

**Books are the treasures of wisdom and are the legacies that genius men leave for the generations to come. The creator of books, however, brings out the hidden treasure of the wisdom and knowledge to be disseminated for the masses, but he is quite often robbed of the material return of his valuable work by book pirates. Hasan Khurshid shares more on this rampant practice.**

A good book, in the language of the book-sellers is a salable one; in that of the curious, a scarce one; in that of men of sense, a useful and instructive one. - Chambers.



Book piracy means the illegal reproduction of books, which has assumed menacing proportions over last few decades, although the piracy had begun by the end of the 15th century, having a link with the advent of printing press by Gutenberg, which in turn led to adoption of unfair practices such as unauthorized printing by competing printers.

To protect the creators or authors of the book work, in the year 1710, the first law on copyright came into existence in England. The law was known as 'Queen Anne's Statute', which provided authors with right to reprint their books for a certain number of years. Subsequently, a new enactment namely, 'Engravers Act' came into being in the year 1735, which included the interests of other creative works such as paintings, drawings, translation and dramatization, etc. There followed a few more enactments and finally copyright Act, 1911, was enacted. After the independence, Indian Copyright Act, 1958, was enacted, which was repeatedly amended in 1983, 1984 and 1994, to keep a pace with the contemporary technological developments. The present law is in full conformity with the Uruguay Round Agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs).

However, despite all the above legislations, piracy is in full swing. The fact remains that simply by making laws, the situation cannot be averted.

### Piracy in India

Book piracy in India, primarily depends on two factors viz. the price of the book and its popularity. Piracy is generally wide spread with foreign books and Indian books having large demands. A study conducted by Ministry of HRD, Govt. of India indicates that three types of print piracy are prevalent in our country. The most prevalent one is reprinting a book illegally; the second category involves the phenomenon of publishing book falsely using the name of famous authors, which in fact was authored by imitators; and the third category of pirated book is to produce the translated versions of foreign-language books in other languages. The pirates do not pay taxes on the huge money generated through this illegal activity and they are also not liable to pay any royalty to the author.

In addition to the above, book piracy in the form of mass photocopying is also prevalent in

India, especially around the schools, colleges and universities.

### **The growing concern**

Book piracy today has become very easy with the use of new technologies. At times, the authors and publishers cannot distinguish between the original and the fake ones; as not only is the text copied but the design, cover, colour and the bar code are also copied.

The copyright piracy besides adversely affecting the creative potential of the authors by denying their legitimate dues, has also largely been impacting economically upon the publishers and booksellers who invest their money in bringing out copyrighted materials for the benefit of the end-users.

In developed countries, the publishing and allied industries such as music, film and video industry and computer software industry, etc; handsomely contribute to the state exchequers. However, in India, there is no reliable data to indicate the contribution of this industry to GDP; although, it is firmly assumed that this sector is quite important in terms of economic contribution of the country. By the same way, there is also no significant data available to give an account of the losses arising out of copyright piracy.

### **How to curb piracy**

A multi-pronged strategy has to be devised, in which the respective regulatory authorities should be requested to direct the colleges to stock large number of books in college libraries. The corporate groups and NGOs should be encouraged to adopt the libraries of the educational institutes and book-grant to them. The University Grants Commission (UGC) should be requested to not only grant adequate funds for purchase of books but should also ensure that the funds so granted for books head are properly used in the given time frame. Say for example, according to the reported news, the UGC between 2012 and 2017, had sanctioned an amount of Rs. 300 crore to Delhi University under different heads but it had to return Rs.108 crore to UGC because it was unable to spend it. The UGC disbursed Rs. 3 crore to buy books for the libraries, but having missed the March 15, 2017 deadline, Delhi University had to return this fund as well to the Commission.

Another way of discouraging book piracy is for the government to encourage book publishing by giving them the handsome concessions in all types of taxes. The publishers should be given subsidies for printing the university, college and school level books with consequent reduction in book prices. Such a strategy will on one side encourage readers to purchase books instead of photocopying and on the other hand will catalyze increased production and profit for publishers.

However, eliminating book piracy is not an easy job. To counter such a situation the trade bodies have to work in tandem with all governmental agencies concerned including the police for identifying, nabbing the offenders and preventing the piracy.

