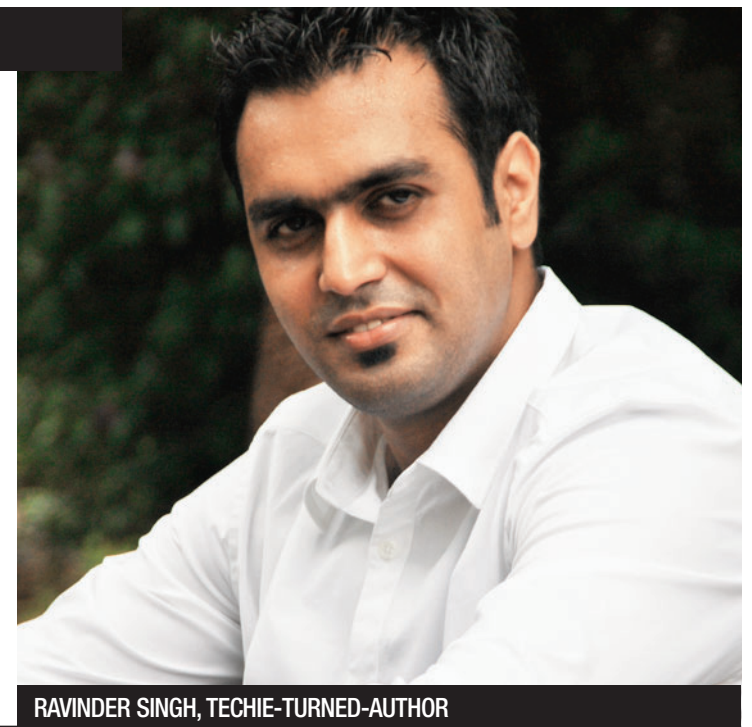


## TRICKS OF THE TRADE

- Imagine a typical Mumbai local train, or a Kolkata metro, ambling to the platform with book covers all over the coaches
- Thought only movies have original soundtracks? Think again. Now, even books have their OST, and trailers are screened
- Meeting your dream author is not a dream anymore. Innovative contests, all thanks to marketing experts, give that chance and more
- We live and breathe social media these days. And our favourite books have made it there too, with various book themes
- And now, even contests to find authors with a good story to tell



RAVINDER SINGH, TECHIE-TURNED-AUTHOR

“Publishing has become more market driven. With a lot of activity in every segment — children’s, self-help, business, fiction. I believe Amish’s advance is justified by his sales record as well as our belief in him as a writer. But it doesn’t necessarily mean a change in scenario as we currently have only two authors — Amish and Chetan — with sales in the million-plus range. It would be great for the industry if more authors began selling such large quantities,” says Gautam Padmanabhan, Chief Executive Officer, Westland Limited.

The man who had first tasted success with commercial fiction, Anurag Mathur, was probably way ahead of his time. “When *The Inscrutable Americans* was printed in 1991, it cost ₹40 each book. The book has seen the 50th reprint now and costs ₹100. The market has become really attractive for authors, we couldn’t even dream of the things happening now, good books are selling well too,” says Anurag Mathur.

Low-priced books has really helped. “When we were in college, we had to think twice before buying a book, say like *A Suitable Boy*. Such books were pretty expensive. Keeping price low has opened up the market. When we launched the *Red Romance* series, each book cost ₹89, its now ₹99 and we will not take it above ₹100. It’s a price that people will pay even at a railway station. We have 24 titles in the series now, the first six titles are sold out,” says Sandhya Sridhar of Pageturn publisher.

## TIP OF THE ICEBERG

So what are the changes in marketing? “There’s emphasis on good production quality and innovative marketing plans over the past few years. The emphasis on digital marketing is growing at a fast pace although I personally feel that a balance is important between traditional and social media marketing,” says Anurima Roy, Sr Manager Marketing — Academic & Trade, Bloomsbury Publishing India. “The publishing industry in India is the only one that is growing, or else so many big houses would not have set up operations here in these five years,” she adds.

While Chetan Bhagat and Amish might have been the game-changers, others like Ravinder Singh, Durjoy Dutta, Preeti Shenoy, Devdutt Pattanaik, have also made a name for themselves. “Publishers in India have always been open to first-time authors — we’ve had to be, since we didn’t work with agents for a long time — and we continue to read and accept unsolicited manuscripts. The thrill is in discovering a new voice, publishing a brilliant new tal-

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ANURAG MATHUR

“THE EMPHASIS ON DIGITAL MARKETING IS GROWING AT A FAST PACE IN INDIA ALTHOUGH I PERSONALLY FEEL THAT A BALANCE IS IMPORTANT BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING”

ANURIMA ROY

ent, nurturing an author or a book, helping the author and book to travel across the world, have it translated, find foreign publishers. It’s always wonderful finding a star. Two of our initial acquisitions have been first-time authors, Maria Chaudhuri’s *Beloved Strangers* will be published in January and Khademul Islam’s account of his family moving from Pakistan to East Pakistan in 1971, will be published later,” says Diya Kar Hazra, publisher at Bloomsbury.

All those who thought being a techie was the cushiest job, might have to do a double

take, since Ravinder Singh of *I Too Had A Love Story*, has quit his plum job of senior program manager at Microsoft just a few days back to become a full time author, and also a publisher. However, he thinks there is still room for more. “I believe we have just touched the tip of the iceberg. Publishing is still unstructured and disorganized in India. Literary agents are an integral part of the industry in the West, but here, they are just a handful. The whole idea of submitting a manuscript is very random here. There’s no transparency on the status of your work. Possibly only the retailers have a structured market. Despite all the success, I have seen prominent bookstores close down in Delhi itself. There has to be more method in the madness,” says Ravinder, who still feels he is an author by chance.

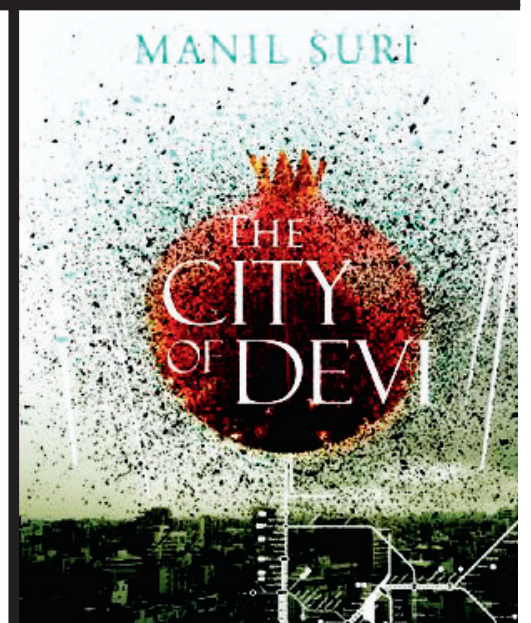
## BOLLYWOOD CALLING

Online bookshops and huge discounts have been an incentive for booklovers too. “It’s true that online bookstores have affected the sales of stores, but they are selling a huge number of books, simply because they offer a lot of discount on the books. Our website is a unique online bookshop where even retailers can make bulk purchases, it will hence ultimately trace back to net sales,” say Biswabandhu Mukherjee, publisher and bookseller.

Bollywood showing an interest in commercial fiction has also brought about changes. The Aamir Khan-starrer *3 Idiots*, based on Bhagat’s *Five Point Someone*, was a hit. His *3 Mistakes of my Life* was turned into *Kai Po Che* on screen and tasted success. Amish’s *Meluha* has been picked up by Karan Johar, with the buzz that Hrithik Roshan might star as Shiva. Ashwin’s *Chanakya’s Chant* has been bagged by UTV and work on the movie will start soon.

While nobody wants to share figures, industry sources says Bhagat’s *2 States* was sold for around ₹65 lakh and Ashwin’s *Chanakya’s Chant* for ₹50 lakh. “However, Bollywood is too powerful and they did not let us have any rights after the film was made. Which means we would lose out on the film’s success. That too is changing, and as of now, I am confident they will cut corners to accommodate us in the profit sharing,” says Ashwin.

Most publishers agree that they are sitting on a sea of good stories. Those who’ve already made a name for themselves have more books coming. Let them make the money, we say, a few more good books are all we want.



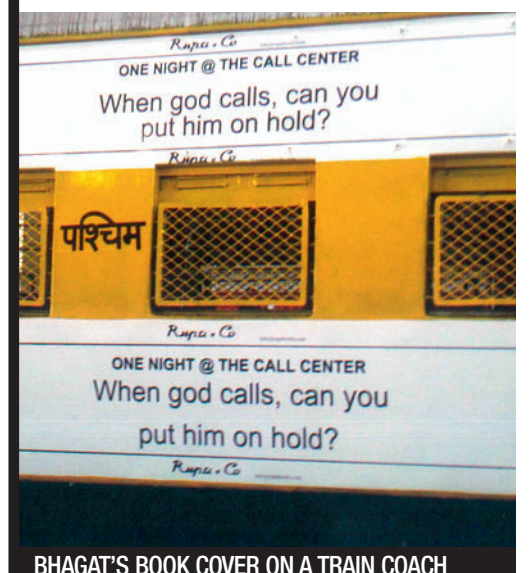
## NUMBER CRUNCHING

■ ₹40 crore is *Meluha* series’ net retail sales

■ ₹50 to ₹65 lakhs are spent for film rights

■ ₹15 crore is the possible royalty paid for just five books

■ ₹5000 crore is the estimated Indian publishing market



BHAGAT’S BOOK COVER ON A TRAIN COACH