

BookTok and Social Media in Popularizing English Translations of Indian Classical Texts

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Abstract: *The emergence of BookTok on TikTok, alongside other social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube, has transformed book discovery and dissemination in the digital age. This paper examines the role of these platforms in popularizing English translations of Indian classical texts, such as the Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Upanishads. Drawing on secondary data, including TikTok hashtag analytics (#BookTok with over 200–370 billion views as of 2025), sales trends, and content analysis of viral videos, the study finds that while BookTok primarily drives fiction and romance sales (with up to 600% spikes), it also boosts engagement with Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) through accessible English translations and quote-based explanations. Creators like Deepak Chopra and youth influencers explain Gita chapters or share 108 quotes, reaching millions and making ancient concepts like dharma, karma, and non-dualism accessible to Gen Z globally. Retellings by authors such as Amish Tripathi further bridge classical texts to modern readers. Challenges include simplification and authenticity debates. The paper argues that social media democratizes IKS under NEP 2020's decolonization push, recommending strategic publisher collaborations. This synthesis of quantitative sales data and qualitative video trends highlights a shift from elite academia to participatory digital culture.*

Keywords: BookTok, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), English translations, Bhagavad Gita, social media dissemination, digital reading culture, mythological fiction, NEP 2020

