

Ajay Prakashan: Educating Chhattisgarh, one book at a time

Shiv Shankar Dani tells Ramu Ramanathan how Ajay Prakashan became a beacon of hope for the students in Central India and has put the state on the map of educational publishing

One of publishing's most important market sectors is education. Some of the biggest publishers in the world today are educational publishers.

Ajay Prakashan is one such educational publisher in the state of Chhattisgarh.

It publishes about 800 titles which include the popular books in college segment called the *Ajay Malu* and *Ajay Super Most* – a guide book popular in the school segment. The company aims to become a leading independent academic publisher of Central India by catering to the growing academic needs of the market in the Central region.

It believes that "education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today," according to Shiv Shankar Dani, of Ajay Prakashan. Its vision is simple – "create rightful, precise and accurate data for the customers," says Dani.

Chhattisgarh educated

Ajay Prakashan has played an important role in the field of education for Chhattisgarh since 1977. This is 23 years before Chhattisgarh was formed as the 26th state on 1st November 2000. During 1977, education in the state was unreliable and there were no publication houses which worked for the benefit of the students.

It was then that Dani's father Anirudh Kumar Dani and Dani's uncle Vijay Dani started Ajay Prakashan. "It was a time when there were no reference or course books available for the university students of the state. So we started publishing a set of



books for the students of Bachelor of Arts," says Dani.

This silent revolution gained momentum due to the company's first machine – a two-colour Orient web offset and was initiated by the first book published by the company which was a patwari competition book. (A patwari is a village registrar or accountant in India).

Since then, there was no looking back for this publication house and it started printing books for school and college level along with books for competitive exams. Chhattisgarh has been the core market for the company since its beginning. "It is the backbone of Ajay Prakashan. Over the years, we have managed to reach every corner of the state and reach every student/customer through our brand name," says Dani.

What started as a single title in 1977 has now turned into a solid offering of 800 educational book titles in 2021. The company has a well-managed stocking facility meas-

AT A GLANCE – EDUCATIONAL PUBLISHING IN INDIA

As per a report in Scroll by Nitasha Devasar managing director, Taylor and Francis India & South Asia and president, Association of Publishers in India (API); Indian publishing, which will celebrate 75 years in 2022, has a close and symbiotic relationship with the educational system in India. Some 95% of the industry directly caters to schools, colleges, universities and research – including technical, medical, and professional education.

The largest segment within education publishing is K to K-12, or school books, which account for about two-thirds. The rest is occupied by higher education, and a small specialist research segment where several international publishers operate. At last count, there were approximately 9,000 publishers across India, producing about 90,000 new books across segments and languages.

uring 25,000 sqft to cater to the printing and warehousing needs.

Business vision exemplified

To set-up a huge printing and publishing company in Chhattisgarh hasn't been easy for the Dani family. What worked for the