



## Reading roots

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*Bookganga.com aims to revive sales of Indian regional literature and curb piracy of e-books*

It was at a preview of Apple's iPad that US-based IT entrepreneur Mandar Joglekar realised that with the increasing popularity of e-reading across the globe, there was still scope to revive Indian literature. "While preparing a presentation for American Newspaper Association on the next generation's reading habits, I found it compelling that the older newspapers there were heading towards bankruptcy due to decreasing circulation and ad revenues. There is little doubt that India will soon follow suit and, using this as an advantage, I thought it is time to launch an initiative that will bring dying Indian literature to its patrons," he explains.

So, on August 30, Joglekar — who runs multiple internet ventures for the NRI audience, like citizen journalism website [globalmarathi.com](#) and social networking initiative [myvishwa.com](#) — launched [bookganga.com](#). This, Joglekar hopes, will become the [amazon.com](#) for Indian literature soon. The website already has on sale close to 7,000 titles across English, Hindi, Marathi and Sanskrit in the e-book as well as hard copy format. The website, within three weeks, is already attending to more than 150 orders from within India and many others from countries like Australia, Peru and the US.

Joglekar and his team started last year by approaching multiple publishers with a unique idea. "We suggested to publishers that for the e-book version, they keep their prices low, often as much as 50 per cent less than the hard copy, since there is no physical publishing involved here. This helps the books reach out to the masses," he points out. And in return, Joglekar's team has developed a system that helps avoid piracy of these books, which further pushes sales. "To purchase e-books from [bookganga.com](#), one has to first become a member. Each member is given a unique code and our proprietary e-book reader, which the user has to install on his device/ computer. However, this reader cannot be downloaded on multiple machines. The purchased book comes in a format compatible to our reader as opposed to PDF files, which easily lend to piracy."

Another draw that the 38-year-old entrepreneur points out is that [bookganga.com](#) intends to tie up with various authors, especially first-timers. The website will publish the first edition of their book and then, depending on the sales, the author can choose to publish it in physical form, thereby saving cost.

The initiative, when being planned, was targeted at the NRI audience so that apart from buying books for themselves, the second-generation NRIs could gift books to their Indian relatives. But Joglekar — a Pune resident who moved to the US 15 years ago — is surprised at the response he has received from within India, especially Mumbai. "It's a city where the suburbs don't have ample regional language book stores and residents find it too much of an effort to travel to South Mumbai."

However, the main challenge for the Indian market remains the lack of familiarity with online payment gateways. It is for this reason that [bookganga.com](#) allows orders to be placed on phone and purchase payments can be made online as well as by a DD or a cheque. And the website's local offices in Pune and Mumbai process these payments and also carry out deliveries of physical copies, wherever applicable.

This, however, isn't where it ends for Joglekar. Encouraged by the response, he aims to introduce Bengali, Gujarati,

Malayalam and Telugu titles next. Also, he feels the book format can be worked on further to help readers. “The benefits are plenty. Someone who is researching a topic can search through multiple titles, fonts can be managed. Take, for example, a recipe book. In an e-book, we have the luxury of adding pictures and videos of how to prepare the dish,” he smiles, adding, “The e-book format has just been introduced. Within three years, as it gains popularity, we have the potential to revolutionise the book market.”