Chapter 3

Contribution of Publishers to Indian Children’s Literature in English

Today there is a literature for children which never existed before in the history of mankind. Revolving racks in drug stores, supermarkets, train depots, and airports, display brightly illustrated books designed to attract young readers (Huck 3).

Children's literature in India is witnessing a drastic change. The position of Children’s Literature in India was different three decades ago. Today’s children have wonderful books as compared to those before independence. There were hardly a few books available which children could read and enjoy even in their mother tongue. The case was even disheartening in the area of English. If at all, very few books of foreign publishers were passed on to them. There were a few reasons that can be held for this kind of neglect on the part of the grownups: the publishers in India were not conscious of the need to produce books especially meant for children.

There is no dearth of reading material in the market today and things are looking brighter every year. As Vijaya Ghose says, “Today everything is right for children's books. There is a literacy drive on; the number of publishers has increased; language publications have come into their own. It is to be only hoped that those in the business will be able to produce the kind of books that fire a child's imagination and lead him or her into a world beyond mere words and numbers” (Ghose). The publishing industry has woken up to the fact that our children need books set in their own social milieu and social sensibilities with characters they can easily identify with and scenes and situations familiar to them.
Today there are a number of publishers catering to children. As Indra Kulshreshtha points out that:

There came a marked difference in the attitude of the publishers, authors and illustrators as the educationists started paying more attention to the ‘need based’ preparation of reading material for the young ones. Gradually the shyness and hesitation of being labelled as an “author of children’s books” gave away to more sophisticated class of writers who wrote books for children (23).

A scrutiny of children literature in India shows that at the time of independence in 1947, there were hardly any publishing houses that produced children's books, and the adult publisher could not afford to invest in children's trade books during the early post-independence period. At that time they were supposed to publish text books and supplementary readers to thwart and neutralise the exertion of colonialism and to replace the imported books recommended in schools where the medium of instruction was English. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), established in 1961, publish bias - free and appropriate text books. However, a few number of urban population acquainted with English had to depend on books and magazines imported from England and United States. India is known for its oral literature and therefore the modern trend of creative writing known as children's literature written for young readers began in the nineteenth century under the influence of western education and imported books. However, before twentieth Century, children's literature was confined to traditional tales transmitted orally, adapting adult's books for children and translating foreign classics into Indian languages.

After the independence of India there was a sense of urgency in our values and in our standards. There was a rapid and almost complete reorientation of thinking.
“Years after Independence, children’s book publishing was seen not simply as an economic enterprise. There were at that time, few publishers of children’s books operating independently, and in order to cater to the country’s children and neo-literate population” (Roy n.p). New goals had to be set up. The rapid change in our values and priorities resulted in a conflict of ideas and ideals. This was reflected in children’s books too. In this rather uncertain state of things, children’s literature had to take a back seat. Not much was written and published until the advent of Children’s Book Trust in the late fifties. It was the late Shankar Pillai, the founder of the Children’s Book Trust, who gave children’s books a new concept and importance. Vijaya Ghose writes, “Suddenly publishers, like many others in India, have woken up to the fact that there is a segment of the population called ‘children’. That these children have specific needs which so far had been neglected and catering to these needs may in fact become a profitable venture: children get what they want and publishers may make some money!” (Ghose). Within a short time since the establishment of the Trust, children’s books became the subject of new thinking and discussion.

The publishers, writers and artists joined forces to make efforts in bringing out books especially designed and written for children. The educationists and psychologists projected the needs of children to help the writers think in terms of children as individuals who could make great demands on them because of their limitations and the insatiable desire to know about everything. Jagannath Mohanty rightly comments

Promotion of children’s literature is multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional issue. Authors may prepare their materials observing all the requirements psychological, sociological, linguistic and educational, but artists have to provide suitable illustrations, editors should bring about necessary modifications in the copies and
publishers should bring out the book in appropriate format and get up. Unless all these personal authors, illustrators, editor and publishers co-operate each other and join their hands, children’s books cannot be attractive and useful. Such collaboration among these functionaries is badly and particularly required for promotion of children’s literature (211).

Today there are number of publishers catering to children. Among these the leading ones are Children’s Book Trust, National Council of Educational Research and Training, National Book Trust, Ratna Sagar, Harpar Collins, Puffin Books, Prathan Books so on. In an interview Praba Ram, the founder of *Saffron Tree*; a blog for Children’s Literature says, “It’s truly a breath of fresh air in the world of Indian children’s publishing. Today, there are some excellent independent children’s book publishers working to promote authors and illustrators and create books with modern Indian sensibilities, while also being sensitive to the needs of children living in both rural and urban India. And there are veteran publishers such as Children’s Book Trust, National Book Trust, Rupa etc. with years of publishing experience, who have promoted gems like Ruskin Bond” (Parekh p.n).

As far as exclusive books for children in English are concerned, it was renowned cartoonist, K. Shanker Pillai, or Shanker as he is popularly known, who pioneered the movement. He realised the need for children to have their own literature to read at leisure and, more importantly for pleasure, at a price well within the reach of the average Indian child. With this in mind, he founded the Children’s Book Trust (CBT) in India in 1957. He began by writing stories himself, and later encouraging other writers to contribute to this much needed and neglected field:
CBT one of the pioneer publishing houses in India, has set for itself the praiseworthy objective of promoting “well written, well-illustrated and well-designed books for children” these include fiction, non-fiction, folklore, fantast, adventure, history, heritage, culture, science fiction, natural history, humour, apart from very attractive books keeping in mind Shanker Pillay’s approach to children, the CBT has always expressed concern for the expansion of individual reading beyond text book material. The attention towards information books has added a new dimension to CBT’s publication programme (Srinevasan 40).

Noted children’s book writer Deepa Agarwal has a similar view about CBT. She says:

On the one hand the children’s book scene has witnessed movements like Children’s Book Trust, Amer Chitra Katha and the Nehru Bal Pustakalaya series of the National Book Trust. These have performed enormous service in making available to children throughout the country low priced, quality books in the major India languages…. A happy balance between books that merely entertain and those that in form and promote values has been achieved. It has begun to be recognised that Children’s Literature plays an important role in inculcating attitudes (Agarwal n.p).

Children’s Book Trust has been concentrating on expansion and diversification. What had been a collection of classics and mythological tales have expanded to include science fiction and books promoting environmental awareness. Wildlife preservations and environmental safety are the favourite themes. In his article, “Promotion of Reading Habits in Rural Children” Vijaylakshmi Nagraj says, “the collection of books published
by (CBT) Children’s Book Trust which made up a major part of our library was what was started with. It was at this point that I felt that more observation would not suffice. Promoting the reading habit was also equally important. This, the advantage of using CBT books was that we also had the language translation of the books written in English. The children were thrilled to read the stories in the language they know and then attempt the English versions” (Nagraj). Talking of CBT brings to mind books by Thompson Press, which, when they appeared in the early 70’s revolutionized the concept of children’s publishing. Subir Roy says in an article, “Children’s Book Illustrations in India” that: “CBT has made a beginning by introducing a series called “How it Works” which covers various aspects from invention to functioning of the aeroplane, the motor car, the television, the ship, the clock, and the train. The information of these is given in the Indian perspective. These series have become very popular, but then there are lot of other areas, which need to be brought out for the children in an attractive and well-illustrated format” (118). Rich in colour, good paper, and hard bound books came at a time when the market was not ready for them. That or their marketing set-up was poor. To encourage creative writing, CBT has been organizing annual competition for writers of children’s books. What began in 1978 merely as creative forum where new ideas could be tried and authors discovered has turned in to a new mega industry with more and more avenues being explored. CBT’s competition has unwillingly set the trend and the ball rolling, gathering strength by strength. Vijaya Ghose writes:

CBT books have improved enormously, thanks to the competition in the market. Some of our finest original writing for children has come from CBT, to name only Arup Kumar Dutta's *The Kaziranga Trail*. They
haven't looked back since and perhaps they are the only publishing house that mainly brings out fiction (Ghose).

The first competition for writers was held in 1978. The rules for entry were simple with no specification of subject or length except that the entries were to be on any subject of interest of children for general reading. They were to have an Indian background and reflect Indian life.

CBT also brings out an illustrated monthly magazine in English for children called *Children’s World*. CBT encourages new talent in writing and illustrations and also organizes training programmes to upgrade skills and remains open to new ideas. The manuscripts range from fiction, non-fiction, plays, poetry, travelogue and humour for all ages. In 1979 CBT organized the first international Children’s Book Fair at New Delhi which provided a welcome opportunity to Indian writers, Illustraters, Editors, Designers and Publishers to look at the large variety in children’s books. After the year 1979 a good number of books for children came to the scene, like *The Chandipur Jewels* by Nilima Sinha, *The Story of Panchami* by Abhijit Sengupta, *You and the Computer* by Dr. Rajagopalan, which are extremely informative books for children in the simplest possible form of language.

In the 1960’s, a new development in English language books for children was the publication of picture books. The first picture book published by CBT in 1965 was *Home*, written by Kamala Nair and illustrated by K.S. Kulkarni. CBT has to its credit a large number of famous picture books. It published bibliography of *Children’s Books Published in India* which covers 7000 titles in English, Hindi, Bengali and other major Indian regional languages.

The CBT is now equipped to handle original Hindi manuscripts without limiting the programme to translation. In 1985, CBT, in
collaboration with the UNICEF, organized a competition to portray boys and girls as equals. In 1989, CBT, collaborating with World Wide Fund for Nature organized a competition on “Our Environment”.

The CBT management predicts a promoting future for children’s books in India... Sanchita Sharma in her “Growing Pains” has commented “the print run of each book tells its success story. CBT publishes 10,000 copies of each book and it prints or has running stock of 100-125 titles at any given moment” (Srinivasan 41).

Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC)

After independence in 1947 the need for developing literature for children was felt and the late K. Shankar Pillai an eminent writer and cartoonist took the lead by establishing the Children's Book Trust for the publication of children's books. In an article “Chasing Dreams: Shanker and Children” Vinoo Hora writes, “‘Children deserve nothing but the best’ was his firm belief and with the keen interest he was taking in children, Shankar began to realize that there was a dearth of good reading material for children in India. He decided to establish a printing press and print books for children. In this venture he was greatly aided by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and in fond remembrance, Shankar named the building of Children's Book Trust, ‘Nehru House’. ‘Children must read good books,’ Shankar has always stressed and proved his point by writing over 160 books in English and almost all have been translated into Hindi.” (Hora). He systematized workshops to motivate and direct writers to write and artists to illustrate books for children. These motivated writers and illustrators came together to organize the Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC). The main aim of
AWIC is to promote better books for children. In 7 March 1981, Shankar provided the guiding spirit and inspired the members to work dedicatedly for the cause of children's literature. The main aim of this registered voluntary organization is to promote and develop creative literature for children. Authors, artists, publishers, teachers, librarians, parents, in fact any adult who is interested, in the promotion of children's literature can become a member by paying an annual subscription fee and a life member by contributing Rs. 4000. Manorama Jaffa says, “The seed was sown, slowly it sprouted, and now the AWIC is recognized as a pioneer organization for the promotion of better literature for children and also promoting its creators. Over the years, AWIC has expanded its activities in the national as well as in the international fora. AWIC has also set up the Indian Section of International Board on Books for Young People (Ind IBBY) since 1990. Today, AWIC is regarded as one of the most successful voluntary organizations in the world, in the field of children's literature” (Jafa n.p).

There is a designated decision-making body but the essence of team work amongst all members is a distinctive characteristic of AWIC. This organisation holds the meeting every month to debate different aspects of children's literature. Apart from distinguished writers, artists, librarians, and publishers, young readers are invited to these conventions from time to time. Vinoo Hora Opinions

Mr Shankar, before you fulfil your premise of bringing joy and smiles into the lives of all the children of the world. When you went around Connaught Place on your bicycle did you perhaps see the dull, vacant eyes, expressionless faces of those children who tug at your sleeves and beg for food, who run around bare feet and clean cars for a few pennies while children of the elite pore over your books, spend hours in your dolls
museum and gaze with delight at the aquarium which you have so thought-
fully provided. How do these children in their rags enter the wonderland
that you have created, Mr. Shankar? You are known to have said humbly,
‘I am old now, to do anything active’, and yet we feel that you could inspire
your Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children (AWIC) to launch
a crusade through their writings and illustrations and create a feeling within
the children themselves to try and eradicate the evils of poverty and drugs
from amidst children (n.p).

To monitor trainee writers, AWIC organizes result oriented workshops twice a
year. Considering the attractiveness of books on different themes, AWIC organise
achieve-oriented workshops for the welfare of the children and children’s literature in
India. ‘Writers’ Workshop in Hindi’ was first workshop organised by AWIC in 1982,
‘Writers Workshop on Picture Books Stories’ was in 1983, in 1985 Workshop Science
Fiction, for English language writers it was organised in 1986 and since then it
continued on. AWIC organized competitions for writers and illustrators to produce the
best literature for children.

The quarterly Journal of the Indian Section of IBBY *Writer and Illustrator* is significant
journal in the field of children's literature in India. It publishes research based articles,
book reviews in sixteen Indian languages related to children’s literature. The writers,
illustrators, story tellers, playwrights who contribute in the field of children’s literature
in India is being highlighted through this journal. It also publishes profiles to display
the contributions made. It gives space to prize winning stories also. The AIWC also
assists publishers who are leading publishers of Children’s books across the country.
Manorama Jaffa the founder Secretary General of AWIC writes:
The AWIC holds monthly get together, seminars and conferences where different aspects of children's literature are discussed. Eminent authors, illustrators and publishers are invited to its meetings from time to time. It also arranges regular display of outstanding books and original art work of children's books published in India and other countries. In 1992, the AWIC organized the first ever exhibition of original art work in Indian children's books at the International Children's Book Fair at Bologna in Italy. In the same year, it also published a colourful catalogue titled *Indian Illustrators 1960-1992*, presenting the work of 42 Indian illustrators for children. This is the only catalogue in the country containing the work of Indian illustrators (Jafa).

Unless the books reach their target readers writing and publishing of these books has no meaning. Keeping this in consideration AWIC has started its distinctive venture of area or home libraries for children. After an assessment of reading habits and the condition in school libraries, AWIC decided that libraries should be established in communities so that children can pick up books of their choice. In the beginning after the establishment of these neighbourhood libraries, books were collected from publishers and writers through contributions. Started in 1983, currently there are more number of libraries run by passionate associates of AWIC. AWIC has reached through these libraries to thousands of children, and children are being familiarised to the delightful world of stories. In a seminar “*Children’s Literature of the Warm Countries*” in Copenhagen Manorama Jafa spoke about AWIC, “AWICs home libraries which have reached out to children of all sections of society in Delhi and other states. She detailed the activities of AWICs dedicated volunteers who often work in dismal rural conditions.
The AWIC Library Project does not merely make books available to children but actually motivates them to read through its varied programmes” (qtd in Nita Berry Seminar in ‘Wonderful Copenhagen’). In the distant and remote areas of India, where there are no bookshops AWIC children's libraries are the only centre of books for children.

Winner of the IBBY-ASAHI Reading Promotion Award, this project was started in April 1983. Today 114 libraries in Delhi and across India have been initiated under this voluntary scheme to promote reading. Each library is provided with free books. The project aims at making good books available to children where there are no books or few books. Most of the libraries are managed by AWIC members on a voluntary basis. While most libraries function from the homes of AWIC members, some libraries have also been set up in parks, hospitals, railway platforms and slum areas for under-privileged children. Each year AWIC awards the Best Librarian, and two Reader of the Year awards from AWIC Children’s Libraries. AWIC initiated IBBY Library Project – Creating Children’s Libraries at Mandi village in Delhi (NCR), at Tezu in Arunachal Pradesh, at Jaipur, Rajasthan and Daman in Goa, India. The UNICEF Library Project - Creating a Children's Library launched the first library set up in Gujarat, and second in Lalitpur district of Uttar Pradesh in 2007 (AWIC n.p).

Surekha Panandiker writes in her article, “AWIC- A Group of Dedicated People Working for Children’s Literature” writes, “In the slums around Delhi where children had never seen a story book, AWIC libraries provide the pleasure of reading these books. Our libraries have provided an incentive to literacy by giving colorful and
attractive books. Delhi Saksharata Samiti is making use of our libraries in eight
different places. In villages of Punjab and in remote tribal areas of Torba in Bihar we
have brought relaxation and pleasure in the tension-ridden lives of the children”
(Panandiker n.p).

Exhibition of good books and art work of children’s books have a tremendous
impact. Not only in India but also abroad AWIC has been exhibiting children's books
and art work. AWIC took up the challenge and has been representing India in the
international children's book fairs. Indian Section of the International Board on Books
for Young People (IBBY) have actively participated in the world exhibitions since
1990. AWIC assembles and chooses children's books from Indian publishers, presents
them in these exhibitions, and has the credit of organizing an exhibition of the artwork
of Indian illustrators of children’s books. The beauty of the original artwork of Indian
talented artists are being displayed, publishers, artists and visitors from all over the
world were captivated by the extraordinary excellence of Indian illustrations. Indian
authors illustrators and translators who won awards are Ranjit Lal for *Faces in the
Water* talks about female infanticide in India, Nirmal Kanti Bhattacharjee, a translator
translated Sunil Gangopadhyay's *Bhoyonkar Sundor* (Bengali) into English titled as *The
Dreadful Beauty*, Shanti Devi, a Madhubani artist, is the illustrator of the
book *Bioscope* (Katha), a story of a village near Mithila told by a girl through
illustrations. Deepa Agarwal’s *Caravan to Tibet* (2007), a masterpiece, was on the
Honour List of the prestigious International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY).

*No Guns at My Son’s Funeral* translated into German and Spanish which was on the
*IBBY Honour List*. Arup Kumar Dutta was chosen for ‘Lifetime Achievement Award’
for his contribution to children’s literature. To promote Indian writers AWIC presents
catalogue of writers on the occasion. Prema Srinivasan Writes about AWIC,
The members of the Association of Writers and children have been committed to quality writing and, over the years, have brought a professional approach to the art of writing for children. By continuously reiterating the fundamental rules of sound story-telling, the workshops and seminars held by AWIC has created the much needed awareness of the importance of children’s literature (55).

To have a better perspective and to undertake research in the field of children's literature it is necessary to have worldwide contracts. By becoming the Indian Section of the International Board on Book for Young People (IBBY) since 1990, AWIC has filled this lacuna. Today AWIC is looked upon as an important institution by researchers, students and all those who are interested in the field of children's literature. Surekha Panandiker a well-known writer of children’s books writes, “We know much has to be done, the field is vast, millions of children who need books are waiting, the advent of TV and cable is threatening the development of book culture, but we have made a beginning. With the team spirit of its 400 members and cooperation from all concerned people AWIC will march ahead to promote and develop good literature for children” (Panandiker) Vijaya Goshe also has the same opinion about AWIC, she says in her article, ‘The Dilemma of Children’s Books’:

This piece would be incomplete without mentioning two organizations that have done a great deal to promote children's writing and the reading habit in children, AWIC--Association of Writers and Illustrators for Children and AWIC Children's Library. AWIC was formed to get together writers and illustrators for children to teach them the necessary skills as well as to expose them to other creative people. They hold regular meetings, conduct workshops and
publish prize-winning titles in English and Hindi. They bring out a quarterly journal called *Writer and Illustrator* (Ghose).

**National Book Trust (NBT)**

In the publishing scene of Children’s Literature in India, The National Book Trust (NBT) was established in 1957 by the Government of India (Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development) to develop reading habits and creation of book culture in the country. In the early years, NBT’s emphasis was on publishing books specifically for children. The main objective of the trust was to help the child to see the word through Indian sensibility and at the same time promote national integration. Varsha Das writes, “These books promote national integration by providing common reading material in their mother tongue to children all over India on wide range of subjects. They cater to four age-groups namely, pre-school, 6-8, 8-11 and 11-14” (47). It has been bringing out children’s books since 1970 under the scheme of *Nehru Bal Pushtakalaya*. Mohini Rao comments,

> With the launching of its very popular and successful series Nehru bal Pushtakalaya (Nehru Library for Children), in 1970, the National Book Trust became the major publisher of children’s books, perhaps the biggest in the country today...Besides being well illustrated and well produced, the books are moderately priced as the Trust is a non-profit making organization. Their publications have filled a great void. Being both good and inexpensive, their books are in great demand, especially for bulk purchase by libraries (70).

National Book Trust published its first illustrated book *Bapu* by F. C. Freitas in 1970. The events of the Trust include publishing, promotion of books and reading, promotion of Indian books abroad, assistance to authors and publishers, and promotion of children’s literature. NBT publishes reading material in several Indian languages for
all age-groups, including books for children and neo-literates. NBT's children's books are known for their illustrations, and the most leading illustrators are Pulak Biswas, Jagdish Joshi, Mrinal Mitra, Subir Roy, Atanu Roy, Manjula Padmanabhan, Mickey Patel and Suddhasattwa Basu.

Every year during the National Book Week from 14-20 November, the Trust organises a number of Book promotional activities throughout the country to promote book mindedness among the masses. This year too, a weeklong programme for children was held at the amphitheatre of Nehru Bhawan, NBT. Based on the theme, *My Children My Literature*, the Festival saw participation of a large number of children from various schools and NGOs in and around Delhi. During the Week, children interacted with well-known children’s authors like Shri Gagan Chandra Adhikari, Smt Surekha Panandiker and Shri Prakash Manu and gave dramatic performances based on stories by renowned authors like Rabindra Nath Tagore and Ruskin Bond. Besides, a number of book promotional activities, which included seminars, book review sessions, meet the author programmes, poet’s meet and book release functions were held all over the country (NBT n.p).

NBT as an organisation organised few book fairs in North-east to promote books for children. The fairs organised special literary activities in order to attract children towards the world of books. The events included and organised are ‘quiz and sit & draw competitions’, ‘meet-the-author’ programmes. The seminars on *Children’s Literature and Reading Habit* and discussions on *Writings of Rabindranath Tagore*, *Essential Elements in the Literature of the North-East* are a glimpse of promotion of children’s literature in Northeast. Prema Srinivasan Writes,
Alongside books of information, NBT has moved into textbook publishing as well. Their plan to identify outstanding fiction in all regional languages as well as prize-winning titles from all over the world. NBT has identified a potential market in the ethnic population living in U.K and a wide variety of books is displayed in the national as well as the international book fairs (38).

She further writes:

Seminars, information campaign, the National Book Week and the Reader’s Club are the various programmes planned by NBT for long term results. If, by and by, children take to reading not just as another exercise but a creative experience, it would achieve the NBT’s chief aim (39).

**National Centre for Children’s Literature (NCCL)**

In 1993 National Book Trust established a centre named as National Centre for Children’s Literature (NCCL), which is the central organization to screen, manage, design and support the publication of Children’s Literature in several Indian languages. The NCCL has established a library-cum-documentation centre of children’s literature. Like other organisations it also holds workshops, seminars and exhibitions to advance children’s literature in India. In promoting and developing the reading habit of the children at the primary level, NCCL facilitates in locating ‘Reader Clubs’ at schools all over the country. It also encourages research areas concerning children, regulate surveys related to children and Children’s Literature. In a report published by National book trust of India says

So far, over 35,000 Readers Clubs have been set up across the country. NCCL established over 1100 Readers Clubs, besides organising Meet-the-Author programmes, storytelling sessions,
workshops seminars, Readers Club Orientation programmes and other children’s activities in various parts of the country. In addition, yearly issues of Readers’ Club Bulletin, a bilingual magazine for promotion of reading habit among children were also brought out. (Report 7).

NCCL’s ‘Reader’s Club’ invites people who are interested in overall development of children’s literature. The invitees usually meet periodically in the Club, the discussions revolve round promotion and development of children’s literature, the children gets opportunity to engage themselves with the books and enhance their reading habits. Active writers for children visit these centres, and provide books and monthly Bulletin of NCCL, and over all learning takes place at the centres at comfort.

Renowned writers and experts on activities are invited as resource persons in such training/orientation programmes. Workshops on creative writing or interesting activities for children or members of Reader's Clubs are also organised from time to time. Besides, the centre arranges subject experts for organising different activities such as workshops on writing and publishing, storytelling etc. on request for promotion of children's literature (NCCL n.p).

Paro Anand, a prolific writer for children and storyteller writes:

The ‘concepts and intention behind holding these meetings is to understand the’ problems that beset the world of children’s books and try, through discussion an' interaction, to find solutions to them. We hope that from each interaction will come action. Each meeting focuses on a specific area of children's literature and the subject is explored in-depth (Anand n.p).
National Centre for Children's Literature has revealed many opportunities of extending its work from the very beginning of its existence, but has also found itself struggling with a number of questions. Appropriate books for particular age group of children, involvement of gender, class discrimination etc. in the content of books and how it should be eliminated from children’s literature. This is the reason NCCL has started publication of the Readers' Club Bulletin in January 1994, comprising of reading material for children. It is being published every month, and stories are written in both English and Hindi languages, it also provides proposals, suggestions and ideas for activities to be taken up by Readers' Clubs. Paro Anand writes about the meetings of Readers' Club:

The meetings have formed an important bridge between the creators of children's literature on the one hand, and the actual users on the other. Thus, it is a unique forum where teachers, parents, book sellers, school principals, librarians and, most important, children themselves have the opportunity to interact with the creators and express their literary views, needs, complaints and desires to those who are responsible for the creation of literature, that is, publishers, editors, authors, illustrators. This has aided those who create the books to understand their readership and also, learn from those who are experts, or have some special experience in a specific focus area the needs'; limitations and possibilities of that a tea, For instance,. a whole range of ideas was thrown’ up during the several meetings whether on the subject of special needs for books for disabled children, in the areas of writing for teenagers, on history or science. In this way, there is a sharing of experiences and ideas, as well as the giving of examples of books, whether
Indian or foreign that are outstanding in the area under discussion (Anand n.p).

National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT)

National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) set out with admirable objectives on the same line as NBT to improve the existing reading habit amongst children. NCERT was established in 1961 in the backdrop of a school system struggling to disengage from its elitist colonial past. Its main objective was to create a common programme of school education that was collectively accessible and reflect the pluralist character of India. In its initial years in 1963 NCERT felt grave concern for the children and commenced projects on “Why, What, and How to Write for Children” and in 1980’s launched a multidisciplinary project called “Leading to Learn” The aim was to improve the capacity of imaginative and bright reading in children. NCERT has been publishing basically textbooks and supplementary readers at a subsidized price.

Begun a few years ago, the Mathura Project, run in about 560 schools, reaching 40,000 children, has succeeded in catching the imagination of teachers, administers and planners. The project uses a participatory process, involving teachers, researchers and experts in all aspects of the design. Its aims to improve the teaching of reading and writing in the early classes, promotion of new pedagogies of reading and writing and supporting it with research, setting up libraries in the schools, training teachers (http://www.ncert.nic.in/oth_anoun/leading_the_change.pdf).

NCERT’s contributions in various book fairs have always been considerable and significant, it presents textbook experts in all subjects, both arts and sciences. English titles which are written for children and published by NCERT are What on Earth is
Energy? by D.P. Sen Gupta which is beautifully illustrated and developed for children in the age-group of eleven and thirteen. This book intends to make children aware of science in everyday life and to demystify it. The book is meant to proclaim that science is not extraneous to us, but that we are part of science. Talking of Trees by Pratibha Nath, as a part of Reading to Learn series provides essential and interesting information about 31 types of trees that adorn hilly and plains alike. This book is sure to appease the curiosity of young readers about nature and environment and gives them the gift of an enquiring mind and spirit. Bahuroope Gandhi by Aru Bandyopadhyaya, describes the multifaceted personality of Gandhiji as a barrister, author, kisan, weaver, nurse, journalist, mason, shoemaker, carpenter, blacksmith and barber. It is an interesting books for children and for those who wishes to know about Gandhi. Akasa Darsana Atlas by G.R. Paranjpe helps to guide and initiate the children into the mysteries of the most fascinating part of the universe i.e. the sky, Akasa Darsana Atlas is designed to create a desire to acquaint children with what they see in the night sky. Contours of Courage by Manoj Das it an anthology of few fascinating characters who were involved in the fight for India’s freedom; these stories illustrate how every children has the capacity to face the most adverse situation with indomitable will. The collection will help to cultivate social, ethical and moral values in children. Glimpses of Plant Life by Brij Mohan Johri and Bharati Bhattacharyya the two parts of this interesting informative book point out the details of dependence of human life on plants for various reasons like food, fibres, dyes, drugs and even survival categorized under interesting heads like “Plants of Worship”, “The beautiful Orchids”, “Wealth of the Firs” “Bonal” “Mosses” “Plants that Heal”, “Plants of Ramayana” “Plants of the Quran” “Biblical Scenario” and such. The two parts deal with a wide variety of plants and trees along with their botanical names, uses, history which is beneficial to children. Remote Sensing
by Meenakshi Kumar, is a small effort under the project ‘Reading to Learn’ attempt to give the children an insight into the remote sensing technology. The subject matter has been conceptualized in such a way that attempt to motivate the children to read. *Thirukkural* by P. Varadarajan, a translation of well-known Tamil Classic Thirukkural intends to make the young generation aware of India’s wisdom, its shades of vibrant culture and its personal and social value systems. It is a collection of 1330 couplets composed in the Venba meters, is a treasure of traditions and values related to human life in totality in all its domain. *A String of Camels* by Pratibha Nath is collection of stories and poems. This book aims at making the child reader aware of the wonderful world around him. The common theme running through the book is the beautiful relation between the child and animal, besides developing a love for animals in the mind of the child. *The Ship of the Desert* by S. K Ram comes under the project ‘Reading to Learn’ series aiming at grooming the children to become adept at reading to make them love books and to make them aware of the world of wonder and beauty around them and within them, it describes how the ship of the desert-the camel, is quite adaptive to the harsh environment it lives in.

**Saffron Tree**

Apart from publishers and illustrators there are blogs on internet which children parents and librarians can access easily for books. One of the most famous blog is *Saffron Tree*. *Saffron Tree* - a non-profit, community-oriented, multi-cultural blog exhibit children’s books. *Saffron Tree* bring together and presents wide-ranging of children's books primarily from India and the books around the world. It does the work of figuring out what books you should select for your child. It displays on the blog age wise list of books from toddlers to young adult books and non-fiction for children. *Saffron Tree* was created in October 2006 by Praba Ram. She is a children's story writer, story-time
expert and an early literacy supporter. In writing for children, the wonders of nature and cultural diversity inspire her the most. Praba Ram comments, “Children's books, especially ones with cross-cultural/multi-cultural flavors, happens to stir our passions. As a result, our reviews sometimes showcase our support for the fiercely independent small publishers from here in the U.S. and India. Occasionally we accept a copy or two from authors and illustrators who have worked on Indian/ South Asian themes and other multi-cultural genre. And, true to our belief, if the book resonates with us and our kids, we share it here” (Praba n.p).

She further writes:

Children's books bring out the inner child in us - the curiosity, the discovery, the unbridled wonder at the world around us - which we, as parents, manage to lose sight of in today's complex life. Reading children's books helps us take a step back and see the world through our children, making it an enriching experience for us that we've come to cherish. As all who are passionate about reading would agree, the benefits of exposing children to books from a very young age cannot be over-emphasized. And, we believe that blogging about the wonderful books, along with the delightful moments we experience while reading these books to our children, helps create a wider forum to discover and appreciate not just the books, but the joys of reading as well (Praba n.p).

Writers who contribute to Saffron Tree are Sathish Ramakrishnan, Ranjani Sathish, Sheela Preuitt, Anitha Ramkumar

The other important publishers who publish solely for children in India are as follows: Duckbill, Harper Collins. Jyotsna Prakashan, , Katha, Little latitude, Ponytale Books, Popular Prakashan, Pratham Books, Pickle Yolk Books, Puffin Books, Pustak Mahal,

In India there is huge mass of standardised, prosaic, mostly didactic and often clichéd books. There are many good writers and illustrators in English language and in all the Indian regional languages. Children’s publishers in Indian need to produce modern, appropriate, receptive and responsive Indian literary resource for children. Manasi Subramaniam writes, “New writing [children’s Books] in India is adventurous, offbeat, and pans the entire spectrum. Like the country itself, the market is entirely non-homogenous, catering to every kind of reader and writer. While larger publishing houses with eclectic focus still dominate the market, the independent publishers continue to thrive, often collaborating with these giants, but refusing to lose their individuality (32).
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