



■ The last decade saw an increase in volume of popular literature and mass-market fiction translated into Hindi as English books try to tap Hindi readers HT FILE PHOTO

English bestsellers ride the Hindi wave

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Popular books in English are cutting through the language barrier to reach Hindi speaking readers in north India. Five commercially successful titles — Hello Bastar; The Secret of the Nagas, Chanakya's Chant, Women & The Weight Loss Tamasha and Two Fates: The Story of 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, 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, 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 Bhola 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 bestselling historical mass-fiction, *Enchantress of Florence*, was translated as *Florence ki Jadugarni*.

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 said.

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 that five years from today, we will have a situation when other languages will account for higher sales of books than in English."

"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 web savvy and are reading new books," writer-journalist Rahul Pandita, the author of *Hello Bastar*, said.