

A talk on the Case of Exploding Hindi Paperbacks by Dr Aakriti Mandhwani

As part of Intersections, a monthly lecture series, the Department of Liberal Arts at IIT Bhilai hosted Dr Aakriti Mandhwani (Assistant Professor, Department of English, Shiv Nadar University) to present a lecture on the Case of Exploding Hindi Paperbacks.

Focusing on the boom in North Indian commercial publishing in the 1950s and 60s, Dr Aakriti Mandhwani talked about the inception of Hind Pocket Books in 1957 and the pivotal role its proprietor Dina Nath Malhotra had in setting a new paradigm for middlebrow literature in Hindi. She argued that Malhotra's publishing strategy of providing readers with multiple genres encapsulating general reading and maintaining decorum and seriousness around pleasurable reading strengthened the basis for middlebrow readership. The inclusion of literature for everyday consumption with innovative schemes such as the Gharelu Library Yojana defied the inspirational or nationalist preoccupations of the 1920s and 40s, while cheaper paperbacks and multiplicity of genres made Hind Pocket Books a household name amongst the Hindi readerships.

Dr Mandhwani also pointed out that Malhotra's trajectory from a printer to an established publisher was made possible through his canny identification of opportunities, whether they were with publishers in the West or with authors and readers at home. The lecture was accompanied by a lively interaction with the audience. The Department of Liberal Arts at IIT Bhilai will continue hosting guest lecturers and speakers on issues of widespread topical interest.

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Hind Pocket Books and Dina Nath Malhotra

When we would go abroad, people would talk in terms of a million copies. We said, we did not print a million at a time, but we did manage half a million.

Dina Nath Malhotra, *Crafting* Interview

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