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Popular books in English are cutting through Hindi speakers in north India. Commercially successful titles, 'Hello Bastar', 'The Weight Loss Tamasha' and 'Two My Divorce', have been translated into Hindi under a new-tie-up between Westland Limited and Yatra Books to promote translation of books and original titles in Indian languages.

"The idea was to realise the true potential of the Hindi market because Hindi is the fourth major language in the world - after Mandarin, English and Spanish. But the publishing industry does not reflect this," writer Namita Gokhale, co-owner of Yatra Books, told IANS.

There is a new creative confluence of Indian writing unfolding before us, enabled by "insightful translations and cross-literary exchanges with 22 scheduled languages as well as Indian translations of international works", Gokhale said.

The last decade has seen an increase in the volume of translated literature and original titles in Hindi with major publishing houses like Penguin and Harper Collins-India collaborating with language publishing companies and even publishing Hindi titles in their main imprint.

The efforts have been complemented by institutional initiatives by the government's translation projects and those launched by foreign missions in India. Hindi is the language of preference in translations given the large readership. A translation project, 'Indian Literature Abroad' launched by the culture ministry, is promoting indigenous literature in Indian languages abroad.

But mass market fiction has been neglected by translators in the zeal to promote classics and textbooks from English to Hindi.

Last year, writer Namita Gokhale's novel 'Paro: Dreams of Passion' was translated into Hindi by Rachna Bholi Yamini while writer Chetan Bhagat's popular books like 'One Night @ The Call Centre' and 'The 3 Mistakes of My Life' have climbed the best-sellers` list in Hindi.

Salman Rushdie's best-selling historical mass-fiction, 'Enchantress of Florence' was translated as 'Florence ki Jadugarni' in 2009.

"It is a good idea to bring what is popular in Hindi because it feels nice to address the wide readership. I don't think this is a trend but it definitely is a way to get acquainted with India. Hindi is the most hospitable language," writer-poet Ashok Vajpeyi told IANS.

Best-selling author Ashwin Sanghi says "only the surface has been scratched and the possibilities are immense".

"There are so many people who try to think like us but would rather express it better in languages like Hindi.

Translations of popular fiction such as ours which have been drawn from Indian traditions help them identify with our thoughts and relate better," Sanghi told IANS. His book Chanakya's Chant is a contemporary interpretation of the life of the Brahmin philosopher and strategist Chanakya in the context of Indian politics.

Mumbai-based Amish, author of the 'Immortals of Meluha' and 'The Secret of the Nagas', says publishing is finally becoming rooted in Indian sensibilities.

"I genuinely believe those five years from today, we will have a situation when other languages will account for higher sales of books than in English. That is the big change happening in publishing - it is taking pride in its own culture than knowing other cultures like in television, where regional language channels have more TRPs," Amish told IANS.

Writers benefit as well in terms of bounty from increased sale, he said.

"As a writer, I have a vast network of friends who wanted to know when 'Hello Bastar' will be published in Hindi. There is a section which is comfortable in English but would rather like to read in Hindi," writer-journalist Rahul Pandita, the author of 'Hello Bastar', told IANS.

He said platforms like Flipkart have "made it possible for Hindi speaking readers to access translations".

"No publisher in the right mind can ignore the Hindi readership for there is a huge market for mass market books, including translations. Hindi speaking readers are Net savvy and are reading new books," Pandita said.

IANS


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