increasing potential for audiobooks and their impact on translated works. The market for audio books has grown over the past decade. In late 2019, Deloitte predicted that the global audiobook market will grow by 25 percent to US\$3.5 billion in 2020 (Deloitte Insights).

Most respondents emphasised the importance of audio books in creating accessibility of Indian literature in translation for a multilingual country where language proficiency varies when it comes to reading and understanding (listening). Respondents

from the Indian language publishing spaces also pointed to a preference for audio books over ebooks.

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**“They can't read and write Kannada, but they can understand Kannada... Life is not different for them, right? Though they learn English, it doesn't mean that they are living in America. So, they want to listen to our stories, and for them audio books are the right choice.”**– A publisher

**“Language publishers have worked much more easily with the audio format than with the digital e-book format.”**  
– A publisher

However there were several concerns raised with respect to the costs of producing these audiobooks and podcasts, if they were to be borne by the publishing house. A partnership with companies such as Storytel and Audible is seen as a good way to balance costs and reach new markets.

Audiobook companies, on the other hand, seek content from these publishers both in the form of acquiring backlists as well as producing new content, including new writing. The former allows publishers to generate a second life for their earlier books that are out of circulation, while the latter creates new reader markets for their books thereby diversifying their investment risks.

## vi. Perceptions of Indian literature in English translation abroad

The UK has significant South Asian diasporic populations with Punjabi (0.5%), Urdu and Bengali being the third, fourth and fifth most spoken languages in the country after English, Welsh and Polish as per the 2011 census<sup>44</sup>. However, Indian literature in translation is yet to create a significant impact on the Anglophone publishing industry.

While classic literature by authors such as Rabindranath Tagore is more readily available in English, especially due to scholarly interest in annotated editions which are used in world literatures and postcolonial curricula, contemporary Indian translations is yet to make its mark, though there have been some notable successes. A number of respondents said that they had managed to sell language rights into a variety of countries, such as Turkey, France, Latin America, but selling into the English market, especially the UK, remains a challenge. MNCs with offices in the UK and the US do have a slight advantage, especially with regards to having catalogues that can be shared at international book fairs. However this relationship has not necessarily done much to increase the visibility of Indian literature in translation.

As per the report published by Literature Across Frontiers in 2017, the percentage of translations among all publications in the UK and Ireland remains around the much-quoted 3% mark, while among Dewey 800 publications (literature), translations consistently make up around 4-5%. 2011 remains the peak year, when translations made up 5.23% of Dewey 800 publications.<sup>45</sup>

Indian language literary translations published in the UK between 2000-2015 as per the Literature Across Frontiers Report (2017)<sup>46</sup> are as follows:

Indian language	Number of translations
Bengali	40
Urdu	19
Hindi	7
Tamil	3
Kannada	3
Telugu	1

India's presence as the guest country at the London Book Fair in 2009 shone the spotlight on Arunava Sinha's 2007 translation of Shankar's *Chowringhee* – the Bengali original having been written in 1962. More recently, authors such as Perumal Murugan (Tamil) and Manoranjan Byapari (Bengali) have found some success in translation, and Vivek Shanbag's *Ghachar Ghochar* (Kannada), has received critical acclaim in the US. Shanbag's book is notable for having been bought by an American publisher based on its own merits. However, Murugan and Byapari's work arguably received more visibility due to their unique circumstances of publication, despite the excellence of their writing— Murugan's brave stance against censorship by the Indian government, and Byapari's unusual journey from rickshaw puller to celebrated author — created a buzz around their work which translated into some degree of recognition by publishers and readers outside India. However, none of these can be considered a "breakthrough title" that can then lead to a publishing trend, as was the case with Deborah Smith's translation of Han Kang's 'The Vegetarian' from the Korean.



**“What we, I think, have not achieved yet are those breakthrough books, that speaks volumes for the particular regional literature, like ‘One Hundred Years of Solitude’ did for Latin American literature. That breakthrough book, which is the equivalent of ‘Midnight’s Children’ in translation for a variety of reasons. Really, there are so many gatekeeping points between the writing of a book and it finally getting into the hands of readers in the West that we’ll never know which of these gates inadvertently close shut.”– A translator**

44. Office for National Statistics, '2011 Census: Quick Statistics for England and Wales, March 2011', 30 January 2013. Available [here](#).

45. Giulia Trentacosti & Jennifer Nicholls, 'Publishing Translated Literature in the United Kingdom and Ireland 1990 -2015', (Literature Across Frontiers, 2017). Available [here](#).

46. Giulia Trentacosti & Jennifer Nicholls, 'Publishing Translated Literature in the United Kingdom and Ireland 1990 -2015', (Literature Across Frontiers, 2017). Available [here](#).

India's strong tradition of writing in English has also, to some extent, contributed to limiting the market for literature in translation. Indian writing in English is very often created with an international audience in mind, and therefore more accessible to foreign audiences than translations which might be very strongly rooted in local contexts, humour, and concerns which readers abroad might find difficult to relate to.

Axis can consider these titles as they form part of their mandate which is supported by the Arts Council. One respondent suggested that rather than foregrounding a book as a translation, playing to its strengths as an interesting, universal narrative that just happens to be a translation, has worked well for some bigger UK publishers. If a translation is included as part of an established imprint, such as Penguin Classics, that can also make a title more accessible and less likely to be judged on its merits of being a translation alone.

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**“There are also very strong cultural barriers against certain kinds of translations. One of the things one often finds about Indian books, I don't know if one finds this about other cultures or other languages, is that their readers who are not familiar with the culture are often confused by the large number of characters. They'll say there are too many characters in this book and that they can't get their head around them. I think that just in the way that translations have to travel, I think somewhere the readers of translations and the publishers of translations have to create receptivity for those books, which come from very different cultures and the readers have to have a willingness to engage and publishing markets generally are so conservative that it's difficult.”**

– An Indian publisher

Small independent publishers such as Tilted Axis in the UK are making careful efforts to discover and make contemporary writing from India more available to a wider audience, by commissioning high quality translations. While these might seem like a risk for more commercial publishers, a publisher like Tilted

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**“I guess it's more like you don't want it to look like the old idea of what a translated book would look like, which is kind of a boring academic cover photograph with paneling and that kind of thing. You want to make it look just like it would sit next to Sally Rooney and look exactly as good as Sally Rooney. That's kind of what the goal is.”**– A UK publisher

Another publisher, however, felt that a book's Indian-ness could be a useful USP:

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**“If we were publishing a book, from an Indian language that was set in India, we would probably make that a virtue because there is a tradition of books being set in India or other places that are perceived as exotic in the UK. That means that if we published it in the summer we might be more inclined to get sales.”**– A UK publisher

Indian publishers too are commissioning now with an alertness to how well a title might travel. As an established Bengali publisher commented:

“

**“When I'm picking up a book for translating . . . [W]e have a checklist. We look at a book, we look at how it's written, what's the log line or the plot, basically in three, four lines, whether it's unique, whether the idea is unique, whether the narrative is great. So these are checkpoints. These are not like one has to fulfill all of them. We see if it's great for audio, or if it's great for audio-visual. We see that it has a global reach. It's not that we only pick up books which have a global reach, it could be that it's a great drama. We know that it's going to make a good movie or a good web series.”**— A publisher

### a. Case study 1: Vivek Shanbhag's Ghachar Ghochar

Vivek Shanbhag's novella *Ghachar Ghochar* (Kannada, 2013) is a unique example of how a work of Indian literature in translation has managed to travel successfully into the Anglophone market, despite not having the sort of compelling backstory that helped to propel the works of Perumal Murugan and Manoranjan Byapari to international attention. Translated by Srinath Perur (2017), the critically acclaimed *Ghachar Ghochar* was published in the US by Penguin and in the UK by Faber, and is still one of the very few Kannada titles to ever be published in the Anglophone market. The two editions were published within months of each other, and was possibly symptomatic of a more general trend: the UK market being increasingly shaped by what was happening in the US industry. The English translation served as a bridge to a variety of international translations including Chinese and Turkish, as well as nationally, where finding translators who could work between the original Kannada and the target regional language was a challenge.

Unusually for an Indian language author and their translator, Shanbhag worked closely with Perur, even writing a few new scenes that appeared for the first time in the English edition, and only consequently in the second Kannada edition. Shanbhag's intentionally sparse and simply written text about the impact of upward mobility on an urban family, set

against the backdrop of an increasingly aspirational, neoliberal economy, helped Perur to create an English rendering which an international readership found readable and easy to relate to. As Perur puts it, “There was nothing intimidating about the book culturally, so that worked in its favor, I think.” While Perur strived to retain elements of Indian English in the translation, some specifics were changed for the US market, “For example, an American doesn't have an idea of an iron box for example, or the way we say tea powder rather than tea leaves,” but overall no significant changes were made. Agent Shruti Debi, who was responsible for bringing the book to the attention of the US agent and publishers, comments on Perur's translation —

**“Even if he cannot bring the exact same moral world or the exact same experience, what I think he can do as a translator which is really special, is that he can provide a moral world in translation. So, when you're in *Ghachar Ghochar*, when you're reading it, you have the concerns of *Ghachar Ghochar*. You're not following it line for line. You're having an immersive experience.”**

The book's entry into the American market was made



possible due to the dedication of Debi and her counterpart in the US who were championing it and finally, only one out of twenty publishers, Penguin, was willing to take on the risk of publishing the US edition. The book's unusual journey continued with Penguin surprisingly capitulating to Perur's insistence on retaining Ghachar Ghochar as its transliterated title, rather than attempting to translate or replace it. Ghachar Ghochar, a nonsensical phrase made up by one of the book's characters, alludes to something that is irrevocably tangled, cannot be undone — and the book's cover design also played against type: the usual "exotic" tropes lazily resorted to when marketing South Asian literature were abandoned in favour of a subtle semiotic nod to the proverbial Gordian knot — that

both holds the protagonist family together while ironically tearing them asunder.

Debi comments on how the emphasis on South Asian and translation studies in US universities played a role, with the academic departmental networks contributing significantly to Ghachar Ghochar's success. As reviewer Parul Sehgal points out<sup>47</sup>, the moniker of the "Great Indian Novel" has often been bestowed on works of Indian writing in English, but Shanbhag's book, glowingly reviewed in publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The Paris Review* and shortlisted for a couple of international literary prizes — despite its modest sales and the fact that it was written in *bhasha* (used to denote a regional language) — was a significant outlier.

## b. Case study 2: Perumal Murugan's Poonachi

Perumal Murugan's *Poonachi* (Tamil), an Orwellian novel about the story of a black goat, was his comeback after a yearlong self-imposed literary exile. Originally published by Kalachuvadu Publications in 2016, it was then translated into the English language as *Poonachi: The Story of a Black Goat* by N. Kalyan Raman. Several respondents of the study agreed that the 'controversy' created around Murugan's writing, its censorship and the consequent attention paid by both national and international media created a buzz which contributed to the book's popularity globally. The book has even made it to the longlist of the National Book Award for Translated Literature (2020), set up by *The New Yorker* where Murugan is the only author to have been nominated twice.<sup>48</sup>

Murugan's 2010 novel *Maadhurubaagan* (later published in English as *One Part Woman*, translated by Aniruddhan Vasudevan in 2013), created a stir among radical right-wing groups from his caste in the region. Outraged by Murugan's depiction of the caste-related mating rituals that a rural, childless couple had to undergo due to societal pressure to conceive a child, they issued death threats and burnt copies of the book. In 2015, when Murugan was forced to issue an apology and withdraw unsold copies of his book, he went into literary exile, later declaring in a Facebook post, that he, "The writer, is dead".<sup>49</sup>

As Kannan Sundaram of Kalachuvadu Publications explained during his interview, the groundwork done

by several friends and well-wishers, escalated the issue via social media, thus making Murugan a global name.

***"Within an hour of this Facebook posting in Tamil on that night, we translated that post in English. By midnight we shared it, and by 6am the next morning, I started getting phone calls from the Indian media. So it is the Indian English media's focus on the issue that made it a national issue, and then an international one."***

He also emphasises how this strong network of supporters, along with the timeliness and context of the issue — Murugan was one of the first writers to be targeted after the BJP government's ascent to power — was instrumental in garnering further visibility for his work.

***"We immediately issued a statement saying we will never withdraw that book. We'll fight it out and that came at a time when Penguin and many other companies were silently withdrawing books whenever they were a target of attack. But we came out really clearly, and decided we won't do that. That brought the whole thing under focus. And that's how Perumal Murugan's case travelled abroad."***

47. Parul Sehgal, 'A Great Indian Novel Reaches American Shores', *The New York Times*, 06 April 2017. Available [here](#).

48. B. Kolappan, 'Perumal Murugan's novel 'Poonachi' makes it to longlist of U.S. National Book Award for Translated Literature', *The Hindu*, 17 September 2020. Available [here](#).

49. Sudha G Tilak, 'Perumal Murugan: India's 'dead' writer returns with searing novel', *BBC News*, 15 March 2018. Available [here](#).

Apart from these contentions, the fact that the subject matter of Murugan's books seems to find resonance with varied audiences is key. As Priya Doraswamy of Lotus Lane Literary, the agent who spearheaded the book's outreach to international markets echoes,

***“A lot of his books do have universal appeal. With themes of identity, love, family, kinship, landscape.... that me or readers in Kenya or Australia or Mississippi can relate to.”***

It seems that the joint efforts of Kannan (the publisher) and Priya (the agent) propelled Murugan's work into new territories. “Kannan is a great partner to work with”, states Priya. While trying to strike a two-book deal for *One Part Woman* and *Poonachi*, she received a lot of interest from many different publishers in New York and London. The rights were finally sold to Grove Atlantic, owing to a pre-emption offered by Peter Blackstock, who acquired world English rights.

While the case of Murugan gives much reason to be hopeful about ILET getting more recognition in the future, such cases are still few and occasional as an Indian publisher points out.

***“I think it's great that he's getting his due, that he's actually being recognised and respected by the international market. And if he travels into one language, then traveling into the other is not so difficult. But it happens rarely.”***

Similarly, N Kalyan Raman, who translated *Poonachi*, alludes to the importance of creating an ecosystem with robust 'discourse' within the country, to start with, so that prolific writers like Murugan, can be better read and understood by Indian anglophone audiences.

***“What I found while translating for Indian Anglophone audiences is that when you take someone considered an eminent writer in Tamil and translate a text by him into English, sometimes there's a total failure of response among the Anglophone readers simply because they don't know how to read this particular writer. There is no discourse available through which a reader can enter the text.”***

# Skills assessment: gaps and needs

## i. Publishing

The varied nature of the Indian publishing sector means that there are no formal professional requirements to enter the business, and in smaller, informal set-ups there might not be any defined compartmentalising between the roles of commissioning, editorial, sales and marketing. Most publishers, including multinationals, do not have rights departments: which is a startling departure from the Western publishing model, where the selling of rights forms a significant income stream. Consequently, there is little awareness of the contractual and legal frameworks around buying and selling rights, and limited opportunities for these skills to be learnt.

While buying and selling rights might form part of a company's remit, most rights work is undertaken by agents. Agenting too is in its nascent stages in India, and again, consequently, whatever training exists comes through experience and learning from more established agents working in the field. There are very few agents who work to promote buying rights between Indian languages: most focus on selling rights of English language books abroad. Selling rights at the major book fairs such as Frankfurt and London requires expertise, not only with regards to books, but also to sell subsidiary rights such as merchandising or film adaptation. While these skills can be learnt on the job, as an agent pointed out, it is expensive to attend international book fairs, and so specific training to sell rights into international markets is essential.

Consequently, India lacks spaces that can train publishers, and there are currently only four established skills training centres in the country:

### a. The Seagull School of Publishing

The Seagull School of Publishing is based in Kolkata and managed by practicing publishers, editors and designers. It offers two full-time professional courses, in Editing and in Book Design, from January to March and June to August every year. The course structure combines intensive, hands-on training programmes with interactive sessions with professionals and experts from publishing houses in India and other parts of the world. Classes range from learning the nuances of editing manuscripts to negotiating buying and selling of rights in the national and international markets, analysing sales and marketing systems to demystifying the phenomenon of e-books and digital publishing.

In 2021, it ran a three-month online course in

publishing covering commissioning, copyediting, contracting, planning, basics of book design and related practical concerns.

### b. Editing and Publishing at Jadavpur University and Loreto College, Kolkata

A four-month Postgraduate Certificate Course in Editing and Publishing is conducted by the School of Cultural Texts & Records, Jadavpur University (Kolkata) to train students in the basic skills required to edit texts for the publishing industry and the media, and to see the work through the entire production process. The course comprises actual text editing, production design, printing-house practice and relevant computer skills, as well as marketing, entrepreneurship and intellectual property issues. It includes visits to printing and publishing units. Loreto College, Kolkata also has an enrichment program on publishing and editing.

### c. Publishing skills training by the National Book Trust

As per NBT's 2018-19 report, it organises short term training courses in book publishing in various parts of the country. A four-week training course in book publishing is held every year in Delhi and other short-term, one-to-two week courses are held in other parts of the country. In 2018-19, for example, these were held in Dharamshala, Imphal, New Delhi, Puducherry, Patna, Ahmedabad and Jammu. The objective of these courses is to "create a talent pool of trained professionals" (p.5, NBT Annual Report 2018-19). There is little to no information about what the structure and content of these courses are in general, and no data about the kind of attendance and impact that these courses have on the sector. Both in 2020 and 2021, these courses were held online (for example, as seen in [this](#) video) but there is no reporting yet on the same.

### d. IGNOU & The Federation of Indian Publishers (FIP)

FIP offers seminars for publishers, with a focus on intellectual property. Similar events are also held during the language conventions, allowing publishers to get up to speed with recent developments in copyright law. In partnership with the Indira Gandhi National Open University, FIP runs a nine-month, distance learning Postgraduate Diploma in Book Publishing (PGDBP), which is awarded jointly by both institutions. The course

seeks to train students in every aspect of publishing, as a faculty member describes the aims of the course:

***“(E)very time I hold a viva for them, I ask them, do you feel that you are capable of starting a publishing house? This is why we were designing this, that by the end of it as a student, he or she should be able to have that kind of confidence, to understand all the nuances of printing, press etc.”***

#### e. Yoda Press

Yoda Press, is a well known publishing house that focuses on “issues such as sexuality, popular culture, cities and urbanism, architecture as a lived experience, and new perspectives in Indian history and sociology”. It also does a series of workshops on publishing, editing and other aspects of the trade. As per their [official website](#), the workshops are conducted by their Founder-Publisher, Arpita Das. Their aim is two-fold: a) to help authors (academic or trade) make their manuscripts publication-ready and advise them on how to interact with publishers b) to mentor young editorial professionals in the industry.

## ii. Translation

Publishing literature in translation at a high standard also requires a very specific set of skills: to ensure the copy-editing process does not undermine the original language, to adequately present contextual information for the reader and to deliver high production quality.

Editorial standards vary considerably across the industry and languages, and more than one respondent stated the need for training in publishing skills for languages other than English.

*“This extensive substantive editing, I don't see that happening in regional languages at all. I mean, they're not edited, not even copyedited. They will send it straight away and give it to the typesetter.”– A publisher*

Respondents pointed out training for publishers in specific areas as mentioned below:

- **Negotiating rights:** For selling literatures in translation, related territorial rights, and subsidiary rights
- **Pitching:** AI sheets, catalogues, potentials for cross-marketing
- **Copyediting:** Editing and proofreading, especially for translation, which requires different skills



**“Recommendations for expertise or training or skills to sell rights into international markets is 100% needed.”**

– A literary agent

There have been one-off training initiatives for agents and translators such as those organised by the German Book Office but no other institutional courses or sustained efforts exist to train literary agents in India. Respondents shared some suggestions for training, which include the art of pitching, presenting a catalogue, scoping the needs of an international market, training in communication and marketing strategies.

The opportunity to upskill for translators is equally fraught with systemic challenges stemming from the nature of translation studies and the limited room for well-paying professional opportunities. While this area has been dealt with adequately in the previous chapter, it is important to underscore the nature of translation programmes undertaken in the country, which are far more academic in nature as a translator pointed out and consequently lead to concerns around quality translations that are palatable to a general reader while meeting critical review. There are some professional training programmes and workshops created for translators by institutions. However, there is little information available on the outcome/success of such training programmes in producing quality translations.



**“They're (academic translators) always far too committed to the source language and very much uncommitted to the target language.”– An educator**

Take the Sahitya Akademi, for instance, which conducts regular annual training workshops for translators. The outcomes of these workshops are unknown.

While there seem to exist multiple courses on 'translation' as a theoretical domain of inquiry, there

exist only a handful of practical courses that offer training and skilling opportunities for upcoming translators. This reflects a major gap in the translation support ecosystem in the sector. Respondents did point to a few well-known translation courses in India:

- a. **Ashoka University, Sonapat:** A Graduate Course in Translation Theories and Multilingual Contexts<sup>50</sup> is offered.
- b. **Jadavpur University, Kolkata:** The Centre for Translation of Indian Literatures (CENTIL), housed in the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, offers a certificate course in Translation as a Skill.<sup>51</sup>
- c. **Indira Gandhi National Open University, Mumbai:** A PG Diploma in Translation<sup>52</sup> is offered.

Respondents also pointed out skill gaps in marketing translations to an international audience. Translation in isolation is not enough to make the text palatable for an international audience; a setting of the context is required to familiarise the reader about the unique worlds that these languages inhabit. This specialised expertise required to package, market, and contextualise a book in translation is missing.

A significant area of concern was the lack of a guild or association for translators that could look out for their interests.

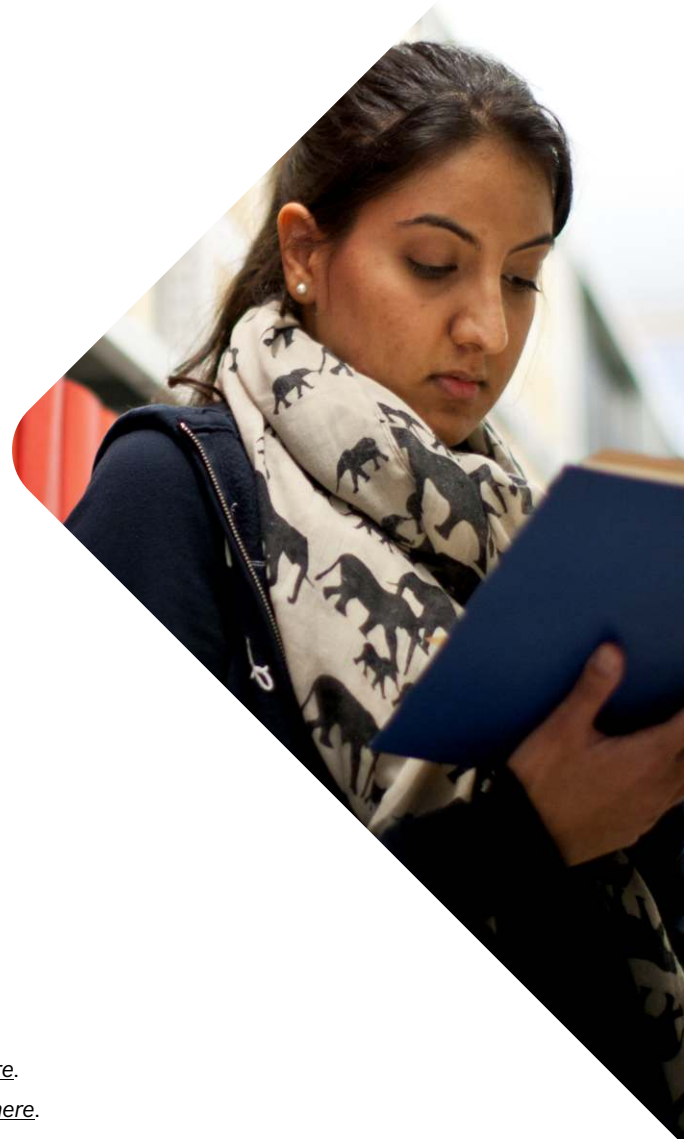
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**“There is absolutely no body of translators, no association, no board of translators where they get together, where there is a structured programme for upcoming translators and where the veterans will teach them the techniques.”**– A stakeholder from a cultural institute

50. For more information, visit the website of Ashoka University. Available [here](#).

51. For more information, visit the website of Jadavpur University. Available [here](#).

52. For more information, visit the website of Indira Gandhi National Open University. Available [here](#).



# The scope of the National Education Policy

## i. Background

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) serves as a comprehensive framework to guide the reform and development of the education sector in India. There have been three prior policies of this nature in India's 75-year history — one in 1968, 1986 (which was subsequently revised in 1992) and the one released in 2020. For these policies to succeed several factors play a role.

The first is the status of education with respect to policy formulation and implementation. Education in India is both a Central government and a State government subject, which means both can frame laws on it. By that respect, while the NEP provides a broad direction, it is not mandatory to follow, and the proposals within the policy can only be implemented collaboratively.

The second is the budgets allocated to it. Previous education policies have struggled with funding. The 2021 budget for education is Rs. 93,224 crore<sup>53</sup>, which is not just a reduction of Rs. 6,000 crores from the previous year's budget, but is also without separate funds for NEP, challenging its effective implementation in 2021. Hence, budgets allocated to education and the areas under which they are allocated both at the Central and State levels would be crucial to determining its success.

The third are the practical challenges of implementation within a country as diverse as India. While the NEP lays down brave reforms, it is likely to encounter implementation challenges owing to existing policies within States on matters of education and language literacy. Since States in India have been historically carved out on the lines of linguistic boundaries, education becomes both an important social and political minefield for a national policy to navigate.

Recognising and navigating these factors would be crucial for any organisation or sector looking to engage with this policy for its work in India.

## ii. Key highlights

The policy covers school education, higher education, professional learning, online education, adult and

continued learning, promotion of Indian languages, art and culture, and aspects of implementation. For this report, seven major policy highlights have been identified that affect the subject of this research and recommendations for intersections:

1. An increased emphasis on multi and cross-disciplinary experiential education through art and culture
2. Use of mother tongue/local language as a medium of instruction in more HEI programmes, and focus on the three-language formula
3. Setting up of an Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI), National Institute (or Institutes) for Pali, Persian and Prakrit, strengthening of Sanskrit and all language departments in HEIs
4. A push to develop and publish bilingual teaching material and textbooks
5. A four-year B.Ed degree which will majorly focus on enhancing the knowledge about native languages and will be used as skills pool to hire teachers for bi-lingual education
6. Flexibility to universities to offer different Masters programmes
7. Setting up of a National Research Foundation

## iii. Intersections with the literature and publishing sector

In Chapter 4, the NEP lays down a multilingual approach to education both at a curriculum and at a pedagogical level. It also provides for learning about and in classical languages including Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia, Pali, Persian, and Prakrit (Ch 4.11), through an “experiential-learning pedagogy involving gamification and apps, by weaving in the cultural aspects of the languages – such as films, theatre, storytelling, poetry, and music” (Ch 4.21).

The NEP makes a specific inclusion for the ‘Promotion of Indian Languages, Arts, and Culture’ Under this section, teaching and learning of Indian languages is highlighted with a provision for a “steady stream of high-quality learning and print materials in these languages including textbooks, workbooks, videos, plays, poems, novels, magazines, etc.(22.6)”.

53. India Today Web Desk, ‘Union Budget 2021: Education Ministry gets Rs 93,224 cr., over Rs 8000 cr. more than estimates’, India Today, 02 February, 2021. Available [here](#).

Both of the above provisions will require high-quality production of translated materials for teaching, thereby opening doors for publishers across the spectrum to engage with the education sector across various age groups. An emphasis on quality of translation will be crucial to this material finding wide acceptability in schools and colleges. Moreover, it allows for intersections with other sectors and disciplines such as edu-tech, arts, services and design.

Chapter 22 also emphasises the need to develop a large cadre of high-quality language teachers who will develop “strong departments and programmes in Indian languages, comparative literature, creative writing, arts, music, philosophy, etc.” (Ch 22.9). In addition, the provision for four-year B.Ed. dual degree programmes in these subjects will enable teachers of these subjects to teach bi-lingually across schools in India. This policy also envisions the establishment of a National Research Foundation to promote quality research in all areas mentioned in the NEP, including bi-lingual teaching in the above areas.

Under Chapter 22.14, the NEP makes an urgent case to expand its translation and interpretation efforts in order to make high quality learning materials and other important written and spoken material available to the public in various Indian and foreign languages. “For this, an Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI) will be established.” 22.11, The NEP also provides for the creation of ‘high-quality programmes and degrees in Translation and Interpretation, Art and Museum Administration, Archaeology, Artefact Conservation, Graphic Design, and Web Design within the higher education system will also be created.’ (Ch 22.11)

This opens the doors for artists, arts administrators, writers and translators to find renewed career options at the intersection of education, arts, literature and language translation.

#### iv. Intersections crucial to British Council and the UK

From a UK standpoint, the employment and deep entrenchment of the English language within this policy is evident. This point of advantage can continue to be pressed within existing relationships of the British Council and its work in India across arts, education and libraries.

The education teams within British Council continue to enjoy good relationships with the State governments. Aligning these relationships with those State governments that have strong language focus, alignment with the Central government, and a history of strong education budgets would be crucial to identifying which agencies to work with. These could

potentially include governments of Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh.

The Arts team work extensively with the private arts sector, including the publishing and literature sub-sectors. Projects developed with these organisations and individuals, aligned to the recommendations of the NEP with respect to experiential learning, could allow for new opportunities for the British Council to engage their Arts division on a policy level.

A deeper look into existing management consulting relationships of the Education ministries of various State governments and its relationship with ‘success stories’ would be merited to identify what would ensure both success and legacy of the British Council work in this area both in the short and long term. For instance, Boston Consulting Group helped the Indian State leadership of Haryana create an educational transformation to improve student-learning outcomes within its 15,000 schools. The school education reforms in Delhi, not based on support or strategic input from consulting groups, boast of unique successes which need to be studied.

The NEP provides specifically for the setting up of the IITI, which is a project and an area that the British Council could immediately get involved in. As it is expanded further upon, in the recommendations sector, it would be wise to partner or collaborate with language-wise institutional mechanisms aligned to work with State governments.

# Recommendations

The following suggestions represent a mix of recommendations made by study respondents as well as those suggested by the research team at the Art X Company. These are broken down with filters for i) recommendations for the sector, ii) recommendations pertaining to proposals under the publishing and translation programme strands by the British Council, and iii) those that may require an ‘internal strategic review and revision’ with the support of other teams and collaborators.

## Recommendations for the sector

### a. For the publishing sector

The research insights point to very basic challenges stemming from lack of knowledge of what is available and inability of both Indian language publishers to access international markets and inadequate common ground for exchange between the UK and Indian publishers.

- a. The most crucial recommendation that was widely suggested across the board by our respondents was the need for a curated database of Indian literature available in English translation, and a showcase of such a database that could be accessed by agents, publishers and others interested in buying rights for the UK market. It is essential to make Indian literature in translation more visible to Anglophone publishers, and this also requires **promoting writers and translators**, and inviting publishers to India to engage with the publishing and literary ecosystem.
- b. A first step towards this could be the creation of a **forum for exchange between Indian and British publishers**, which the British Council could facilitate: many Indian publishers, authors and agents mentioned that access to their counterparts in the UK was often a challenge. This forum could host sessions by UK editors and publishers that would give an insight into what sort of work they were looking to commission and buy, and also allow British publishers to have a more informed and nuanced understanding of the Indian publishing industry and of regional literary cultures. This forum might also host workshops that can demonstrate how Indian publishers can best showcase their catalogues in order to appeal to an international Anglophone audience. More generally, this forum could also support conversations with regards to innovations in publishing, online marketing and bookselling.
- c. Smaller independent publishers, especially those publishing in Indian languages, would also benefit from support that would facilitate their attendance at international book fairs — this could take the

form of **mobility grants, or subsidising their attendance.**

- d. **A website that lists Indian author and translator biographies, synopses of published work accompanied by a sample chapter** was also strongly recommended by respondents as a way to increase interest in translations. These could be further contextualised by including notes on the regional and linguistic background of the original texts, as Indian literary culture is so multi-faceted and various, as well as citing a reason for the inclusion of these particular titles. Even the funding of one sample chapter per book can help to place these works on the map, and organisations such as the Federation of Indian Publishers are willing to take on the responsibility of sourcing these titles. Regional British Council branches in India could also play a part by helping to promote literature being produced in their State’s languages, by listing new titles being published monthly, and encouraging translations of such titles.
- e. While having a catalogue of translations available to foreign publishers will definitely go a long way towards increasing the visibility of Indian literature in translation, in order to actually ensure that these translate into rights sales, **training and skilling opportunities for literary agents and publishers in selling rights** is absolutely essential. The facilitation of participation in international book fairs through funding would also contribute to increasing opportunities to make these sales; however, the context of the pandemic forcing many of these events to go online has somewhat leveled the playing field and should, in fact, be made the most of by Indian publishers and agents who otherwise might not be able to afford attending.
- f. A **committee of sector stakeholders** comprising translators, agents, writers, publishers, to be drawn from the study respondents’ list of this study, can be brought together in collaboration with an existing literature festival/ event. This committee can meet periodically to suggest and pick the right literature that needs to be translated from the



respective regional languages into English. Potential collaborators can include the Jaipur BookMark and Indian Novels Collective, with involvement from Sahitya Akademi, but should also include industry figures from the UK - as what might work for a domestic audience, might not necessarily hold the same appeal for UK readers, and market insights would be valuable to make a call with regards to which titles might work well abroad.

## b. For the translation ecosystem

The translation ecosystem suffers from lack of training opportunities to produce quality translations coupled with limited understanding of the international reader on the one hand, and the informal nature of the translation sector which renders the translators vulnerable to system inequities of IP concerns, financial precarity for translation as a stable career, and peer sharing around common shared concerns.

- a. The first recommendation in this area would be to carve out a space for consistent quality of translations emerging from the sub-continent. In order for titles in translation to be of interest to an international market, there does need to be a standard of consistent quality in place, which can only be ensured by **better training opportunities, pay and representation of translators** in the country, who are currently underserved by both the skills and the publishing ecosystem. This would ideally be scaffolded by a national government body, but also needs to be supplemented by other initiatives that are invested in promoting translation and funding translation. There needs to be a strategic approach with regards which kinds of books to promote specifically, as certain narratives travel better for international audiences.
- b. Most countries offer considerable support to ensure their language's literature is translated through grants and subventions — this is a definite gap in India that needs filling to ensure that translators can treat it as a viable professional option. **A review of existing mega projects, especially owned and run by the State**, such as India Literatures Abroad and the work undertaken by the NBT, Sahitya Akademi and related agencies, and public-private partnerships in this realm to build upon existing assets would prove to be valuable from a policy development perspective.
- c. For a multilingual country like India, a central Government led top-down approach in literature promotion can only go so far without being impacted by hegemonic structures of linguistic preferences. Our research also demonstrates peculiarities and strengths of certain languages, which need to be accounted for while formulating projects around collaboration with these languages. **Language-wise institutional mechanisms** aligned to work with State governments in certain priority languages, will allow for more focus in tackling specific challenges. These mechanisms could include collaborations with specific existing language-centric projects, organisations and governments in areas of translation workshops, festival collaborations, and cross-translation visits and promotions.
- d. The publishing industry also needs to commit more widely to ensuring that **translators are paid royalties**. Organisations such as the British Council might explore the possibilities of offering a subsidy that will offset translation costs for the UK publishers who might not be able to afford it; thus encouraging the interest in translations from India. Respondents highlighted the need for a **“homegrown organisation which will protect the rights or at least get a fair deal for writers and translators,”** similar to the Society of Authors in the UK or the Authors Guild in the US.
- e. There is an urgent need for **structured training programmes for translators** which can help create spaces to discuss and brainstorm challenges faced, both with regards to the work of translation, as well as how to translate with a specific target audience in mind. The British Council can help foster a relationship with the British Centre for Literary Translation, which is an exemplary space for such work, and create mentorship schemes that could benefit the translation community in India, which can then shift to a “train the trainer” model in order to ensure sustainability. Such collaborations could be anchored around a specific project, and also facilitate the creation of a set of guidelines for professional ethics for translators.
- f. There is a case to be made for promotion of translated works of Indian literature abroad by a coordinated network of **agencies engaged in cultural diplomacy** — Ministry of External Affairs, Indian Embassies and Consulates, ICCR and the Business Councils in the respective countries. Each of them have a significant role to play in promoting translation projects among Indian Languages and English.

# Conclusion

It is undeniable that globally, translation is enjoying a cultural moment: there is definitely increased focus on and investment in literature in translation in an increasingly globalised world. As with all trends in publishing, as soon as their potential for bestsellers was evident, literature in translation was at least being considered a growth area. In India, too, there is definitely a quiet, yet visible movement keen to assert the beauty, variety and the power of Indian language literature, by making it accessible to a larger audience through translating into English. Initiatives such as Arshia Sattar's Sangam House, or the Indian Novels Collective, are doing important work towards sustaining conversations around, and supporting inter-regional translations, as well as translations into English. Most publishing houses are at least considering translation's potential by investing cautiously into a few titles, or setting up an imprint. However, as much of this report's findings demonstrate, these efforts are yet to bear fruit in the context of rights sales into Anglophone markets. Yet, there are some noteworthy developments: the US market, which is less conservative than the UK market, is increasingly open to buying rights to translations from the subcontinent. The UK is no longer the arbiter of cultural taste, and looks to the US for trends, and as described in the report's case

studies, the rights sale trajectory means that these translations get an opportunity to access another Anglophone market.

Given these developments, it is imperative that the publishing and translation ecosystems are ready to respond to the possibilities that these trends might offer — but there needs to be focused and considered investment of time, money and skills. While there have historically been government agencies which focus on translation, some respondents mentioned how the investment of private individuals and companies would also be very welcome in the translation space. Government agencies are often hampered by bureaucracy and poor distribution networks, and commercial publishers are very risk averse, so might be wary of publishing translations frequently, especially since they are very unlikely to be bestsellers. Academic institutions might also play a part: the emergent, vibrant discourse around decolonisation and identity politics in the universities creates ample opportunity for publishers to seek out Indian language authors whose work speaks to this cultural moment, demonstrating a wealth of histories, and perspectives that represent the stories of a quarter of the world's population.



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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Details of all respondents

Please see the document attached.

## Appendix B: List of all focus group discussions

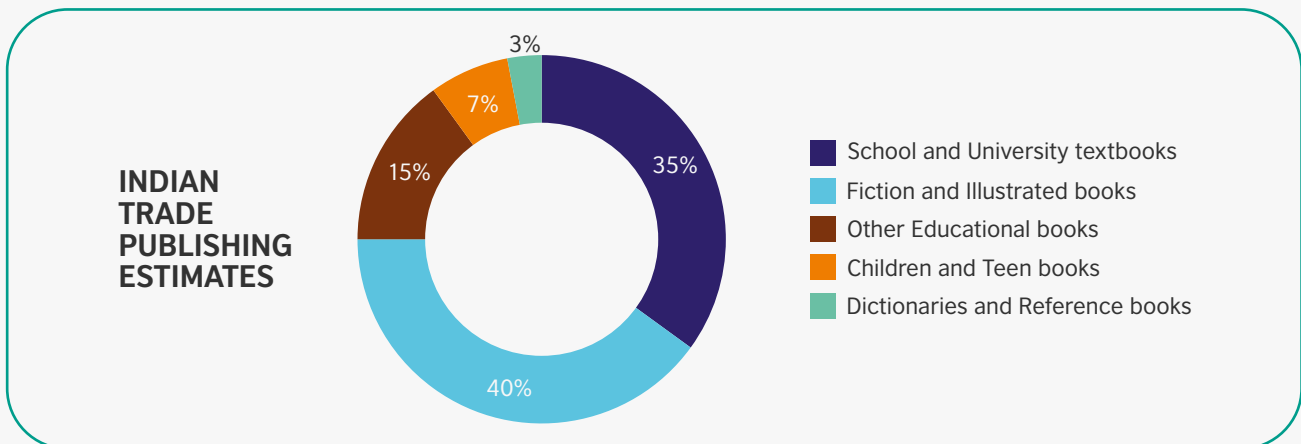
Please see the document attached.

## Annexure A: Additional data on the publishing sector

### i. Size of the Indian Publishing Sector

Indian Trade Publishing Estimates<sup>54</sup>:

As has been mentioned earlier, accurately capturing the size of India's literature and publishing sector is a fraught exercise. Existing reports point to statistics that have been published before 2016 (there hasn't been any major study on the sector since). This has been further corroborated with data collected during fieldwork and through additional data sources not widely available.



There are other available statistics in books published. Here is an excerpt from a 2013 book on the percentage split of languages and number of books published, with ISBN numbers, in India<sup>55</sup>:

Language	No. of books with ISBN number
Hindi	21,370 or 25.9%
English	18,752 or 22.7%
Tamil	7,525 or 9.1%
Bangla	5,538 or 6.7%
Marathi	5,475 or 6.6%
Telugu	3,482 or 4.2%
Malayalam	3,358 or 4.1%

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Language	No. of books with ISBN number
Gujarati	3,213 or 3.9%
Urdu	2,172 or 2.6%
Kannada	1,998 or 2.4%
Punjabi	1,298 or 1.6%
Assamese	1,285 or 1.6%
Oriya	763 or 0.9%
Sanskrit	749 or 0.9%
Sindhi	176 or 0.2%
Kashmiri	140 or 0.2%
Other languages	5,243 or 6.4%

## ii. Number of publishing houses

The Federation of Indian Publishers states that there are approximately 19,000 publishing houses in India out of which 12,400 are using the ISBN system and are publishing approximately 90,000 titles per year. Out of these, 50% titles are in Hindi and English, while the remaining are in any of the 24 officially recognised regional languages of India.<sup>56</sup>

## iii. Number of new titles per year

The sector presently produces 90,000 new books a year in 24 languages including English.<sup>57</sup> The per capita number of book titles published in India is around 8 per 100,000 population.<sup>58</sup> Among the other Indian languages, publishing in Tamil and Malayalam is more active.

In terms of languages, the per capita number of titles published per 100,000 persons:<sup>59</sup>

**Note:** In the following sections of Annexure A and B, some information has been directly sourced from the descriptions as found on the websites of the various organisations. Each title has been hyperlinked to the website source for further information.

Language	Books/100,000 persons
Assamese	7.7
Bangla	6.3
Gujarati	6.2
Hindi	5
Kannada	4.8
Telugu	4.2
Urdu	3.9

56. German Book Office, New Delhi. (2015?). Perspectives on Publishing in India 2014-2015: Trends in Indian Publishing- An Overview of the current trends and opportunities in the Indian Publishing Market.

57. FICCI. (undated). Publishing: Sector Profile. Available [here](#).

58. S. N. Sahai, 'Publishing industry on a roll', Business Standard, 20 January 2013. Available [here](#).<sup>59</sup> S. N. Sahai, 'Publishing industry on a roll', Business Standard, 20 January 2013. Available [here](#).

59 S. N. Sahai, 'Publishing industry on a roll', Business Standard, 20 January 2013. Available [here](#).

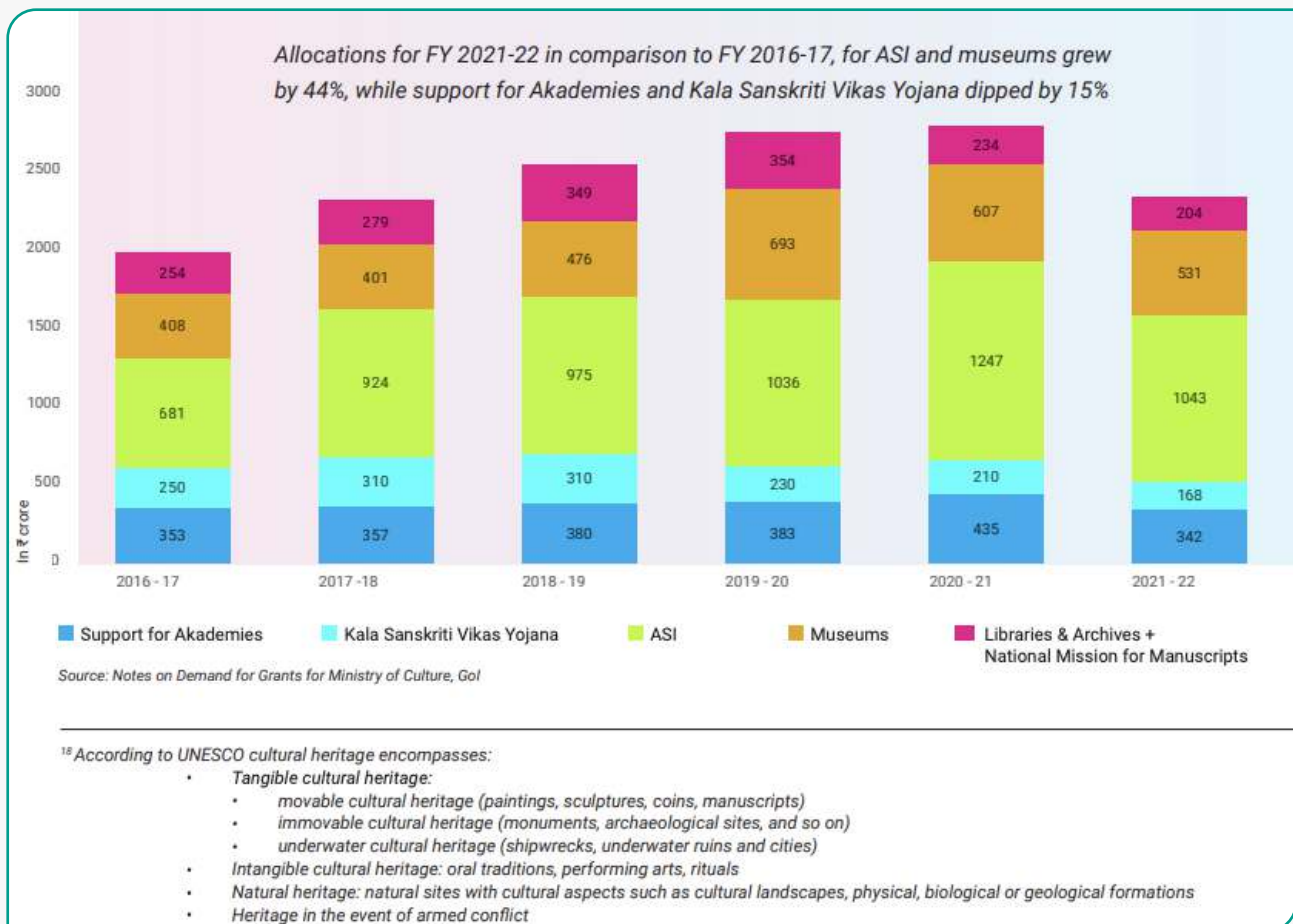
#### iv. Government organisations

Based on both secondary research as well as interview responses, two apex government organisations that lead efforts in the Indian literature and publishing sector have been identified, with a further focus on translations.

##### a. Sahitya Akademi<sup>60</sup>

The Sahitya Akademi was established in 1954 (originally as the National Academy of Letters), covering 22 Indian languages. It has published over 3,000 books including translations, monographs on eminent figures from the history of Indian literature, anthologies and the mammoth five-volume Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature, dictionaries etc., in addition to conducting numerous workshops, encounters with writers and other events. The Sahitya Akademi states that its current publication record is

approximately one book every 30 hours ('General Information' brochure, Sahitya Akademi). In the FY 2020-21 budget for India's Ministry of Culture, support for tangible heritage was 66% of the total budget while intangible heritage (support for Akademies and Kala Sanskriti Vikas Yojana) was 20%. In comparison to the previous year, FY 2021-22 saw a budget cut of 26% in the allocations for intangible culture. Within the schemes covering tangible heritage, budgets for libraries and archives have been relegated to the corner. Allocations in this space have dropped in the last five years by 21%.<sup>61</sup>



60. World CP International Database of Cultural Policies, India, (undated). Available [here](#).

61. Sahapedia, Budget Guide, (2021). Available [here](#).

### b. National Book Trust (NBT)<sup>62</sup>

NBT, India is an apex body established by the Government of India (Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development) in the year 1957. The objectives of the NBT are “to produce and encourage the production of good literature in English, Hindi and other Indian languages; to make such literature available at moderate prices to the public; to bring out book catalogues, arrange book fairs/exhibitions and seminars; and take all necessary steps to make people book minded”. In furtherance to the above objectives, NBT is mandated to publish (a) the classical literature of India (b) outstanding works of Indian authors in Indian languages and their translation from one Indian language to another (c) translation of outstanding books from foreign languages and (d) outstanding books of modern knowledge for popular diffusion.

### v. Not-for-profit associations

The following section outlines some of the key associations that represent the interests of publishers, booksellers and other relevant stakeholders in the sector. It also identifies some informal collectives that have been formed by various sector actors which target specific areas of interest such as publishing and translations.

#### a. Federation of Indian Publishers (FIP)<sup>63</sup>

The FIP is the representative body of publishers in English, Hindi and other regional languages with its membership from all over India, representing more than 80 percent of the publishing industry. All the leading publishers of the country are its direct members, other publishers being represented through various local associations. Since its inception, the Federation has become the national representative body of the Indian publishing industry and is growing stronger and stronger day by day. The Federation is a deliberative and consultative organisation with the principal objective to strengthen and promote professional standards among its members and create a forum not only to discuss their problems but also to address them satisfactorily.

#### b. Federation of Booksellers and Publishers Association<sup>64</sup>

The Federation works towards ensuring the development of publishing in English, Hindi and all other Indian languages. It provides a forum for various

segments of the book industry in the country to discuss their problems at national and international levels and looks after the interests of its members by taking active part in all meetings with the Government and concerned professional bodies. With the view to promote and upgrade publishing and book distribution, the Federation organises training courses, workshops, seminars, etc., from time to time. It also takes up with concerned authorities matters of common interest pertaining to the book trade like paper prices, tax provisions, import and export regulations, copyright laws, anti-piracy measures, nationalisation of textbooks, online/e-tailing/excessive discount related matters, etc.

#### c. Association of Publishers in India (API)<sup>65</sup>

The Association of Publishers in India is a trade organisation that stands for the promotion and advancement of international publishers in India as well as protects the common interest of members and professionals engaged in global publishing. Engaged in market research and compiling statistics, API runs a number of industry-specific events and seminars. API representatives have been regularly participating in intra-industry meetings and best practices are shared with international bodies. It also leads advocacy efforts on behalf of the entire publishing industry.

#### d. BAPASI: The Booksellers and Publishers Association of South India<sup>66</sup>

BAPASI was started in 1976 to “publish more books, to spread reading and to create awareness, taking into account the needs of book lovers”. The federation started the Chennai Book Festival 28 years ago.

#### e. The Publisher’s Exchange

In April 2020, a group of Indian language publishers from across the country came together to understand and tackle challenges of publishing and distribution in a post-COVID world. This is a first-of-its-kind platform of publishers representing different languages.

#### f. Indian Novels Collective<sup>67</sup>

The Indian Novels Collective is a not-for-profit network of individuals set up with the objective to bridge the gap between the English reader and classics of Indian literature by making available quality translations and building reader communities that celebrate Indian storytelling.

62. For more information, visit the website of the National Book Trust. Available [here](#).

63. For more information, visit the website of the Federation of Indian Publishers. Available [here](#).

64. For more information, visit the website of the Federation of Booksellers and Publishers Association. Available [here](#).

65. German Book Office, New Delhi. (2015). Perspectives on Publishing in India 2014-2015: Trends in Indian Publishing -An Overview of the current trends and opportunities in the Indian Publishing Market.

66. For more information, visit the website of BAPASI. Available [here](#).

67. For more information, visit the website of the Indian Novels Collective. Available [here](#).

## Annexure B: Additional data on the literature sector

### i. Government structures and relevant ministries

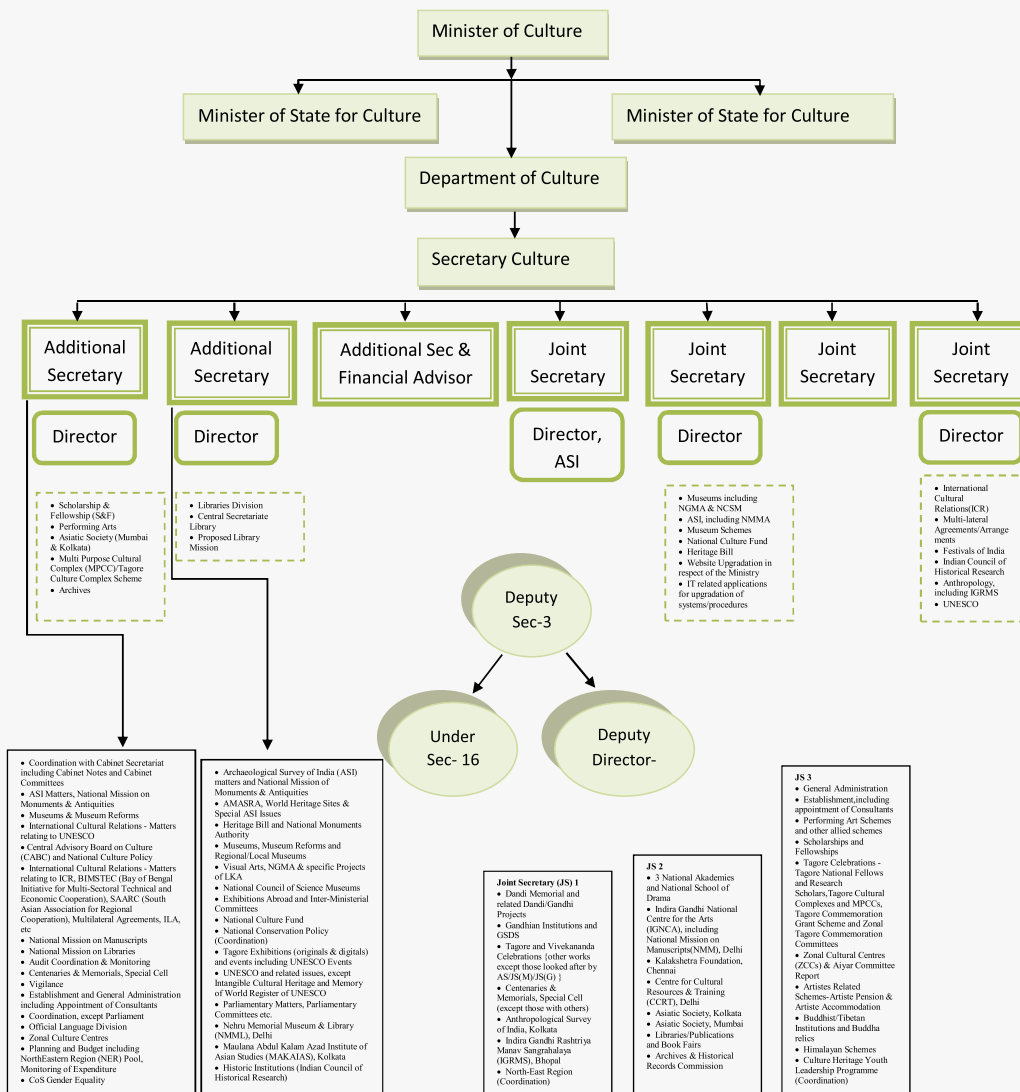
In India, support for art and culture is operationalised through institutions supported by the Central and State governments while funding for culture is regulated through allocated budgets at Central and State ministry levels. However, the allocation of activities in this area over the last 70 years has fallen under a 'culture department' in varied ministries ranging from the Ministry of Scientific Research and Culture Affairs in 1961 to the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs in 2000, before being established as an independent Ministry of Culture in 2006.

As Rajadhyaksha et al. observe in India Culture Policy Profile (2013), all this does not constitute a formal,

unitary cultural policy. 'Instead, the policy has covered a range of complex, and often mutually contradictory, definitions. ... These do not necessarily add up to a coherent "arm's length" policy, or even necessarily to a "federal" policy, but can sometimes resemble aspects of both'. (P.12 - same source)

The India Culture Policy Profile, produced by the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (2013)<sup>68</sup> describes the organisation of state and government ministries (related to culture) as the following:

- Cultural policy, along with procedures for disbursement of funds for public purposes in culture, move from the Centre (various Ministries involved with cultural issues), State, and City (Municipal) levels.



- b. Central administration: At the Centre, the Ministry of Culture plays a major role in the promotion and protection of India's 'cultural diversity and heritage' (quoting from the Ministry of Culture's Vision Statement of the Citizen Charter). The Ministry's mandate emphasises the right of all sections of Indian society to conserve their language and culture as also the rich heritage of its composite culture (see Legal Mandate, Ministry of Culture). Thus, the Ministry largely focused on establishing museums, libraries and arts institutions, and protecting ancient monuments and archaeological sites. The Ministry of Culture has numerous organisations under its jurisdiction.
- c. State administration: At the state level, the 28 States and 8 Union Territories that constitute the Indian republic either have a department of culture or a department that also handles culture (e.g. the Department of Tourism in Daman and Diu, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli). The respective departments of culture centrally focus on the protection of regional languages and folk cultures and support of contemporary arts – literature, visual and performing arts.
- d. Mirroring the akademies that constitute the apex arts bodies at the centre, there are state akademies in the fields of literature, music and dance, sculpture, visual arts, folk, minority languages and book publications. For example the state of Karnataka has a Karnataka Sahitya Academy (Karnataka Academy of Letters).

The chart below is a representation of the Government organogram for the culture sector from the same source.

- e. Moreover the Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting<sup>69</sup> is one of the leading publishing houses in the Country and the largest in the public sector. It functions under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. It attempts to promote National Integration by disseminating information and creating awareness about the various activities, regions, people and the myriad cultures and beliefs of the Nation. The Division publishes and sells books at affordable prices through its outlets in important cities and also through agents. It also participates in exhibitions and books fairs to promote the sale of books and journals. Till date, 7600 titles have been published, of which 1500 are live today. Besides books, the Publication Division has also brought out 21 journals about various issues of national and social significance.
- f. The Ministry of Human Resource Development set up a National Book Development Board (NBDB) in 1967, to lay down guidelines for development of

the book industry, in the context of over-all requirements of the country. A new body, called the National Book Development Council (NBDC), was formed in September 1983. Thereafter, the Council was reconstituted, from time to time. The 2018 draft of the National Book Promotion Policy can be found [here](#).

- g. The Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation in Kolkata is a central autonomous organisation established and fully financed by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. It is the nodal agency of the Government of India to support public library services and systems and promote public library movement in the country. The Foundation works in close association and active cooperation with different State Govts. and Union Territory Administrations through a machinery called the State Library Planning Committee (SLPC/SLC) set up in each State at the instance of the Foundation. The Foundation has been distributing books to more than 30,000 public libraries. The Foundation is not a publisher but its role has been to facilitate the distribution of books to libraries and buying them from publishers.

## ii. Domestic initiatives

Here are some domestic literary initiatives that we have come across based on our secondary research. However, as per responses from interviewees, most of these initiatives are either not readily accessible to stakeholders, or are on hold and not fully functional. Details or data on the outcomes of these programmes are not readily available and will need to be procured through RTIs.

1. The Financial Assistance Programme for Translation<sup>70</sup> programme, conducted by the NBT is a dedicated Rights Exchange Programme that will pursue translation of Indian books into foreign languages. Under this initiative, the Trust will provide financial support to foreign publishers who are interested in translating Indian works. Financial assistance will be granted as part of an ongoing support programme to enhance and strengthen the international profile of Indian writings. This incentive would help make it commercially viable for foreign publishers to take up Indian books. Indian publishers keen to avail of this grant should furnish a copy of the agreement they have signed with the translator and the foreign publisher. The scheme will cover the brand categories of fiction, non-fiction, science and technology and books for children except dictionaries, magazines, journals, text-books, for schools/colleges and professional courses like medicine, engineering, science and technology, business administration. Regional language

69. For more information, visit the website of the Publications Division. Available [here](#).

70. For more information on the Financial Assistance Programme for Translation, visit the National Book Trust website. Available [here](#).

publications not available in English translations will also be considered for selection into foreign languages.

2. The Indian Literature Abroad (ILA)<sup>71</sup> project has been initiated by the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, to support and facilitate translation and promotion of literary heritage and contemporary literature from the Indian languages into major foreign languages (especially those recognised by UNESCO). ILA seeks to open windows to the polyphonic voices coming out of India. To achieve this goal, ILA is working on ongoing translation commissions, and also on workshops, collaborations and fellowships. Being India's premier literary institution, Sahitya Akademi was entrusted with the job of carrying out the Project Indian Literature Abroad (ILA). As per a written response from the Sahitya Akademi, "The project is in the final stages of formalisation with the Ministry. Once given approval, Sahitya Akademi will launch the Indian Literature Abroad [ILA] formally."
3. Indian Literature,<sup>72</sup> Sahitya Akademi's bimonthly journal, is India's oldest and the only journal of its kind featuring translations in English of poetry, fiction, drama and criticism from 23 Indian languages besides original writing in English. The journal strives to feature some of the best literature and writers, old as well as new. There is hardly any significant Indian author who has not been featured in the pages of this journal that has completed 58 years of service to the cause of Indian Literature.
4. The National Translation Mission (NTM)<sup>73</sup> is a Government of India scheme to establish translation as an industry in general and to facilitate higher education, by making knowledge texts accessible to students and academics in Indian languages in particular. The vision is to create a knowledge society by transcending language barriers. NTM aims to disseminate knowledge in all Indian languages listed in the VIII schedule of the Constitution through translation.

### iii. Other literature festivals

The major literature festivals, accounting for various factors such as their popularity, the focus regions of this study and the festival's mandate and interest in promoting translations, has already been discussed under section 8, part iv of the report under literature festivals. Other than these, some other festivals which have a particular mandate for translations and other marginal voices include:

1. Arunachal Literature & Art Festival  
ALAF is an annual event that brings the brilliant and budding writers, poets and artists of the State onto a single platform. The festival brings focus on the tribal art form of the State and contemporary art scenario in the state and brings mainstream artists to the pristine valley so the upcoming generation of writers and artist enthusiasts can have an open interaction with prominent artists and writers and to grow in the field.
2. Goa Arts & Literature Festival  
Goa Arts and Literature Festival (GALF) was founded to celebrate the margins, taking inspiration from an idea developed by the late Eunice de Souza, a renowned poet of Goan origin, that there are 'different ways of belonging'. For GALF, this has translated into a consistent emphasis on writers and artists from Goa, from India's North-East and Kashmir, as well as from countries like Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. GALF has also devoted substantial attention to themes such as Dalit writing, poetry, graphic novels, and translations.
3. Gujarat Literature Festival  
The Gujarat Literature Festival aims to popularise Gujarati language and culture among the youth, to motivate them to read, write, translate – basically tell their stories and hear those of others. GLF was born as a medium and genre-neutral festival and it expanded the popular definition of literature from printed text in books to include all forms of literary storytelling and more.
4. Mathrubhumi International Festival of Letters  
As an integrated media house, Mathrubhumi connects to people through its daily, events, magazines, online, radio, television and books division. As a responsible corporate citizen they are wedded to the immutable principles of truth, equality and liberty. The festival is envisioned as a celebration of the inherited syncretic culture to take forward the legacy of literature, words and its potency.
5. Gateway Litfest  
Despite a rich crop of literary festivals that have sprung up across the subcontinent, the rich regional writings have remained more or less unrepresented and never received the kind of respect it deserved. The Gateway Litfest aims to create a platform where regional language literature can flow into the mainstream.

71. For more information on Indian Literature Abroad, visit the website of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India. Available [here](#).

72. For more information on Indian Literature, visit the website of the Sahitya Akademi. Available [here](#).

73. For more information, visit the website of the National Translation Mission. Available [here](#).



