

Pandits, printers and others
Publishing in nineteenth-century Benares

Francesca Orsini, University of Cambridge¹

How does print work in a multilingual society? How does the introduction of print affect the balance between existing languages and the knowledge traditions that they represent? Secondly, how does print change a multilingual literary sphere where transmission had been oral and/or scribal? This essay revolves around these two questions in the context of north India in the nineteenth century, with particular focus on Benares.

North India certainly was a multilingual society in the nineteenth century and still is now. Benares in particular was a centre where local traditions of education and learning based on Sanskrit were still very strong. Moreover, poetic and religious traditions in Braj Bhasa, a Western variety of Hindi that had become a supraregional poetic language, were also strong and diffuse (McGregor 1984). At the same time, though to a lesser degree than other towns in north India due to its strong Hindu character, Benares could not help but be influenced by the role of Persian and, increasingly, of Urdu as languages of administration and diplomacy; some of the earliest journals issuing from Benares were in fact in Urdu. Beside the local dialect, Bhojpuri, which had a rich tradition of folk songs that found their way into printed collections, there were the languages spoken by the city's settled immigrant groups: Bengali in particular, but also Marathi, Nepali, etc. As an early British bridgehead in the region in the late eighteenth century (Bayly 1983, Cohn 1987, Dalmia 1997), Benares was, albeit to a lesser extent than Agra, a site for English education and, more significantly, for the new self-affirmation of Hindu middle-classes through Hindi. Intensely multilingual and by no means perturbed by the "new knowledge" brought in by the British, Benares is thus a good standing point from which to examine the impact of print on a multilingual society (cf. Bayly 1996: 238-243).

Following Benedict Anderson, we are led to believe that print simplifies: one variant of the vernacular becomes the "print language" and acquires fixity and predominance over the others, which in turn become sub-standards. As the language of schools and of the press, the standard vernacular becomes a necessary qualification for access to the public sphere, and the medium of communication for a community that transcends close geographical boundaries

¹I would like to thank Michael Dodson for his comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

(Anderson 1983). Yet, if one turns to look at the book market in nineteenth-century north India, the picture is one of persisting stratification and diversity of languages in print. Clearly, the question needs to be asked afresh.

The second question addresses the impact of print on the literary sphere. Print and publishing were the arena for great changes in the literary spheres of nineteenth-century India. Publishing was a veritable “field of action” in which old and new literate groups came to work: writers and editors, copyists, compositors and printers, publishers and booksellers. One of the big questions for nineteenth-century Indian literature must indeed be: why did some genres make it into print and not others? And if something did not get printed, why not? If it did get printed, then what kind of life and space in the literary system did those who produced the text envisage for it when they consigned it to print? The three broad avenues along which publishing developed in the nineteenth century were education, high literature and knowledge, and commercial genres. The importance of Fort William College (est. Calcutta, 1800) and of other colonial educational institutions in providing the occasion for new prose works in Hindi and Urdu has been amply recognised in literary histories: in fact, attention has focused almost exclusively on the “new” genres that education and the new public sphere introduced. By comparison, the role of print in maintaining pre-existing branches of knowledge and elite and popular literary genres has only begun to be recognised (Blackburn 2001). Publishing was initially supported by both royal and colonial patronage but it was also, of course, concerned with commerce, with the need to make money and to bring out something “new”, timely, attractive or useful. This commercial aspect of “the advent of print” has often been overlooked (but see Pritchett 1985, Ghosh 1998, Stark 1998 and [2001]). In this paper I will argue that, in the context of north India, the study of commercial publishing can help us to correct a view of publishing and of literary production which has been too much focused on single language traditions (Hindi, Urdu, Persian, Sanskrit) and alert us to the stratification of literary publics and the exchange between languages. This essay concentrates on the case of Benares in order to explore the relationship between print and language variety, and that between old and new genres and old and new audiences.

The penetration of print in north India: sources and patterns

After an early start in Calcutta, print and publishing came to north India around 1830, when the first litho presses were established in Lucknow and Kanpur. At great expense the Nawab Ghaziuddin Haydar founded a typography with Arabic fonts which printed a few works in Persian, the earliest recorded in 1821.² Other early records are of a scholarly book in

²*Haft Qulzum*, printed in 1821, soon after completion achieved some celebrity in Europe after the German scholar-poet Friedrich Rückert translated part of it as *Grammatik, Poetik und Rhetorik der Perser* (Leipzig, 1874). Given that Sprenger notes in ca. 1848 that the work was

Persian (1831-32) and a *Tulsī Rāmāyaṇa* (1832), both printed by Mr Archer's Asiatic Lithographic Society Press in Kanpur. Archer, who had established a lithographic printing office in Kanpur ca. 1830, was invited to Lucknow by the Nawab Nazir-ud-din Haydar, entered the Nawab's service and published for him some scholarly and moral works in Persian and some Urdu books (Sprenger 1854: xii). Other litho presses owned by Indians then sprang up in Kanpur and Lucknow.³ Thus, knowledge about the technology of printing spread within Indian society and was indigenised in a way in which knowledge about other imported technologies, for example that of the telegraph, did not (Lahiri Choudhury 2000: 359).

The map of printing in north India shows that British administrative towns and cantonments like Agra, Allahabad, Kanpur, Meerut and Lahore were the first to acquire printing presses. Other important catalysts were missionaries and school-book societies in Agra and Ludhiana, and the Indian courts in Delhi, Lucknow and Benares. Mofussil towns like Moradabad, Aligarh and Bareilly and pilgrimage places like Mathura were other obvious centres since they had both the literate manpower and the ready-made market for publications.⁴

Initially, only a handful of printing presses used movable type: the majority used lithography. Although type fonts for Naskh and Nastaliq characters, used for Arabic, Persian and Urdu books, had been developed in England and India in the late eighteenth century, they were very expensive. After lithography was introduced to England and India at the beginning of the nineteenth century, it became the favoured choice for Urdu and Persian printing as it was cheap and easy to operate and it reproduced the elegant hand of calligraphers (Ahmad 1976), who thus found new employment.⁵ But while Persian and Urdu books were almost universally lithographed, in the case of Hindi books a hierarchy came into place. Publications for government or for wealthy patrons and textbooks that guaranteed high

not as famous in India, we can assume that it was its status as printed book that engendered its international diffusion. See Schimmel 1992: 5.

³ As the story goes, some passages in a history of the royal family of Oudh, written by a Munshi of the observatory in 1849, annoyed the Nawab, and the observatory and printing were immediately abolished and forbidden in Lucknow (Sprenger 1854: vi), for a few years at least. Some printers moved to nearby Kanpur, others remained but omitted the place of publication on the cover (which was still written clearly, as was the practice, at the end of each book, or on an inside page). Ahmad 1976: 120-1.

⁴ By the time of the first colonial report on Native Presses in the North-Western Provinces in 1848, 17 litho presses were listed as working in the area: 7 in Delhi, 5 in Agra, 2 in Benares and 1 each in Bareilly, Meerut and Simla; the absence of Kanpur is puzzling and the figures are probably incomplete. There were 40 presses only five years later in 1853, and in 1854 Aloysius Sprenger counted 12 private litho presses in Lucknow alone. Incomplete information after 1857 shows 20 presses in operation, and even a conservative estimate in 1865 would set the number upwards of 60; after that, it was a constant rise; Note 1853, Note 1858, Report 1864.

⁵ Compared to 26 Roman letters, there are under 200 letters in Naskh but over 600 character combinations in Nastaliq, making it the most expensive. Despite that, Nastaliq was considered more elegant and similar to the calligraphic hand and all the Urdu books printed in India before 1800 were in Nastaliq character. See Ahmad 1976: 15-115.

sales were printed, while books published on a smaller scale and those brought out by smaller, commercial printers were lithographed. The visual impact was quite different: printed books shared in the mystique of English publications, while lithographed books reproduced the visual experience of manuscripts, albeit with a different format and pagination; they also often contained beautiful wood-block illustrations. As the industry grew, more and more litho printers acquired presses with movable type, and new litho workshops sprang up: thus, the expansion took place at both the higher and lower ends of the market.

Crucially, the cheapness and acceptability of lithography allowed printers to produce books at low cost in different scripts, without having to buy a full set of type fonts. Lithography also allowed variant ways of writing and spelling and was more amenable for books in local dialects.

Our main source of information for this period is the Reports on the Native Press compiled by the provincial Secretary of the provincial government or by the Director of Public Instruction for the Governor, hence colonial administrative documents reflecting colonial concerns and English perspectives, and a few words about them will not be out of place. Although they are our most complete source of information, they can by no means be taken to be exhaustive. Reports were compiled on the basis of returns solicited from publishers which were collected by the local Munshi or the Resident, corroborated by their own observations and then sent to the provincial department of public instruction, located first in Agra and then in Allahabad. The loopholes in this system were evident to the compilers themselves, who argued that the method could be improved

if the returns were called for authoritatively through the Magistrates of the different districts: this course however was deprecated by the late Lieutenant-Governor, that the exercise of any such power would tend to affect the accuracy of the returns. The native character being particularly suspicious, the proprietors of the presses would immediately imagine that it was the intention of Government to introduce some tax on literature, and they would proceed forthwith to falsifying their returns as much as possible. They are therefore written to privately by the Moonshee, instead of being subjected to an official mandate (Note 1853: 387).

This “semi-official” mode of eliciting the required information appeared even more inadequate after 1857. Since those involved were “a class peculiarly jealous of interference on the part of constituted authorities, and indisposed to lay bare the working of their arrangements voluntarily”,

Little confidence can... be placed in returns thus obtained retrospectively from Proprietors or Editors themselves. They can easily suppress all notice of objectionable works, and make their catalogues of publications as plausible as can be desired by the most fastidious official (Note 1858: 313).

Kempson, the Director of Public Instruction at the time, thought that registration of books, optional and sweetened by the pill of copyright, could be a solution, and wrote several memoranda to this effect suggesting, for example, that registration be made possible with the local magistrate instead of solely with the Secretary of the Government of India in Calcutta. After a petition by printer Muhammad Mustafa Khan in 1853, this became possible, but initially he was the only publisher to register his books, possibly because of the high registration fee required, Rs. 2 per title (Note 1853: 390-1). Registration of books, formalized in the Act XXV of 1867, remained optional and was mostly sought by printer-publishers who either wanted to establish their copyright or submit their books to government for patronage. Lasting vestiges of the Act are the voluminous quarterly lists of publications registered which must form the main source of information for any study on publishing in this period. But as the net closed over publishers, some still managed to escape: they were the more local, small and low-key producers of cheap lithographed publications who had nothing to gain from exposure to the colonial gaze.⁶ They still need be considered *in absentia*.

What led colonial officers to compile such painstaking reports and lists? The need to survey and control is one obvious answer. But other strands may be detected as well, strands that influenced colonial perceptions of “native” publishing. The Education Department, for example, was keen to support worthwhile books and newspapers and urged the provincial government to do so with its ampler funds. Among the journals supported were *‘Umdat ul-Akhbār*, *Akhbār ul-fiaqāyūq*, Munshi Sadāsukh Lāl’s *NĒr-ul Abẓār* (Urdu) and *Buddhi Prakāś* (Hindi) from Agra, and *Koh-i NĒr* from Lahore. The connection between the patronage of the education department and publishing is an important one and has already been remarked upon: in 1862 Kempson boasted that the department supplied newspapers to all the chief schools in the province through the fund for Prize-books (Kalsi 1975, Naim 1984, Dalmia 1997, Orsini [2001a]). He saw government schools as “centres of intelligence” in each village, where pandits would read out a newspaper as soon as it came. Editors of native newspapers, he claimed, almost without exception desired to obtain the patronage of the government, and the government should not miss this chance to spread useful knowledge and influence the native mind. Patronised and supervised journals could be used, for example, to dispel false rumours, such as the one current in 1862 that the Badshahzadi Victoria had changed religion (Report 1862: 3). Besides, Kempson envisaged a more interventionist attitude in dealing with publications deemed “immoral”, for which he advocated direct censorship, an *index expurgatorius* to be circulated to local magistrates, and a check on colporteurs selling “immoral” books.

⁶ The issue of official censorship is not addressed here. Graham Shaw [2001] quotes evidence showing that the government had not laid down any clear guidelines on the subject of obscene books; much heavier fines were levied on booksellers in Punjab compared to those in Lucknow and the North Western Provinces, resulting in the disappearance of “obscene” books from the bazaar in Lahore.

The governor's office seemed to take an altogether different stance, keener rather to find about "native public opinion" and traces of political discontent therein than willing to believe that patronage would bring about wonderful changes in Indian society. In this expectation they were largely disappointed. Firstly, they noted, the news in newspapers was generally "neither new nor original": editors either mentioned letters from friends and correspondents in distant places - akin to the earlier newsletters - or translated news from the English papers, "and I regret to observe", wrote Kempson, "that they fasten greedily on accidents discreditable to Englishmen, such for instance as the casual [!] maltreatment of their countrymen" (Report 1862: 3). Secondly, editors rarely ventured to express their own opinions and were especially cautious when the interests of the Government were in any way concerned: in a word, they refused to be the channels of the critical "native public opinion" that the government expected them to be (Note 1848: 238; Note 1850: 248). The contrast with the English press in India was striking: "While the least occasion or opening for reform is eagerly seized by the one, the other would repress enquiry, and throw dust into the eyes of its readers" (Report 1862: 2). (The fact that any criticism was either silenced or dismissed as "querulous complaint" does not seem to have struck them.) Thirdly, their expectation that book publishing would help the dissemination of "useful knowledge" went largely unfulfilled: Indian publishers brought out very few new titles (only one out of 141 in 1850, noted the compiler; Note 1850: 247), and the reading public showed a clear preference for "immoral" works and reissues and retellings of older works.

The reports' assessment of the Indian press and of publishing in north India was thus almost completely negative. As the compiler of the 1858 report put it, no doubt shocked by the break-down of information that had made the 1857 uprising possible:

the most striking characteristic of the Native Press, glancing at the returns and works before Government, seem to be insignificance and puerility, want of tone and latitude of purpose. [...] making every allowance for the incompleteness of returns, the amount of Literature, good or bad, which finds its way into the Indian market, is to modern European ideas absurdly insignificant, and the "general reading" Indian public forms such an infinitesimal fraction of the vast population, that the direct influence of the few publications on readers, cannot be estimated by their number according to European standard.

Even the few immoral publications were not to be feared, for 'it would be difficult to concoct books, more immoral in their tendency than the legends, traditions and doctrines, which are instilled in the mind of every Hindoo by his spiritual guides, or the sensual aspirations which Mahomedanism delights in cherishing' (Note 1858: 314). With the English model in front of them, mid-nineteenth-century colonial officers could have only a negative verdict for Indian publishing in north India: unoriginal, "immoral" and ineffectual. Just the opposite of new, useful and effective.

In reality, the beginning of printing in north India can indeed be called tentative, but for other reasons. Patronage - of the courts, of the British and the “indirect” patronage solicited from local notables - played a large role in direct and indirect ways, as the case of Benares will show.⁷ When not supported by patronage, editor-publishers had to rely on the market, which must have seemed full of possibilities but also of frustrating limitations. Readership of journals, which printers almost invariably brought out along with books, was very small and confined to local notables (monthly subscriptions hovered between 1 and 2 Rs., no small sum), though C.A. Bayly has suggested that even those few copies could travel far across country by ‘private dwaks’ (postcarriers) at a paltry charge of three pice, while European newspapers were crippled by postage charges (Bayly 1996: 239). Possibly the difference between newspapers and their predecessor, the newsletter, was still unclear, for the choice of material, mostly local news and news translated from other journals, was much the same. The margin of profit was small. Some editors complained that receipts did not cover expenses, others that they could not publish any new books because the old stock still lay with him unsold; one publisher complained in 1852 that none of the six books he had published during the year had been sold (Note 1848: 238, 240, 244; Note 1853: 401). Under such circumstances, one wonders what the inclination and motivation of Indian printers and publishers must have been. Was it a question of prestige for them, or a new business proposition? And does the repeated lack of success mean that publisher-printers entered this new field light-heartedly, deceived by the low cost of copyists and of litho publishing and without thinking out the whole process of distribution and sale and which genres would find a ready readership? And if so, was this market innocence induced by patronage?

The lone success story of the early part of the century, that of the Matba-i Mustafai press, seems to suggest that market acumen did make all the difference. It also showed others where money could be made in publishing, and it tells us which were the ready fields and audiences for books in north India. Started probably before 1850 in Lucknow, the Press had to move its headquarters to Kanpur in 1852 and finally to Delhi, where it could command a readier sale for books. The manager, Mustafa Khan, was a dealer in books and had an extensive network of agents and colporteurs in all the main towns of the province: an impressive eighty titles were published in 1853 alone. Prices were considerably lower than those of other publishers and the quality of lithography was considered good. Mustafa Khan seems to have been the first to be able to gauge the possibilities of the market and the

⁷ The *Zubdat ul-akhbār* (1833?) from Agra, for example, managed by one Wajid Ali Khan and connected in some way to the English *Agra Akhbar*, was printed in 157 copies (subscription cost Rs. 1 per month, so not for the poor) and showed returns of Rs. 140 per month. To these, wrote Kempson, ‘more than Rs. 100 may be added... as receipts from neighbouring and other princes, anxious to secure the goodwill of a newspaper, which might be otherwise made the vehicle for publishing information regarding them not in every instance well suited to meet the public eye.’ The Rajas of Bharatpur and Alwar and the Nawabs of Jujjhur and Hyderabad made monthly payments of Rs 15 to 30 each to the editor. Note 1848: 238.

dynamics of the business: he produced expensive, excellently lithographed and specialised books for the upper end of the market and more current genres at much cheaper prices. Thus the classics of Persian education, Urdu *qissas*, *masnavis* and the ubiquitous almanacs sold at 3 annas, with editions as high as 1000 copies. Medical, religious and law books were priced higher but also found a ready market (Note 1853: 400 ff.). These were the “sure” genres, the plank on which commercial publishing expanded, first in Urdu and then also in Hindi, in the nineteenth century.⁸

Books published by Matba-i Mustafai in 1853

Kanpur:	<i>Javâhir ul-Kurân</i>	(1000 copies)	Rs 1, 12 annas		400 sold
	<i>îfvat ul-Maâdir</i>	(1000)	4 annas	Persian verbs	100 sold
	<i>Daftar ôâk bah</i>	(200)	Rs 1	Urdu, post	100 sold
	<i>Ma'mûd nâma</i>	(1000)	3 annas	Persian poem	400 sold
	<i>Karîma</i>	(1000)	3 annas	education	500 sold
	<i>Khâliq bâr</i>	(1000)	3 annas	“	600 sold
	Hindi almanac 1854	(1200)	3 annas		all sold
	Urdu almanac 1854	(1200)	3 annas		all sold
	<i>Shab dilpazîr</i>	(1000)	2 annas, 6 paisa	love poem?	200 sold
	<i>Munâjât kalmâ</i>	(1000)	1 anna, 6 p.	prayers in Urdu	500 sold
	<i>Layl Majnû</i>	(1000)	3 annas	love poem	400 sold
	<i>Risâil TÊghra</i>	(600)	Rs 3		400 sold
	<i>Qisâa Manûr Shâh</i>	(1000)		3 annas	story 50 sold
	<i>Akhvân ul-Imân</i>	(1000)	3 annas	religious	50 sold
Delhi:(no copies, no price given)					
	<i>Hazâr maâlâ</i>	questions and answers on law		<i>Safinat us-Zarâfat</i>	Urdu jest-book
	<i>Wâqiya-i KÊhistan</i>	on battles with Gurkhas		<i>Majmû'a-i Makhummisât</i>	religious poems
	<i>Maânavî Shama-i Shabistân</i>			<i>Paighambar</i>	
	<i>Wafatnâma Paighambar</i>	religious		<i>Qisâa-i Gul o Sanobar</i>	story
	<i>Mawlûd-i sharîf</i>	birth of Muhammad		<i>Qisâa-i Syâhposh o</i>	two stories
	<i>Qâyda Baghdâdî</i>	rules for pronouncing Quran		<i>Maânavî Dilsoz</i>	
	<i>UrÊz saif</i>	rules for poetic composition		<i>Banjâranâma</i>	story
	<i>Ryâz ul-anvâr</i>	love poem		<i>Naâfhatnâma</i>	
	<i>Châr bâgh va</i>	Sa'dat Yar Khan		<i>Joghnâma</i>	story
	<i>Khanjar-i 'Ishq</i>	Rangila's masnavi		<i>Qisâa-i Shâh-i RÊm</i>	story
	<i>Charkunnâma</i>	poems		<i>Kathâ salon</i>	story
	<i>Shahr-âshob Dihlî</i>	poem		<i>Da'ulatnâma</i>	story?
	<i>va Tazhik rozgâr</i>			<i>fialma Dâstory?</i>	
	<i>Risâla 'ajb o gharîb</i>	religious instruction		<i>Da'ulat -i fiatm</i>	story?
	<i>Afsâna -i gham</i>	romance		<i>ChÊhon kâ achâr</i>	
	<i>Lub al-taqvîn</i>	divination		<i>Zâd-i gharîb</i>	religious instruction
	<i>Naâfîr-i Hamadân</i>	Persian letter-writer		<i>Mazhab-i 'ishq</i>	
	<i>Insha-i muftîd</i>	“ “		<i>Shahîd-i 'ishq</i>	
	<i>Ghuncha-i zarb</i>	“ “		<i>Êib-i YÊsuf</i>	medical
	<i>Qasîda-i Zauq</i>	poems		<i>Khulâât al-fiqh</i>	Urdu religious text
	<i>Qasîda-i Zafar</i>	poems			

(Source: Note 1853: 400-2)

⁸ For the printing history of *qissas*, see Pritchett 1985.

There is another reason why the publishing market in north India appears “tentative”, at least until the 1860s. A high proportion of books were published by the author or “by order” of a wealthy patron: this suggests that in most cases authors went to printers and not printers to authors. (We should not assume that in these cases books were meant for private circulation only, for publication lists specify when that is the case.) Thus, the initiative often did not come from publisher-entrepreneurs who had the market or an agenda in mind, but from patrons or authors who now wished to see a work in print rather than manuscript form. When printers did take the initiative, they (re)printed texts of genres which were already known and would already find readers.⁹ This is, of course, a universal characteristic of the early phase of printing. Thanks to a rudimentary distribution system, many multiple editions and versions of the same title could be reprinted in different towns, despite the handwritten warnings about copyright one finds even in lithographed books. Visually, lithographed books looked very much like manuscripts, apart from the format and binding; copyists, who (still) wrote their name at the end of the text, must have thus found it easy to switch over to the new business set-up. More needs to be known about this side of manuscript culture and of the transition to print: when and under which circumstances it became advantageous to buy a book rather than to have it copied, since copyists were comparatively cheap and widely available. Also, we still know next to nothing about manuscript circulation and the availability of manuscripts in either Persian, Urdu or Hindi.

For the greater part of the nineteenth century, print-culture in north India meant Perso-Urdu print-culture, not just in terms of numbers of titles published but also of the range of publications. It was the Perso-Urdu literary culture that first got reproduced in print and found a commercial market. By comparison, Hindi was slow to find its way into print: until the 1860s Hindi publishing was confined to primers and textbooks produced by missionaries and for the education department, and to religious publications in the great pilgrimage centres of Benares and Mathura, often cheap and of low quality.

A universal feature of these early printers was the fact they invariably brought out books in more than one language. In the case of E.J. Lazarus’s Benares Medical Hall Press, or of the Newal Kishore Press in Lahore, they had Arabic, Persian/Urdu, Devanagari and Roman fonts (Stark 1998). In the case of litho presses, the overwhelming majority, the matter was simpler and more economic, for the book needed only to be copied in a fair hand. In fact, lithography allowed books written in “sub-standard” dialects to be printed, at no extra cost, if the printer or the author envisaged a market for them. As we shall see, in Benares some

⁹ Often, when printers were also publishers, it was their name that figured most prominently on the frontispiece. Sometimes it was booksellers who took the initiative and published books; e.g. Munshi Gayaprasad, bookseller in Gorakhpur, published two collections of devotional poems, *Siyāvarkeli padāvalī* (1889) and *Premprakāśikā* (1891) with Saligram Press in Agra; Bharti Bhawan library, Allahabad.

printers specialised in Sanskrit publications, but even they would print books in Hindi. The great majority of printers in Benares brought out books in Hindi, Sanskrit, Urdu. Urdu printers would be more likely to publish Persian and Arabic books, but they did also bring out books in Hindi, like Muhammad Hanif of the Gulzar-i Benares Press (Quarterly List 1883). Not only that, a substantial number of publications were bilingual, and the volume did not diminish throughout the nineteenth century. This prominent and persistent multilingualism, whether of bilingual publications, translations or educational books, requires some attention. It certainly had a lot to do with education, learning and knowledge which was multilingual as a matter of fact, since valuable knowledge was preserved and transmitted in the classical languages: Sanskrit, Arabic and Persian.¹⁰ In order to access this knowledge, a large corpus of grammatical, lexicographic and commentarial literature existed. As most literate cultures, Indian literate culture too, in its various traditions, was highly hypertextual: texts referred back to other texts and presented themselves as translations, commentaries, compendia or guides to other texts - even when they in fact were original works. Moreover, the new government schools required a significant number of books, which consisted mainly of translations from English into Hindi and Urdu.¹¹ Multilingualism in this wider sense includes: (a) books published in more than one language (e.g. government textbooks, entertaining stories), (b) books written in more than one language (e.g. text and commentary or translation), and (c) more than one print-language in the same market.

The first reason behind multilingual publishing was the plural nature of knowledge: several traditions of knowledge coexisted in the same society. The other, related, reason lies in the plural audiences. The same book printed in more than one language addressed different audiences: in the case of English and an Indian language, the English text addressed the government or the British/international community of scholars (and, increasingly, the pan-Indian one). Text and translation side by side suggested equivalence between languages. As Veena Naregal has shown in the case of Marathi-English newspapers, bi-lingualism was a statement: it warranted that Marathi was as able as English to carry intellectual reflection (Naregal 1998).¹² Literate audiences crossed over religious boundaries, and that also made multilingual publishing necessary: since Hindus made up a significant part of the Persian-educated service elite, Urdu versions of religious texts like the *Bhāgavad* and *Īva Purāṇa*, of

¹⁰ Although Sanskrit education involved mostly learning texts by heart, the large number of grammars and textbooks of various kinds published in Benares in this period suggests that printed books were also used.

¹¹ Despite the early distinction between Hindustani (Urdu) and Bhakha (Hindi) at Fort William College, the government policy in the Department of Public Instruction of the United Provinces was to publish the same textbooks in Urdu and Devanagari scripts; C.S. King 1994.

¹² In a different case, James Ballantyne of Benares College often published his works in Sanskrit and English together, either side by side on the same page or sequentially. The suggestion here is that he was actively encouraging a critical examination of the translation, so as to improve it. Communication by Michael Dooson, 18.2.2001. For Bhartendu Harishchandra's use of English in his Hindi journals, see Dalmia 1997: 238.

Tulsīdās's *Rāmāyaṇa* and of the *Mahābhārata* were made available to them. Finally, as the taste for reading books spread among the common populace, publishers were keen to reach new and wider audiences. Thus, after pilgrimage guides and other religious publications such as versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Satyanārāyaṇa kṛt kathā*, *Vīṇu sahasranāma*, prayer books and books on astrology, secular popular genres like qissas, *bārahmāsas* and other popular poems were made available in the Devanagari script.¹³ Thus, by the 1860s-1870s, an ever-renewed flow of qissas, *sāṅgāt* and religious booklets were published both in Hindi and Urdu and could be purchased in the main bazaars. This commercial book market in Urdu and Hindi consisted mainly of “genres reproduced”, that is of genres rooted in either oral or manuscript culture which now underwent a greater and more generalised diffusion through mechanical reproduction. Agra, Kanpur and Meerut (and Delhi) were the main centres of commercial publishing, with printers-publishers bringing out roughly the same genres and titles in Urdu and, increasingly, in Hindi too, though mostly in the cheaper lithograph form. Literary Urdu publishing, centred in Lucknow (and Delhi), also had supra-regional networks of writers, publishers and readers, while more and more publishers jumped into the market for school text-books, especially in Agra, Benares and, increasingly, Allahabad.

The public that this early publishing industry reached out to was, then, a stratified one: at the top there was the cross-communal class which was educated in Persian and found in Urdu a flexible medium for literary and non-literary communication. At the bottom, there was the mass of pilgrims and occasional artisans and shopkeepers who purchased cheap religious books and were drawn to cheap entertaining stories, dramas and songs.¹⁴ In the middle, merchants and other groups (including a growing number of students) trained in Braj Bhasa poetry found in Khari Boli Hindi, the other print-language according to Anderson's model, a vehicle for new genres and for public self-assertion (King 1974, Dalmia 1997), while Urdu-educated clients, clerics, clerks and their families purchased religious booklets and entertaining stories. We now turn to Benares for a concrete example of printing in a multilingual society.

Pandits and printers in Benares

¹³ For example, Munshi Kishanlal and Pandit Hardev Bihari in Agra and Hardeo Das in Mathura started bringing out, in the shadow of Urdu, the same qissas, *sāṅgāt* and *bārahmāsas* that had become the staple of Urdu commercial publishing. At the same time, Urdu commercial printers, such as Jwalaprasad Bhargava and Macchu Khan in Agra, Ramsvarup in Fatehgarh, and Biharilal and Abdul Rehman in Kanpur, Syed Jamiluddin and Ganeshi Lal in Meerut, and Amjad Ali in Moradabad, and of course Newal Kishore in Lucknow, also started in the 1860s to bring out Hindi editions of their titles in these popular genres.

¹⁴ Most booksellers in the bazaar kept cheap books of religious or entertaining nature: song collections, theatre chapbooks, the basic grammars, religious texts and digests and a few literary titles; it is difficult to establish their origin since all books are listed only by their title and price; lists are usually available at the back of books.

As a famed site of education and learning, a large commercial and manufacturing centre, a Hindu pilgrimage destination of national importance and the site of early British experiments in education, Benares seemed to have all the prerequisites to become a centre for publishing, with its large population of teachers, students, merchants and pilgrims, i.e. of many potential writers and readers. Yet, until the late 1870s publishing in Benares remained purely functional to the educational and religious needs of the city's resident and floating population. Only in the 1880s did a commercial market for entertainment literature develop, when songs, plays and - in the 1890s - novels became a prominent feature of its urban culture.

Compared to the more mixed pattern of commercial publishing elsewhere, the scene in Benares at the outset can be described as far from dynamic. Initially, publishing in Benares remained subordinate to the Maharaja's court, to colonial administration and to education. Apart from official documents and textbooks, most publications were in Sanskrit. All in all, about twenty printing presses brought out hundreds of Sanskrit books between the 1860s and the 1880s. Most printer-publishers in Benares were in fact Brahmins - Chaubes, Tivaris and Pathaks. Quite how these pandits became printers remains to be discovered. The suggestion that they acquired printing presses thanks to donations from their patrons is an attractive one.¹⁵ What did they print? The first detailed records that we have date from the mid-1860s. The pattern they reveal remained stable in the following decades: comparatively few classical texts were published.¹⁶ Either Benares pandits, their potential customers, already had manuscript copies at their disposal, or the commercial potential of printed editions had not been realized yet. Far more widely published were religious manuals for daily ritual and prayer books to specific deities, usually sold for a few annas (16 annas to 1 Rupee). Astrology manuals would belong to this category;¹⁷ almanacs with dates according to the Hindu

¹⁵ Personal communication, V. Narayana Rao, September 1999. See also his essay on 'Print and Prose: Karanams, Pundits and the East India Company in the making of modern Telugu' (Narayana Rao [2001]).

¹⁶ E.g. Pt. Govindadeva Shastri edited the play *Prasannarāghava* (1868, printed with movable type, pp. 166, Rs 1 and 12 annas) and a *Bālarāmāyaṇa* (1869) for the leading press of the city in this period, the Benares Medical Hall Press of E.J. Lazarus. Pt. Durgāprasād revised a lithographed edition of *Kāṇva Mahātmya* (1867, 2nd ed., pp. 30, 3 annas) for Gopinath Pathak's Benares Light Press. Shivcharan's Diwakar Press brought out a hefty edition of the law book *Mātāṅgāra* (1865, pp. 239, Rs. 6), which had acquired authority as the "authentic" Hindu law code. A lithographed edition of the *Manusmṛiti* was brought out by the Benares Light Press (1870, pp. 240, Rs. 1 and 4 annas). Special mention deserves the Sanskrit periodical 'The Pandit' (1866-), where classical works, mainly of philosophical nature, were published as well as English translations. The journal was brought out by the pandits of Benares College and seems to have wanted to encompass the worlds of the European orientalist, the Sanskrit pandit in government employ, and the emergent learned Hindu elite. Written communication by Michael Dodson, 18.2.2001.

¹⁷ Popular titles printed by more than one Benares publisher were *Viṣṇu (Bhīṣṇu) sahasranāma*, *Durgā saptaśatī* and *Gajendramokṣa* (e.g. published by Pt. Anant Ram at the Anand Ban Press, 1866, for 1 or 2 annas). Examples of astrological books were *Jyoti-prakāśa* or *Jyoti-pradīpa* (1865 and 1866,

astrological calendar were published in a mixture of Sanskrit and Hindi. But by far the largest category of Sanskrit printed books was, unsurprisingly, that of grammars, the first step into proper Sanskrit education, for which an audience was readily available in the city.

Interestingly, whereas Pāṇini's classic used to be memorised, new textbooks came with notes and apparatus in Hindi (some were translated from Bengali), a fact which suggests that they were meant to be read.¹⁸ Print also seems to have served the needs of those Hindus who were keen to access their "classical" religious texts and could now do so without the mediation of pandits and a full course of Sanskrit education, for numerous editions of such texts started appearing with notes and translations in "bhāṣā", i.e. Hindi. Special mention should be made of the *scientific* publications of pandits connected to the Benares Sanskrit College (founded 1791), where the Principal James Ballantyne (1844-62) had undertaken to introduce Western science and philosophy through the medium of Sanskrit and with the help of pandits (Dodson [2001], Bayly 1996: 224-26, also chapters 7 and 8).¹⁹ 'While it is true that the constructive orientalist's lessons failed to percolate down quickly', argues C. A. Bayly, 'new communities of knowledge did begin to form among Indians': for example, these Brahmin groups 'broadened the range of the critical public and generated innovative responses amongst traditional scholars' (Bayly 1996: 226).²⁰ To conclude this brief overview of Sanskrit publishing, one has to add the pandits' forays into polemical pamphleteering, as in the case of the public debate with the religious reformer Dayanand Sarasvati over the issue of image worship. Though the polemic was by no means limited to Sanskrit, and in fact it circulated more widely in the vernacular Hindi press, Sanskrit pamphlets did nonetheless appear, testifying to the new appeal of the print medium (see Dalmia 1997: 383-85).²¹

Some Brahmin printers worked in close collaboration with the royal court and brought out "classics" from the Braj Bhasa poetic tradition that was still alive and well in Benares and

printed by Lachman Chaube at his Vidyaprakash Press, pp. 40 and 46, 2 annas each), Bhavani Prasad's *Praṣṇāṁṭa* (1872, printed by Channulal, pp. 16, 2 annas) and the hefty *Muhūrta mārtaṇḍa* (1865, Diwakar Press, pp. 120, Rs.1 and 4 annas). Other printers specialised in these cheap religious books were Munnalal's Sanskrit Chandriki and the Varanasi Sanskrit Yantralay.

¹⁸ Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* was printed several times (e.g. in 1865 and 1866 by the Vidyaprakash and the Buddhiprakash Presses, pp. 180, 12 annas), and so was the *Laghukaumudī* (e.g. 1866, Anand Ban, 65 pp., 8 annas). Bilingual grammars included Mathuraprasad Misra's *Tattvakaumudī* (1868, Benares Medical Hall, printed with typefonts, 8vo, pp. 160, 12 annas), *Vyākaraṇa upakramikā* and Taracharan Tarkaratna's *Saṁskṛta praveśinī* (both translated from Bengali), published in 1867 and 1875 respectively at the Benares Light Press (8 and 12 annas each).

¹⁹ See e.g. Pt. Nilambar Jha's *Golaprakāśa*, ed. by Bapudev Shastri (1872, Medical Hall Press, pp. 264, Rs 2 and 8 annas), other works on trigonometry and geometry published by the Medical Hall Press, which also brought out the College journal *The Pandit* and volumes of the *Bibliotheca Indica*.

²⁰ Michael Dodson (Girton College, Cambridge) is currently working on the pandits at Benares Sanskrit College and their activities.

²¹ See e.g. Pt. Gurusahay's pamphlet *Devatattvaprakāśa* (1878, Channulal printer, pp. 8, 1 anna). See also R.F. Young, *Resistant Hinduism. Sanskrit Sources on Anti-Christian Apologetics in Early Nineteenth Century India*. Vienna: De Nobili Research Library, 1981.

its environs. The Maharaja had already patronised the Hindi translation of the *Mahābhārata* by Gokul Nath in 1828 (Grierson 1889: 108). Thus, his role in commissioning printed books seems to have been an extension of his role as a patron of literature and religion. Later, in the 1860s Gopinath Pathak of the Benares Light Press worked with a team of court poets (Narayandas Kavi, Munshi Harbans Lal, Babu Avinashi Lal and Babu Bholanath) to print accessible lithographic editions of devotional and poetic classics like Tulsīdās, Sūrdās and Kabīr. They also brought out works of courtly-erotic (*rīti*) poetry and commentaries and the Hindi texts produced in Calcutta for Fort William College, like Lallulal's *Sabhāvilās*.²²

This marked emphasis of Brahmin printers on Sanskrit and on the Hindi literary tradition was reflected in their language choice as well. Especially in the case of prose, where a Hindi style had to be developed anew, their leaning was definitely towards a Sanskritised diction: “pañcīṭī”, as it was called even then. As a result, even a popular text like *Alif Laila* (an Urdu version of the *Arabian Nights*) was translated and adapted in Benares into a very Sanskritised Hindi by Badrilal, Hindi master at the Kashi Pathshala, as *Sahasra rātri saṅkṣep*.²³ The contrast with the lively and colloquial style of the Urdu original and other Hindi versions, as well as with that of later detective novels, is striking.

The importance of government and independent schools in the development of Hindi and Urdu printing and the role played by School Book and missionary societies in the writing of textbooks have already been amply documented and need not be rehearsed here (Vedalankar 1969, McGregor 1974, King 1974 and 1994, K. Kumar 1991, Dalmia 1997). Though Agra retained its pre-eminent role as the centre of textbook production in the early part of the century, Benares did not lag far behind, and textbook publishing, especially in Hindi, became perhaps the largest source of revenue for publishers and printers. In particular, the contribution of Shiva Prasad ‘Sitare Hind’ to establishing Hindi within the colonial education system, to the creation of a modern Hindi canon and to modern Hindi prose cannot be overestimated (see McGregor 1974; Bayly 1996: 234-38).

A fully-fledged Hindi print culture developed in Benares only in the 1870s, mainly through the initiative, talent and indefatigable activity of ‘Bhartendu’ Harishchandra (1850-1885) (Dalmia 1997). It was Harishchandra, himself not a pandit but a member of the merchant elite and of many important networks in the city, who saw the possibilities and the usefulness of print for immediate communication and for the new public and independent role of the intellectual. He gave the printers lectures, essays, translations, periodicals, historical

²² E.g. two commentaries on Keshav Das's *Kavipriyā* and *Rasikpriyā*, two classics of *rīti* poetry, written by Sardar Kavi (1865 and 1867, Benares Light Press). Among the new editions of Fort William books were Lallulal's *Sabhāvilās* (1867, 2nd ed., pp. 42, 9 annas) and *Rājnrīti* (1867, 2nd ed., pp. 130, 12 annas).

²³ *Sahasra rātri saṅkṣep*, Benares Medical Hall Press (1861), printed in 1000 copies, pp. 84, 6 annas. A similar case is that of Mirzā ‘Alī Beg's *Fasāna-i ajāib*, which circulated in both Urdu and Hindi in a very mixed style, but was translated into a language almost devoid of Persian and Arabic words by Pandit Ramratna Bajpeyi for Newal Kishore in 1881.

researches, drama, satires and sketches, devotional and occasional poems, songs: the list is almost endless. Almost every month of his short but intensely productive adult life saw some writing of his appear in print and *written precisely to be printed*.²⁴ Such a regular output must have created in readers an expectation for more, and in poets the sense that one's poems now ought to appear in printed form and that there was a readership and a market even when sales were slow to follow. In a word, Harishchandra's activism certainly established a "field of action" for writers in Hindi. It is well known that Harishchandra encouraged many contemporaries to write and publish, wherever they were: the "Bhartendu circle" had its centre in Benares but extended over several cities in the United Provinces and Bihar.

As Harishchandra's own production shows, the Hindi literary print culture that developed in Benares was a mixture of *genres reproduced* and *genres introduced*: it fed on and *reproduced* the taste of Braj Bhasa poetry circles in Benares and Eastern U.P., it *introduced* newspaper essays, skits and drama as a form of social and political commentary, and it looked further afield to Bengal for models of fiction writing.²⁵ His lead was followed by the Bharat Jiwan Press, established in 1884 by the dynamic Ramkrishna Khatri, alias Varma (1859-1906). Ramkrishna Varma was early to realise the potential for Hindi publishing. The orphaned child of a petty grocer, he struggled to get an education, he set up a small bookshop, patronised and encouraged by Harishchandra himself, and in 1884 made a trip to Calcutta to buy a second-hand press. He then started publishing the works of contemporary Braj Bhasa poets from Benares and the adjoining region. As secretary of the Kashi Kavi-Samaj, a local poetry circle, many of them were his friends. Some collections were printed "by order" of the author or of a wealthy patron and were distributed free;²⁶ others were printed and distributed commercially and clearly found a market: in fact, out of 256 titles published between 1884 and 1900 by the Bharat Jiwan Press, 119 (46%) were collections of poems or songs in Braj Bhasa, mostly of *gāra rasa*. Only a fraction of them were "classics": the rest were the works of contemporary authors or manuals of metre and rhetoric, halfway between manuals and collections of verses. In this way Braj Bhasa poetry,

²⁴ Although it is not yet clear to me how the process of publishing actually worked in his case (e.g. whether he was paid or had to pay, or both alternatively), it seems that he published every work with more than one publisher (one in Bihar, one in Benares), and that he spread out his publications catholically over several printers (10 in Benares alone).

²⁵ As Vasudha Dalmia has demonstrated (Dalmia 1997), in establishing a literary field for Hindi Harishchandra drew upon the widest possible sources, including devotional and courtly poetry, Urdu verses and metres, Sanskrit, Bengali and popular drama, seasonal songs and the variety of colloquial styles and idiolects that obtained in the cosmopolitan city of Benares.

²⁶ E.g. the poems (*nakhBikh* and *Σat@tu*) of Diwakar Bhatt printed in 1884 in a thousand copies and distributed free, or the collection of *ghanākΣar#s* by Jagannath Das Ratnakar, published in 1897 by Gosvami Balkrishnalal, himself a member of the Kavi-samaj, and distributed free. Ramkrishna Varma also printed the proceedings of the Kavi-Samaj and their "poetic riddles" (*samasyâpËrti*).

which had until then circulated at courts and in private circles of poets, was made public and became part of commercial print culture. And despite the moralistic condemnation of this erotic poetry by literary reformers, it took several decades before an alternative poetic taste developed in the area.

At the same time, Ramkrishna Varma took the cue from Harishchandra and looked to Bengal for new literary models. His three publications of stories “of fifty years ago” about thugs, police officers and Company officials in Bengal, translated from Bengali into lively and colloquial Hindi prose, were clearly meant to be gripping reading for the reasonably well-to-do and were a novelty in Hindi publishing.²⁷ In fact, Ramkrishna Varma spanned the whole range of genres reproduced and introduced, from daily prayers to reformist pamphlets, from grammars to calls for cow-protection (six titles in 1888 alone): clearly Hindi, too, had by now become a public, print-language in Anderson’s sense.

Significantly, Ramkrishna Varma published some of the first translations of Bengali novels,²⁸ which paved the way for the explosion in fiction writing that took place in Benares in the 1890s (see below). Apart from the novels of Bankimchandra, who was renowned in north India too, most Bengali novels that were translated appeared without the author’s name: it was the template that was important, not authorship. Bengali novels provided a model for a new kind of fiction which broke away from qissas and dāstāns in terms of narrative conventions, social setting and characterisation. For example, they introduced inner focalisation and indeterminacy: suddenly the reader accustomed to relishing *how* a story was told did not know *what* was going to happen next. The work of Karttikprasad Khatri, an associate of Ramkrishna Varma at the Bharat Jiwan Press, both a translator and an original novelist, shows how the *introduction* of Bengali novels was soon followed by original attempts in Hindi.²⁹ A space for fiction was finally established in Hindi, and soon journals and publishers sprang up that were solely devoted to it; detective novels, *jāsEś upanyās*, constituted perhaps the most significant subgenre (Orsini [2001b]).

By contrast, Urdu publishing in Benares remained low key compared to other centres in the region, with about ten printers bringing out a mixed fare of religious, medical and poetic titles.³⁰ E.J Lazarus’s Benares Medical Hall Press brought out Urdu editions of its

²⁷ See Ramkrishna Varma (tr.), *Ēhag vṛttāntamālā* (1889, pp. 782!), *Pulṅs vṛttāntamālā* (1890) and *Amlā vṛttāntamālā* (1894, Rs. 1), published and printed at the Bharat Jiwan Press.

²⁸ See *Saccā sapnā*, tr. Pandit Vijayanand (2nd ed. 1890), pp. 42, 2 annas.

²⁹ Among Karttikprasad Khatri’s translations were *Pramāṇā* (1896), *Madhumāṭṭ* (1897), *Dalit kusum* (1898), all published by the Bharat Jiwan Press. *Jayā* (1896) was an original novel. *Dṇānāth* (2nd ed. 1907) is an interesting and “candid” account of the slow rise and fall of a self-made man as advocate in Benares.

³⁰ Urdu printers in Benares included: Fath Muhammad and Shaikh Fazl Mal, Muhammad Hanif of the Gulzar-i Benares Press, Muhammad Sayyid, a teacher at the local Islamiya School, Ghulam Hasan, Muhammad Ismail of the Hidayat Press; other presses included the Sayyid-ul Press, the Nasim Press, the

Hindi and English textbooks. To complete this overview, one has to mention the role of the city as a centre for the publishing activities and literary sphere of the Nepalese diaspora: it was here that Bhanubhakta's Nepalese Rāmāyaṇa was published in 1884 by Ramkrishna Varma.³¹ Worth mentioning also is Bengali publishing: several of the printers were in fact Bengalis and at least one seems to have specialised in Bengali publications.³² In nearby Allahabad, another member of the Bengali diapsora, Chintamani Ghosh, set up the Indian Press, which became the largest publishing house in the region and published in English, Hindi, Sanskrit, Urdu and Bengali: it was here that Ramanand Chatterjee's influential journal *Modern Review*, and indeed all of Rabindranath Tagore's early books, were printed (Ali 1989).

As far as the question of the impact of print on literary traditions is concerned, we can reach some provisional conclusions. Despite the continuities between literary culture (oral and manuscript) before and after print, there were nevertheless immediate and mediated ways in which print exerted an influence on the literary world of north India in the nineteenth century. Firstly, it opened possibilities: of wider recognition for a writer, of a market for the printer-publisher and bookseller, of greater availability of texts for readers, of greater immediacy of texts which referred to current events or fictionalised version of events, etc. In the case of Sanskrit publishing, too, where there was an already consolidated and highly sophisticated system of organisation and transmission of knowledge, *possibilities* must have been apparent, but what shifts occurred remains to be seen. Clearly some genres, like Urdu qissas and masnavis (narrative poems) were particularly suited for print, as they made available in comparatively simple language narrative traditions already made familiar by story-tellers (Pritchett 1991). Other genres, like novels, required a process of familiarisation.

Enterprising Khattris: a “fiction industry” in Benares

Lest one should think that the commercial market tended only to reproduce genres already popular in oral or manuscript transmission, I would like here to focus briefly on the growth of a publishing industry centred on a “new” genre, that of the novel. Here, too, we will see that the initial impetus came from the fact that novels were already commercially successful in another language, that is, Bengali. The introduction of a new genre with new reading conventions initially posed problems and forced printers and writers to be

Nazir-ul Matb'a and the Chashma-i Kawsar Press, specialised in religious publications.

³¹ Apart from The Bharat Jiwan Press and Hitchintak Press which published also Nepalese books, other printing presses that specialised in Nepalese books were Bansidhar Misra's Gauri Press (1892?), Sakhi Vinayak's Gurkhi Press and Bhairon Prasad's Gurkha Press. Rhoderick Chalmers at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London is doing a study of the role of the diaspora in the early Nepalese literary sphere.

³² Bhutnath Mukherjee. See *Quarterly List*, 1883.

enterprising and devise ways of reaching out to readers and familiarising them with the conventions of the genre (Orsini [2001b]). The momentum generated gave rise to a kind of Hindi “fiction industry” in Benares which consolidated writing and publishing as commercial enterprises in the city. Though the popularity of fiction reflects the growing readership in the vernacular that accompanied rising literacy and expanding vernacular education, it was a kind of reading that contravened reformist desires. This fiction industry, and one could say the same of chapbooks of plays and collections of theatre and film songs (Hansen 1992), circulated in a mixed, colloquial language that was a far cry from the sanitized one of the Hindi reformist elite in the early twentieth century (Orsini [2001a]). Although these popular genres did occasionally incorporate nationalist themes and other features of reformist discourse, they nonetheless exploited them to fit their own commercial logic of providing entertainment and maximising appeal (Hansen 1992: 108ff., Orsini 1998). Here I would like to focus on the structural innovations of this fiction industry and the unique figure of the writer-publisher.

The newly established “field” of Hindi publishing prompted many potential writers, almost all of them centred in Benares, to try their hand at novel writing. Some, like Kishorilal Gosvami (1865-1932), were scions of scholarly pandit families and took some time to switch from their highly sanskritised literary models to a more colloquial prose style.³³ Most, however, like Devkinandan Khatri (1861-1931), Gopalram Gahmari (1866-1946) and Harikrishna Jauhar (1880-19?), drew upon Bengali models or developed their own original style. The impact of Bengal was so strong at this stage that many derided Hindi as a “literature of translation”; writers on their part freely acknowledged that they made trips to Calcutta in order to pick up Bengali novels to translate, sometimes even from junk shops (*raddīkhānā*)!³⁴

One crucial innovation these writers introduced was a professional one. They very soon became their own managers and developed a new means of distributing their “product” (i.e. fiction): almost all of them started their own monthly fiction magazines and began publishing their own books. They all became *professional writers*.

Monthly fiction magazines were a new concept which started in Urdu and Hindi in the 1890s.³⁵ Fiction monthlies solved the two problems that had plagued commercial publishing

³³ See his early novel *Pra^aypari^ay* (1890) and drama *Maya^kamañjar* (1891) for evidence of his debt to Sanskrit models and literary language.

³⁴ See Kishorilal Gosvami’s statement in the translator’s note to *Premmay* (Brindaban: Sudarshan Press, 1914, second edition), a Bengali novel he translated after picking it up with many other books in a junk shop in Calcutta in 1889.

³⁵ *Tafri^ul Ukala* (1890), edited by Munshi Durgaprasad in Allahabad, *Nazâra* (1890) from Gorakhpur, with translations of English novels by Riyaz and Raza, and *Muraqqa-i ^alam* (1890), edited by Muhammad Ali Khan, in Lucknow are the Urdu fiction magazines mentioned by the Quarterly Lists of Publications; one ‘Two anna novel series’ (ed. Jalal-ud-din, 1898, Moradabad) is also mentioned. I have not been able to trace any of them yet.

from the start: the problem of distribution and that of irregular demand. Fiction magazines promised and delivered to subscribers regular monthly instalments or full novels at a reasonable price, and at the same time aroused their expectation for the next instalment. In this way, profit was guaranteed to writers, and entertainment and novelty to readers, all thanks to the postal service and the railways. Since journals required a constant output, a veritable fiction industry was created.

Serial publication set specific conditions for writers and their work: crucial for its success was the ability to maintain a grip on readers, to manipulate their attention and arouse in them a dependence, a craving for more. With their easily recognisable and easily reproduceable formula, detective and mystery stories were ideally suited for this purpose, and two fiction monthlies came out solely devoted to detective novels, *JâsÊs* (*Detective*, 1900) and *Hindî dârogâ daftar* (*Hindi constabulary*, 1910). Suspense, mystery, dramatic reversals and denouements became the bread and butter of many a Benarsi writer. A brief outline of the activities and careers of their authors will help us to appreciate the many improbable ways in which one became a commercial Hindi writer and the extent to which commercial fiction came to constitute an important dimension of the Hindi literary sphere, albeit one overlooked by literary histories.

Perhaps the most sensational success story, one that was grudgingly acknowledged even by “serious” critics, was that of Devkinandan Khatri: a forestry contractor in Chunar, near Benares, and a literary friend of Harishchandra, he started writing fiction after he had read Bankimchandra and the English novelist G. W. M. Reynolds of *Mysteries of London* fame.³⁶ His first adventure novel, *Chandrakântâ*, came out in instalments in 1892 to huge popular acclaim, and soon Devkinandan Khatri launched a fiction monthly, ‘Upanyâs lahrî’ (1894 or 1895) and acquired his own press, the Lahri Press (1898), in order to bring forth a continuous stream of stories about Chandrakanta’s descendants. Khatri became a very rich man, and it is easy to imagine what the spectacular success of the novel must have meant for his Hindi contemporaries: wealth, stability and fame in a market that had so far been notoriously grudging of them. The novel and its sequels (continued after Devkinandan’s death by his son Durgaprasad) remained continuously in print in Hindi and Urdu and in different formats suited to every pocket, and the Lahri Press became one of the foremost commercial publishers in Benares.

If Devkinandan Khatri was something of a phenomenon, Kishorilal Gosvami, who was the grandson of a famed *âchârya* and scholar of the Nimbarka *sampradâya* in charge of

³⁶ Numerous novels by Reynolds were translated into Bengali, Urdu and Hindi from 1880 onwards. Khatri was in fact so taken by Reynolds that he planned a fiction journal solely devoted to translations of his works; only one novel, *Pravîṇ pathik* (*Leyla or the Star of Mingrelia*) was translated, by Khatri’s younger brother Devi Prasad Khajanci; the likely date is 1899 (Ray 1968, 1: 224). For Reynolds’ popularity in India, see Priya Joshi, ‘Indian Novel’, in Schellinger, Paul (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Novel*, vol. 1. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1998, pp. 596–597.

ritual service at a temple in Vrindavan, epitomises the unlikely career of a commercial Hindi novelist. Kishorilal underwent a typical Sanskrit education, lived with his father in Arrah (Bihar), dabbled in religious and educational activities until he settled in Benares under the shelter of his maternal grandfather, who counted Harishchandra as one of his literary disciples. Here he received an informal Hindi literary education and, under the inspiration of Harishchandra and of Shiva Prasad, wrote his first novel. This was followed by a series of translations of Bengali novels, and his language changed accordingly: descriptive passages in a conventionally ornate style alternated with lively dialogue in colloquial language; the predominant tone was heroic for historical novels and pathetic for “social” ones.³⁷ The narratorial voice became confident, humorous at times and bold enough even took to suggest an alternative ending.³⁸ In 1898 Gosvami started his own monthly fiction magazine, *Upanyâs mâsik pustak* (Novel Monthly), for which he translated and wrote over 65 novels.

Jayramdas Gupta was one of those “potential” writers of Benares who tried their hand at novel writing almost as a joke, as he told the readers of his first novel.³⁹ After writing one more novel, in 1904 he started editing a monthly fiction magazine, *KâßŸ Upanyâs Darpa* (The Benares Mirror of Novels). He must have discovered a talent for publishing, for in 1907 he launched his own magazine, *Upanyâs Bahâr* (The Prime of Novels) and his own publishing house. Unlike Kishorilal Gosvami’s journal, *Upanyâs Bahâr* offered a complete novel with every issue instead of keeping readers in suspense. At Rs. 2 per annum it was cheap, and no postal charges were demanded of ordinary readers: ‘Of course, rich people like rajas and maharajas, seths, moneylenders and others may send according to their power and their gift will be gracefully accepted.’⁴⁰ Jayramdas Gupta himself wrote several detective and mystery novels, as well as loftier historical ones. An amateur actor with the local theatre company Nagari Natak Mandali, he later specialised in publishing “theatrical plays” and collections of songs from Parsi plays and from the Hindi playwrights on the Calcutta stage. The Upanyas Bahar Press became one of the most flourishing commercial publishers of Benares in the early twentieth century, and its books are still sold in the Chowk area of the city.

Two more writer-publishers deserve to be mentioned. The first is Gopalram Gupta, better known as Gopalram Gahmari, from the town of Gahmar (district Ghazipur) in eastern U.P. After trying his luck in Bombay, back in Gahmar he launched in 1900 the first Hindi monthly solely devoted to detective fiction, *JâsËs* (Detective). The second is Harikrishna

³⁷ Kishorilal Gosvami also published collections of poetry and songs in Braj Bhasa according to the fashion of the time.

³⁸ For example, in *PremmayŸ*, a Bengali “social novel” about *kulŸn* marriage, he changed the ending from a sad one to a happy one; Brindaban: Sudarshan Press, 1914: 28.

³⁹ The detective story *Binâ savâr kâ gho᳚â* (The Riderless Horse, 1904), published by the Bharat Jiwan Press

⁴⁰ From the notice at the back *Kâlgrâs* (no date), Bharti Bhawan Library, Allahabad.

“Jauhar”, one of the earliest authors of detective novels in addition to romances with magical elements (*tilism* and ‘*ayyār*’), his speciality.

Not all detective writers became enterprising publishers like the ones mentioned so far, but they all became *professional* writers. One of the most striking characteristics of early detective fiction in Hindi was therefore the way in which it quickly constituted a generic field and established its own commercial networks and publishing “offices”, as they were called. Novels were part of a more general trend: the growth of a commercial literature of entertainment which was part of, and sustained, an entertainment industry comprising theatre, songs and music, which had its Hindi capitals in Benares and Calcutta. This publishing industry was commercially minded and omnivorous and eclectic in taste; initiative was in the hands of enterprising writer-publishers, who were able to create and rear a readership and a market for Hindi. In this, Devkinandan Khatri’s *Chandrakāntā* really marked a watershed: it was only after its publication that the path for Hindi fiction was really cleared. It was in this commercial market that Hindi poets and writers in the early twentieth century tried to make their mark, and it was against it that they and scholarly critics reacted.

Conclusions

One of the big questions that faces anyone working on early print and publishing in India must be this: why did Indians come so late to the printing press when the technology was already known to Europeans in their coastal enclaves? C.A. Bayly has recently argued that although pre-colonial India had a low (but variable) level of literacy, it was nonetheless a ‘literacy aware’ society (Bayly 1996). In fact, the effectiveness and cheapness of ‘bazaar writer establishments’ made the need for widespread literacy less pressing, while professional writers (*munshis*) jealously preserved their monopoly over writing skills. We still know too little about arrangements for copying books to ascertain if this was the case for obtaining manuscript copies, too. Other arguments cited by Bayly for the late development of print include ritual objections to printing religious texts, ‘which alone would have made the press economically viable’, and the hostility of indigenous rulers on political grounds (Bayly 1996: 238).⁴¹ However, between 1820 and 1840 rapid change occurred and print spread all over north India. And by the 1840s and ’50s indigenous newspapers, vernacular textbooks and tracts, cheap religious publications and valuable texts of the high literary traditions all started to appear in print. Such a swift indigenisation of print can be explained, he argues, in the context of changes in ‘the information order as a whole, rather than in one particular dimension of it’ (Bayly 1996: 239). Although the “colonial context” is *the* crucial element in the equation, it is clear from the evidence presented in this essay that the indigenisation of

⁴¹ The argument he quotes about the difficulty of the Persian script even for the lithographer seems to be belied by the boom of Urdu lithographic printing in the Persian script in the nineteenth, and indeed twentieth, centuries.

print took place at the hand of Indians themselves. This essay has explored the various uses to which Indians put the technology of print, focussing in particular on commercial enterprises.

For one thing, the capacity of print technology (especially lithography) to be multilingual must count as one of the most important factors in this indigenisation. The case of Benares shows that printing had to be multilingual because knowledge (both classical and colonial) remained plural. As Bayly has argued:

Print itself did not create an information revolution. Rather, it speeded up the velocity and range of communication *among existing communities of knowledge*. It helped transform some actors within the old ecumene [of north Indian society] into leaders of a modern public, but it marginalised and subordinated others. (Bayly 1996: 243, emphasis added)

The case of Sanskrit publishing in Benares has shown how one such ‘community of knowledge’ took printing on board and developed it into a commercial enterprise at a time when, we are told, English education and knowledge were making other forms of knowledge obsolete. Within Sanskrit publishing itself, we have observed how grammars offered a complementary method of transmission to learning by rote, though they did not supplant oral teaching. Michael Dodson’s work on the pandits of Benares College shows that some pandits used print to disseminate new, syncretic forms of learning through Sanskrit and, gradually, through Hindi as well. Print thus created unified fields of communication among earlier discrete communities of knowledge. It forced old elites to respond and adapt, and pushed new elites (like the Hindi intelligentsia) into action. It also opened up fields of confrontation, as the large literature on language movements and on religious controversy in nineteenth-century north India shows. The new intelligentsias in Hindi and Urdu forged their own affiliation to the “classical” cultures, while other traditions were marginalised at least in name.⁴² The same intelligentsias, active in literary associations and in University departments, would later establish a separate canon for Hindi and Urdu (Orsini [2001a]).

Thus, printing in north India could only be multilingual because traditions of knowledge and literature and, consequently, reading audiences were divided between different languages (Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, Braj Bhasa, Avadhi, Urdu, etc.). But multilingualism in this context meant more than one thing, as we have seen: it meant that different traditions came printed each in its own language, that knowledge in the classical languages and in English came with glosses, translations and other explanatory material in the vernaculars, and thirdly that textual and previously oral traditions crossed alphabets and languages to reach the maximum possible audiences. In fact, at the same time as ideas about “mother tongue” and “national language” were starting to aggregate (and divide)

⁴² Shackle and Majeed have shown this shift of affiliation from Persian to Arabic in the case of Altaf Husain Hali’s *Musaddas*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997.

communities on the basis of language and religion (King 1994, Dalmia 1997, Orsini [2001a]), a new bilingualism came into place with English and the "vernaculars".

One could argue that the phenomenon of bi-lingual or multilingual publications was akin to the vernacularization of print in Japan in the early seventeenth century, when Japanese books and reading practices became more autonomous and visibly different from current sinological ones (Kornicki 1998). Thus, multilingual publishing could be considered a transitional stage towards a print culture based on one vernacular. Burgeoning Hindi publishing in the 1870s and '80s does indeed suggest that Hindi as a print-language was coming into its own. This development took place mainly thanks to the institutionalisation of Hindi education and through public sphere institutions and activities. Yet, even this did not imply a transition to a monolingual print culture.

The case of Benares has shown the different modes in which print operated in nineteenth-century Indian society: (a) as an extension of courtly patronage, (b) as an instrument of education and reform, and (c) as a field for commercial enterprise, including the peculiar phenomenon of author-publishers. These modes intersected and overlapped but followed different logics and trajectories. Educational-reformist publishing did introduce new values and concepts and paved the way for new 'imagined communities' with their own public sphere activities. Language reformers initiated a threefold process of linguistic dichotomisation, standardisation and historicisation that was carried out mainly through efforts in the field of education (Dalmia 1997: 148). High literary traditions made the transition to print either in the form of patronised enterprises, or were aimed at specialised readerships and, gradually, found their way as "classics" into the crystallising literary canon embodied in literary histories and educational institutions. This accommodation within the new location and the new reformist ethos was not a painless one: it required an aesthetic reassessment, and "awkward" traditions (namely of erotic poetry) were downplayed, marginalised or enjoyed only in private. In the case of Hindi, the process took place really in the early twentieth century, outside the scope of this study (see Orsini [2001a]).⁴³

The focus on commercial publishing in this paper was intended to correct the excessive reliance on the reformist part of the story. Commercial publishing was, not surprisingly, the most eclectic in terms of genres and of language style, subverting the process of linguistic standardisation and dichotomisation. Aided by the cheap and flexible technology of lithography, commercial publishing reproduced genres that were already popular in other vernaculars as well as texts in local dialects. Driven by commercial considerations, printers and publishers thus reproduced a broad spectrum of popular genres, from songs of the twelve months to stories, from poetic romances to narratives of adventure and magic, from seasonal songs to religious stories and risqué dialogue-poems. They also started a lucrative symbiosis

⁴³ For Urdu, the process has been documented by Frances Pritchett in her book *Nets of Awareness*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

with the world of commercial entertainment (Parsi theatre, Nautanki, song collections), just as chapbooks containing film songs and dialogues can be found today at every railway station in India. Sensitive to their mobile and omnivorous reading public, commercial publishers also ventured into ‘new’ genres like the novel, though at the popular end with detective and magical adventure (*tilism*) stories. More importantly, the genres of commercial publishing carried a cultural ethos that was at variance with that of cultural reformers. Both at the level of ethos and aesthetics, they embraced sensual pleasure, an aesthetic of excess and elements of playful subversion (Gupta [2001]). They often contained unreconstructed gender and social identities which were anchored in pre-reformist understandings of community, although of course they were not unaware of contemporary developments in their search for novelty and appeal (see e.g. Hansen 1992). In this way, powerful messages that ran counter the values associated with the reformist use of print were maintained in circulation.

Though it would be wrong to consider these three modes - of education and reformist literature, of high literary traditions and of commercial genres - as sealed off from each other, they did follow three contrasting agendas: of reform and mobilisation, of conservation and of eclectic entertainment. These agendas partly neutralised one another and make for a more complex picture than that suggested by Anderson’s argument: the print-languages that crystallised “language communities” never occupied the whole field. Thus, for example, many voices resisted the language dichotomisation because they could not believe in the new language identities: for them identities were naturally multilingual. And commercial genres introduced a lasting tension between identity and pleasure.

13,000 words ca.

References

- Ahmad, Nazir (1976). ‘Development of Printing in Urdu, 1743-1857’. Unpublished M.Phil. thesis, University of London.
- Ali, Mushtaq (1989). ‘Hindī sāhitya meṁ ilāhābād kā yogdān, iṅḍiyan pres ke viḥiṁ sandarbha meṁ’. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Allahabad.
- Bayly, Christopher A. (1983). *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- (1996). *Empire and Information. Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780-1870*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blackburn, Stuart (2001). ‘The Tale of the Book: print and story-telling in nineteenth-century Tamil’, in Rachel Dwyer and Chris Pinney (eds), *Pleasure and the Nation: the Politics and Consumption of Popular Culture in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

- Cohn, Bernard S. (1987). 'The British in Benares', in *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays*. Delhi: Oxford University Press: 320-631.
- Dalmia, Vasudha (1997). *The Nationalization of Hindu Traditions: Bharatendu Harißchandra and Nineteenth-Century Banaras*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Dodson, Michael [2001]. 'Re-presented for the Pandits: James Ballantyne, 'Useful Knowledge,' and Sanskrit Scholarship in Benares College During the Mid-Nineteenth Century'. Forthcoming in *Modern Asian Studies*.
- Ghosh, Anindita (1998). 'Literature, language and print in Bengal, c.1780-1905'. University of Cambridge: Ph.D. thesis.
- Grierson, George A. (1889). *The Modern Vernacular Language of Hindustan*. Calcutta: [publisher].
- Gupta, Charu [2001]. '(Im)possible Love and Sexual Pleasure in Late Colonial North India'. In *Modern Asian Studies*, 35 (2), [pp. ?]
- Hansen, Kathryn (1992). *Grounds for Play: The Nautanki Theatre of North India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kalsi, Amrik S. (1975). 'Realism in the Hindi Novel in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries'. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge.
- King, Christopher S. (1974). 'The Nagari Pracharini Sabha of Banaras, 1893-1914: A Study of the Social and Political History of the Hindi Language'. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin, Madison.
- (1994). *One Language, Two Scripts. The Hindi Movement in Nineteenth Century North India*. Bombay: Oxford University Press.
- Kornicki, Peter F. (1998). *The Book in Japan. A Cultural History from the Beginnings to the Nineteenth Century*. Leiden: Brill.
- Kumar, Krishna (1991). *The Political Agenda of Education. A study of colonialist and nationalist ideas*. New Delhi: Sage.
- Lahiri Choudhury, Deep Kanta (2000). 'Beyond the reach of monkeys and men'? O'Shaughnessy and the telegraph in India c. 1836-56'. *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 37, 3: 331-59.
- McGregor, R.S. (1974). *Hindi Literature in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.
- (1984). *Hindi Literature from its Beginnings to the Early Nineteenth Century*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.
- Naim. C.M. (1984). 'Prize-Winning *Adab*: A study of five books written in response to the Allahabad Government Gazette Notification', in Barbara D. Metcalf (ed.), *Moral*

Conduct and Authority: The Place of Adab in South Asian Islam. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Narayana Rao, Velcheru [2001]. 'Print and Prose: Karanams, Pundits and the East India Company in the making of modern Telugu'. Forthcoming in Vasudha Dalmia and Stuart Blackburn (eds), *New Literary Histories for South Asia: Mapping the Terrain*. publisher?

Naregal, Veena (1998). *English in the Colonial University and the Politics of Language: the emergence of a public sphere in western India (1830-1880)*. London : University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, Ph. D Thesis.

Note 1848. *Notes on Native Presses in the North Western Provinces for the Year 1848*. In *Selections from the Records of the Government, North Western Provinces*. Agra: Secundra Orphan Press, 1854.

Note 1850. *Note on Native Presses in the North Western Provinces for the Year 1850*, by J. W. Sherer. In *Selections from the Records of the Government, North Western Provinces*. Agra: Secundra Orphan Press, 1854.

Note 1853. *Note on the Native Presses in the North Western Provinces, for the Year 1853*, by C.P. Carmichael. In *Selections from the Records of the Government, North Western Provinces*. Agra: Orphan Press, 1855.

Note 1858. *Note on Native Periodicals and Presses*, by F. B. Outram. Allahabad: Government Press, 1860.

Orsini, Francesca (1998). 'Reading a social romance: *Cand hasāno ke khutbā*'. In Vasudha Dalmia and Theo Damsteegt (eds), *Narrative Strategies: Essays on South Asian Literature and Film*. Leiden: Research School CNWS: 185-210.

- [2001a]. *The Hindi Public Sphere: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, forthcoming.
- [2001b]. 'Detective novels. A commercial genre in nineteenth-century north India'. Forthcoming in Vasudha Dalmia and Stuart Blackburn (eds), *New Literary Histories for South Asia: Mapping the Terrain*. publisher?

Pritchett, Frances W. (1985). *Marvelous Encounters. Folk Romance in Urdu and Hindi*. New Delhi: Manohar.

(1991). *The romance tradition in Urdu: adventures from the Dastan of Amir Hamzah*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Quarterly List 1883. In *Quarterly List of Publications, North-Western Provinces*. Various titled. IOLC: SV412.

Report 1862, 1863, 1864, 1865. *Report on Native Presses in the North Western Provinces for the years 1862, 1863, 1864 and 1865*, by M. Kempson. In *Selections from the Records of the North Western Provinces*. Allahabad: Government Press, 1866.

- Schimmel, Annemarie (1992). *A Two-Colored Brocade. The Imagery of Persian Poetry*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Shaw, Graham [2001]. 'The Parameters of Publishing in Nineteenth-Century North India: a Study based Loosely on Delhi'. Forthcoming in Vasudha Dalmia and Stuart Blackburn (eds), *New Literary Histories for South Asia: Mapping the Terrain*.
- Sprenger, Aloys (1854). *A Catalogue of the Arabic, Persian and Hindustany Manuscripts, of the Libraries of the King of Oudh, compiled by order of the Government of India*. Reprint of the Calcutta edition, Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1979.
- Stark, Ulrike (1998). 'Inside a nineteenth-century publishing house: The Newal Kishore Press in Lucknow as a new kind of literary and intellectual centre', unpubl. paper, presented at the 15th European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, Prague, Sept 1998.
- [2001] 'Hindi publishing in the heart of an Indo-Persian cultural metropolis: Lucknow's Newal Kishore Press (1858-1895)', forthcoming in Blackburn, Stuart and Vasudha Dalmia, *New Literary Histories for Nineteenth Century India...*
- Vedalankar, Shardadevi (1969). *The Development of Hindi Prose in the Early Nineteenth Century (1800-1856 A.D.)*. Allahabad: Lokbharti Publications.