

Here Is Story Of MBA Graduates Defying Traditional Course To Follow Their Passion For Writing

After making it to top business schools, these MBA graduates have turned to writing, and penning down their cherished dreams.



MBAs from top business schools turning to writing.(Representational image)

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A young boy in a management school, studying hard to make it big in the business world, but while figuring his way out through the cutthroat competition, he discovers his true calling — writing.

Sounds like a story straight from a book or a film, right? Except that there's a high chance that the movie or the book is based on a true story...true stories of several MBA graduates who defied the traditional course of career to follow their passion of writing and become authors.

Like Ravinder Singh.

Ask Singh, who wrote his first book "I Too Had a Love Story" while he was still a student at the Indian School of Business, what pushed him to take the plunge, and he says, writing gave him a "high" that his high paying job in IT never did .

"Nobody knew what I did in Microsoft. People knew Ravinder Singh for the books he writes, and not for the program codes at Microsoft. I wanted to create a bigger identity for myself," says Singh, who is currently attending the Sharjah International Book Fair.

"The technology that I am working on will be outdated in five years, there will always be a version 2.0 of all the technologies, but there will never be a second version of 'I Too Had a Love Story', or the other books that I have written," he adds.

Singh has penned over nine novels till date which have been published by some of the leading publishing houses including Penguin and Harper Collins. About half a decade back, he branched into the publishing industry himself with his venture Black Ink.

Not unlike Singh, is the story of another bestselling writer Ashwin Sanghi, best known for his thrillers like "Sialkot Saga", "Keepers Of The Kalachakra", and "The Vault of Vishnu" among others.

Sanghi completed his MBA from Yale University, after which, staying true to the conspicuous career path, he joined his family business to make a living.

But a well paying job wasn't enough for Sanghi, who grew up reading a new book every week, and writing a feedback about them to his grandfather. He had an itch that only writing could scratch.

"Up until 2005, I remained a voracious reader without having any idea that there was a writer lurking inside of me. In that year I visited Rozabal, a shrine in the heart of Srinagar which carries the legend that the person buried there is none other than Jesus Christ himself. I was fascinated by the story and began reading and researching everything that I could lay my hands on.

"Twelve months and fifty-seven books later I had multiple theories swimming in my head. My wife casually suggested that I should try weaving the disparate threads into a single cohesive whole and that gentle nudge got me started on writing my first book, "The Rozabal Line," says Sanghi.

He wrote two more successful books, "Chanakya's Chant", and "The Krishna Key", before he took a step back from the business in 2021 to pursue writing full time.

"Very few novelists are able to earn an income that they can live by from writing alone. Even those who identify themselves primarily as writers turn to other avenues such as journalism, editing, translation or copywriting to supplement their income. It takes years for royalties from book writing to become substantial enough to live on them

"I always advise aspiring writers: don't lose the day job; it is very difficult to write when you're hungry," he says.

While Singh and Sanghi did eventually dare to leave behind their IT job and business respectively to focus full-time on writing, other MBAs-turned-authors chose to be a bit more cautious.

They did take a leap of faith to explore their creative side with writing books, but they also decided to hold on to their lucrative jobs that they landed post their MBA degrees.

Ravi Subramanian is one of them.

An IIM, Bangalore alumnus, he is a banker by profession, and also the author of bestselling banking thrillers like "The Incredible Banker", "The Bankster" and "Bankerupt".

Like Singh, it was the desire to be remembered "long after you're gone" that fuelled the writer in Subramanian.

"I feel that irrespective of what you achieve in your professional career, you are only remembered for their creative exploits. And we all want to be remembered long after we are gone. I just felt that if one writes a book, some library somewhere will hold the book for a long time," he says.

And, while it was through his books that he wanted to leave a mark, and there were several moments in his life when he wanted to pursue writing full time, he never could bring himself to pull the plug on his banking career.

Explaining why, he says, "I did a calculation in terms of my earnings to see if writing would be sufficient, and thankfully I was one of those fortunate few in the country where the money that I earn from my writing would have been sufficient for me to live a comfortable life.

"But I had another problem. The thing is that on the work front I had my job, and outside I had my writing. Alongside the job, the writing was more fun. But the moment I give my job up, writing would become the full time job and with that pressure, it would become monotonous, and then you lose interest...you churn out books just because you have a deadline to meet and your creativity takes a hit. I thought that that was not the best thing to do."

Subramanian is currently the CEO of a non-banking financial company, and his last book was "Don't tell the Governor" that came out in 2018.

Singh, Sanghi and Subramanian are among several MBAs-turned authors that India has seen in the last couple of decades. It would be safe to trace back this trend of B-school graduates taking up writing as a career to Chetan Bhagat penning "Five Point Someone" in 2004.

A former student of IIT, Delhi, and IIM, Ahmedabad, Bhagat's literary debut became an instant hit that visibly inspired Bhagat himself , and several other closeted writers in management schools across the country to take up the pen to make the penny.

Bhagat went on to write several successful books that have also been adapted into hit Bollywood films, including "The Three Mistakes of my Life", "2 States", and "Half Girlfriend". Other management graduates followed suit.

Among well known writers with a management background are Amish Tripathi famous for his "Shiva trilogy", and Durjoy Datta who has authored "Of Course I Love You...! Till I find Someone Better..."

While these MBA graduates did venture into uncharted territory by pursuing writing, but ask them if their management seemed futile in light of how their careers panned out, the verdict is unanimous —"It does not".

For them, their time at management schools only added to the success of their books.

"My MBA made me a very organized person and I approach each novel almost as a business plan. My attention to detailed research is probably what sets apart my novels in the 'Bharat Series'. I still write all my novel outlines on Excel! And like many other younger authors, I tend to get my hands dirty in marketing aspects," says Sanghi.

Subramanian agrees.

"The difference between an MBA author and a non-MBA author is that we go about ruthlessly and shamelessly marketing our books.

"You wouldn't find a tweet from an MBA author without referring to his book or trying to sell his books...not many authors are comfortable doing that. The jury is still out on whether it's the right way to do it or not, but if you've spent a year writing a book, I think you are entitled to stand up in the market and scream at the top of your voice saying, 'I have written this book. Read it. Buy it!'" he says.