

STATUS OF DALIT LITERATURE IN THE FEATURED BOOKS OF BLOOMSBURY, HARPER COLLINS AND RUPA, INDIA: A COMPARATIVE CHECK

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There are the English versions of *Jhoothan* and can be downloaded easily from the web. But not even a single copy of the original Hindi version of Om Prakash Valmiki's *Jhoothan* is made available free of cost on the entire so called virtual globe---internet

Introduction:

The term Dalit literature came into use in 1958. Dalit literature is an important stream of Indian writing in English and other languages of India. It is literature about the oppressed classes and castes of India. Dalit (oppressed or broken) is not a new word. It was used in 1930s as a Hindi and Marathi translation of the 'depressed classes'.

In 1970s the 'Dalit Panthers' revived the term and expanded it to include scheduled tribes, poor peasants and women and all those being exploited politically, economically and in the name of religion. So Dalit is not caste. It is a symbol of change and revolution.

Objectives and Methodology:

The study aims to find out the status of Dalit literature projected on websites of the top publishing houses stationed in India. Through comparative analysis the project intends to check the participation of Indian Dalit writers and their works. The study used statistical data from these websites and thus tried to compile it in a transparent and scientific way. In this project the Project Team tried to find out the state of "Featured Books" section of the select publishing houses through the data and evidence collected from their respective websites. That is why the Research Team began with the question: What is the state of Dalit literature as compared to other literatures featured on the websites of the select publication houses? After this the result was tested through empirical research method. The aim of using empirical methodology was to reach to fundamentally logical and valid conclusions. Before writing more about this literature it is pertinent to mention the history of publication of Dalit literature in India. Baburao Bagul, Mamta Rajawat, Namdeo Laxman Dhasal, Shantabai Krushnaji Kamble, Perumal Murugan, Om Prakash Valmiki and most of the authors were denied publication in the topmost publication houses of India. That is why they had to go in for self-publication or had to get published with some unrecognized publication houses.

In the year 2015 Dr Sandeep Sharma attended the Jaipur Literature Festival and was in the session "Is the Commerce of Literature Today Killing Good Writing?". He asked a question to the panel, "There is vicious triangle of commerce, writing and fame...[does]burning gives way to commerce?..." It was a panel of learned scholars such as the Chief Executive Editor of BBC, Nayantara Sehgal, the renowned author and the Chief Editor, Harper Collins. The Chief Editor, Harper Collins, responded, "Good controversy is okay" (*You Tube*). Then our team pondered over the question for this project: "What is the definition of 'good' in publishing industry and how much 'good' is acceptable?" We remained unsatisfied by the answers so this made us more curious to know as to what is happening in Indian publishing houses and how far the commerce and other factors in these publication houses, especially for the Dalit literature work. This remark motivated us to do an analysis of the websites of some publishers and their section "Featured Books" on their Indian websites ending with "in." We also wanted to know to which direction these publication houses are taking our readers and buyers of books. This paper is a study of internationally recognized publishing houses taking in cognizance their Indian website and "Featured Books" displayed on their web pages and the status of Dalit literature. We have proposed the concept of Influence Rating Point (IRP) in this paper and remain doubtful of the existence of IRP in the Indian publication industry. There is a list of 41 featured books attached as Appendix along with this paper. Hope this paper will give fuel to "good controversy" over the functioning of world renowned publishers in India and their frequency in placing the Dalit literature in featured list. In the notes there is also a list of featured books which these publishers show in the websites based in UK. ^{1, 2, 3 and 4.}

Bloomsbury Publications, India			Harper Collins, India			Rupa Publications, India		
1 Total featured books	2 Indian authors	3 Dalit Lit	1 Total featured books	2 Indian author s	3 Dali t Lit	1 Total featured books	2 Indian author s	3 Dalit Lit
07	02	0	18	11	0	16	13	0

Fig 1. Representation of Indian Authors and Dalit Literature in Featured Books

Here in the above table or Fig 1, it is quite clear that the percentage of Indian authors is quite low and Dalit literature represented as featured book is zero which is alarming. Bloomsbury Publishing, India almost avoids featuring Indian authors as also Dalit literature at their home page. Harper Collins and Rupa Publications, India, do have some greater percentage of featured Indian authors but Dalit literature is almost absent. It is strange to know that these publication houses are stationed in India but have bent themselves on promoting the European, Pakistani or Sri Lankan authors. This clearly defines what it means to be a Dalit or an Indian author for these publication houses.

The table given below (Fig 2) shows that the percentage of the women authors is almost one-fourth of the total Indian authors featured but Dalit Indian authors are completely missing.

Total Featured Books	Male	Female	%age of female authors (Indian)	%age of Dalit Indian authors (Indian)
41	29	12	29.2%	0

Fig 2. Total Representation of Dalit Indian Authors in the Featured Books.

And here again, in Fig 3, there is another bifurcation of featured women authors in the web pages of publication houses:

Bloomsbury Publications, India				Harper Collins, India			Rupa Publications, India			
Indian Authors	Dalit woman authors	Others		Indian Dalit authors women	Others		Indian Dalit authors women	Others		
-	Zero	02	05	Zero	02	02	Zero	01		

Fig 3. Representation of Indian Women Authors and Dalit Women Authors in the Featured Books

Here we can see that the representation of the Indian women in the featured books is very low (Fig 3). Bloomsbury Publications, India totally avoids showing the name of even a single woman author in their featured list. It seems that the publishers, except Harper Collins, India and Rupa Publications, India have shown no interest in featuring the books of Dalit women authors. The question is this one: does it really reflect the real condition of Dalit women in contemporary Indian society or it reflects the European vision regarding Indian women authors. Maybe the publishers better know the psyche of Indian readers and the commerce involved in the goodness therein. With this question raises another one that is: from which class do these women writer come from? So the question pertaining to their class is inevitable and unavoidable.

Shubhangi Swarup the author of *Latitudes of Longing*, 2018 was awarded Charles Pick Fellowship for Creative Writing at UEA; Richa S Mukherjee the author of *I Didn't Expect to be Expecting*, 2018 is Advertising and Brand consultant and so on. Both women are from the upper caste and class. There is no single Indian woman writer who doesn't have abundance of everything in their lives and are already well established in their respective fields (other than writing). This revelation is a major setback to the middle class authors like women scholars, Dalit women and those women who are into teaching and writing profession in India. To our surprise we could not find any single woman scholar or professor in the list. Either it means that they are not worth the "Feature" or they have been ignored by the publishers.

Bloomsbury Publications, India	Harper Collins, India	Rupa Publications, India
1	8	4

Fig 4. Political Books in the Featured Section

The publishers do publish politically orientated books and feature them (Fig 4). Bloomsbury is not much interested in the books having political themes. It finally features a book (to be published) titled *Sea Prayer* by Khaled Hosseini. But the author is not an Indian and the book is about Syrian refugee crises. Then we have Harper Collins, India which hugely highlights featured books related to political themes. Majority of themes which these books reflect are India-Kashmir-Pakistan crises or they demolish the image of India. Take for example Karan Thapar's *Devil's Advocate*. This book completely demolishes the image of Indian politicians and dignitaries. In this book Karan Thapar recalls the most controversial interviews and meetings with great Indian

personalities which send the message that there is something wrong with these people who are actually in the centre of Indian *mandla*. For example, in one of his interviews with Amitabh Bachchan Mr Thapar writes as to how he was successful in his attempt to eavesdrop the conversation of a wife (Jaya Bachchan) and her husband (Amitabh Bachchan). This event of eavesdropping happened right after an interview with the Bachchan couple. Thereafter, based on his tip-toed strategy of eavesdropping, he thoroughly judges their relationship in this book. Finally, the event is more intruding than his interview. However, there are many such judgments in the book, which readers will hopefully enjoy.

Then we have featured books of Harper Collins, India like *Between the Great Divide: A Journey into Pakistan-Administered Kashmir*, 2018 by Anam Zakaria; *The Billionaire Raj: Journey Through India's New Gilded Age*, 2018 by James Crabtree; *Being Pakistani*, 2018 by Raza Rumi; *How India Works: Making Sense of a Complex Corporate Culture*, 2018 by Aarti Kelshikar; *The Night of the Broken Glass*, 2018 by Feroz Rather and *Ummath A Novel of Community and Conflict*, 2018 by Sharmila Seyyid. All these books have political overtones. But I'm being very specific about this book titled *The Billionaire Raj: Journey Through India's New Gilded Age*, 2018 by James Crabtree. This book is in the featured list of Harper Collins, India as it has also been published by Tim Duggan Books by Penguin. One book and two world renowned publishers! If you visit the Amazon website you'll see praise showered on this book by *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*, *The Financial Times*, the Nobel Prize winning author and authors of great fame from around the world. But what makes it so special? It analyses India from the goggles of a great critic which the author actually is. It shows as to how no matter India claims to be rising at "unprecedented rate" but it is having within it scams, corrupt and dark political environment: "James Crabtree's *The Billionaire Raj* takes readers on a personal journey to meet these reclusive billionaires, fugitive tycoons, and shadowy political power brokers" (Back Page). This is all about the featured books which show India as a doomed country. Now let us move on to the theme of sex and sexuality in the featured books (Fig 5).

Bloomsbury Publications, India	Harper Collins, India	Rupa Publications, India
1	2	0
Fig 5. Sex and Sensuality in the Featured Books		

When Harper Collins, India decides to make a book on its featured list it is a book which is well suited to the plot of a movie in the Bollywood. *Anything But a Wasted Life*, 2018 by Sita Kaylin is a story of California based stripper who explains about her intimate time with her customers. She unravels many secrets of sex-industry. The cover photo of this book is also too revealing as we can see a girl lying down on brown bed sheet, wearing high heel white sandals, while her white lingerie and thighs are visible. In other words, the book suits the genre "Pornography for Sale."

Bloomsbury Publications, India	Harper Collins, India	Rupa Publications, India
1	5	1
Fig 6 Self Help Books		

These publishers and their Indian websites also highlight their books written for the self-help of readers (Fig 6). But again Bloomsbury Publications, India features the already renowned author Shiv Khera and his *If You Want to Stand Out, Then do Something*, 2018. Then we have Harper Collins, India which seems to be more interested in management guides. The featured book of Rupa Publications, India is *Winning like Saina Nehwal: Think and Success*, 2018 by Jatin Gupta. But it is difficult to understand whether Rupa will in future bring more sequels of "Winning Like ___" as previously they had published (with different author) *Winning Like Virat: Think and Succeed like Kohli*, 2017 and *Winning Like Sourav: Think & Succeed Like Ganguly*, 2018 by Abhirup Bhattacharaya. Time will tell.

So in the end let us see how many featured books are about the rich Indian culture and mythology:

Bloomsbury Publications, India	Harper Collins, India	Rupa Publications, India
0	0	3
Fig 7. Indian Mythology		

Bloomsbury Publications, India and Harper Collins, India nowhere have featured books concerning Indian mythology and its rich culture (Fig 7). But here we have Rupa Publications, India which features books by Indian authors on Indian mythology. We have *My Hanuman Chalisa*, 2017 by Devdutt Pattanaik ; *A Broken Sun*, 2018 by Aditya Iyengar and *Sri Aurobindo and India's Rebirth*, 2018 by Michel Danino. Then again, all these authors are already well established.

Conclusion: A General Overview:

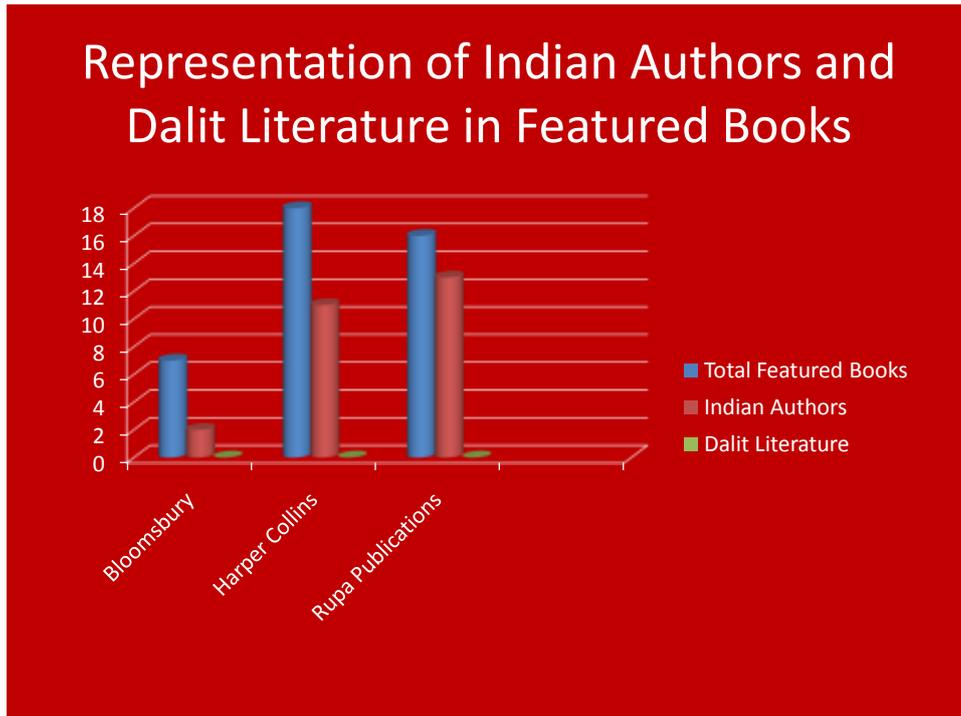


Fig 8. Representation of Indian Authors and Dalit Literature in Featured Books

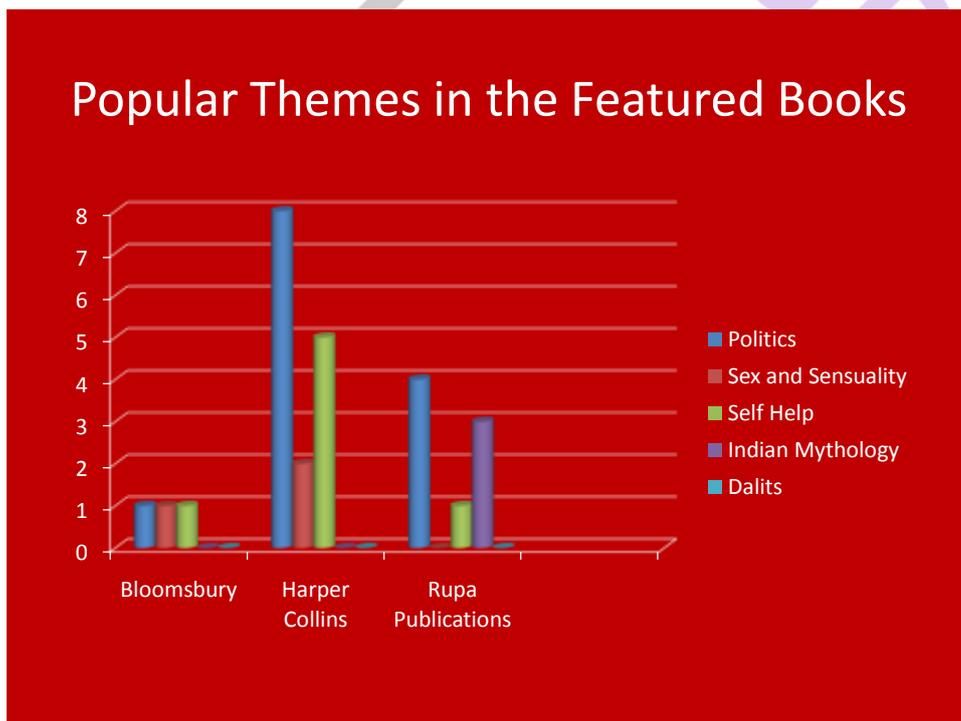


Fig. 9. Popular Themes in the Featured Books

Hope this research will generate the so called “good controversy” and help the Dalit writers get some place in publication industry of India.

Notes

1. When we visit the website of Harper Collins Publication, UK we see that Leil Lowndes, Lucky Holliday, Dr Dan Ariely, Dr Kelly Brogan, Rosie Thomas, Kerry Fisher, Trisha Ashley, Kim Harrison, Caroline Roberts, Jeffrey Eugenides, Allegra Huston, Elizabeth Day, Michael Chabon, Jilliane Hoffman, Elizabeth McKenzie, Katherine Heiny, Craig Darling, Hunter S Thompson,

Gillian Anderson, Anthony Doerr, Annie Proulx, Arundhati Roy, JG Ballard Ned Beaman, C L Taylor, Sarah J Harris, Raymond E Feist, Neal Stephenson, Sidney Sheldon, Wilbur Smith and Tom Clancy are in the list of featured authors.

2. The UK based website of Penguin Publication features list of books on Man Booker Prize, Mariam Keyes, Paula Hawkins, Yuval, Mohsin Hamid, Caitlin Moran, Bill Clinton and James Patterson, Sophie Kinsella, Anthony Horowitz, Cesare Pavese and so on.

3. The UK based website of Bloomsbury Publication features Jack Stein, J K Rowling, Michael Ondaatje, Yasmin Khan, Sarah J Mass, Samantha Shannon, Khaled Hosseini, Patrick Nunn, James Montague, Laura Purcell, Stella Rimington, Melissa Harrison and so on.

4. All data taken in this research pertains to the year 2018 except for the data taken for the Dalit literature and Indian women writing Dalit literature which actually pertains to the Featured books on their web pages from 06 Jul to 07 Jul 2019.

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