

Young turks re-inventing Hindi literature

NEW-AGE IIT, IIM graduates turn authors in Hindi with stories representing concerns of youth, connecting with urban readers on social media

Manoj Sharma

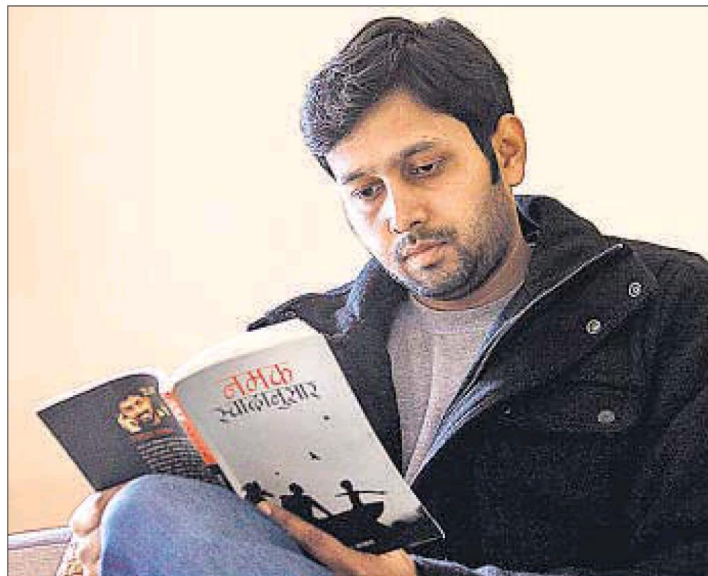
manoj.sharma@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: A new breed of writers in Hindi, many of them IIT-IIM graduates, are seeking to become the agents of a new revolution in Hindi literature. Their protagonists represent the young, resurgent India and its problems as well as their dreams. 'Terms & Conditions Apply' is the title of Divya Prakash Dubey's latest book. The choice of the title in English, Dubey says, is deliberate. "The idea was to make the book look cool," says Dubey. He belongs to a new line of authors in Hindi who are rewriting the rules of the game. Their aim is to take their books to a whole new generation of Hindi readers. Dubey aspires to be a Chetan Bhagat of Indian writing in Hindi as far as accessibility and entertainment value of his books are concerned.

Dubey's book, a collection of short stories written in simple conversational Hindi, is set in towns such as Lucknow, Mumbai, Indore, and revolve around themes such as college, office, love and relationships, much like the new-age writers in English.

"The reason why Hindi does not have new, popular bestsellers like those in English, is because most of those writing in Hindi are stuck in a time warp, telling stories that aspirational youth of today cannot relate to. My stories in Hindi tackle subjects that the youth can immediately identify with," says Dubey, 32, an engineer and MBA by education, who presently works as a marketing manager with a leading cellular company in Mumbai.

Much like Dubey, Nikhil Sachan, 27 — an IIT-IIM alumnus — recently published 'Namak Swadanusar' that deals with aspirations and frustrations of the youth in contemporary India. Similarly, Prachand Praveer, 31, an IIT Delhi graduate wrote 'Alphari Grihyagi: IIT Se Pehle', a novel that deals with the lives of students prepar-



■ Nikhil Sachan (above) and Divya Prakash Dubey (right) are two upcoming new-age Hindi writers.

MANOJ KUMAR AND ANSHUMAN POYREKAR/HT PHOTOS

ing for competitive exams.

Most of these new-age writers in Hindi were born and brought up in small towns, referred to as tier-II cities, in UP, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

Sachan, for example, hails from Kanpur, where he went to a Hindi medium school. But Sachan enjoys the works of both Hindi and English writers such as Joseph Heller, Orhan Pamuk, Milan Kundera, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Shri Lal Shukla and Uday Prakash, etc. "I could have easily written my book in English, but I thought my stories will be better told in Hindi. There is a wrong notion in Hindi literary world that only those who are MA and PhD in Hindi can write books in the language. Writers like me are trying to change that perception," says Sachan, who works with an MNC

in Gurgaon as a consultant.

"There is a lack of popular bestselling new authors in Hindi because of a mismatch between prevalent themes in contemporary Hindi fiction and concerns of the youth. It would be difficult for a girl born and brought up in Delhi to identify with the issues and conflicts of an oppressed woman in a remote village. That is what we are trying to change," says Dubey, whose next is called 'Masala Chai', stories about kids and teens and their first experiences of exploring love and life.

But unlike the Chetan Bhagats of the English world, there is not much money for these new-age Hindi writers. Most of their titles sell somewhere between 1,000-5,000 copies with each book priced at a modest ₹100-₹150.

"I do not think people will not read a good story because it is in

such as Dubey has sought to clear the borders between Hindi and English as they used 'Hinglish'. For example, in 'Terms & Conditions Apply' — apart from several terms described in English — there are emails that are reproduced without being translated into Hindi.

Also, they are exploiting the social media to reach out to a wider readership. Dubey has two YouTube videos to promote his book.

"From the responses on my Facebook page I realized that most of my readers are young professionals who were born and bought up in small towns but are living and working in Metros," says Sachan, who also promoted his book on the social media websites.

"These writers are not only choosing their topics wisely but also know how to promote their books. The success of Hindi translations of the books of writers such as Chetan Bhagat and Ravinder Singh are a testimony to the fact that if Hindi publishers would have promoted these writers they could also have scripted similar success stories," says Prabhat Ranjan, a Hindi writer

who has translated works of many well-known English writers such as Vikram Chandra, Mohsin Hamid and Khushwant Singh.

Shailesh

Bharatwasi, 30, an engineer by education who founded a Hindi publishing house by the name of Hind Yugm in 2010, says that he is trying to do what most established publishers should have done long back. "Instead of finding new, young writers in Hindi who wish to experiment with themes, plots and language they are only re-printing classics. They

are not willing to take risks," says Bharatwasi.

Hindi Yugm has brought out 100 books, many of them by engineers and management professionals. "We are approached by at least 20 IIT-IIM graduates every month, who wish to write in Hindi," says Bharatwasi, who find new writers by following blogs in Hindi.

"I am very particular that all the books that we publish have smart, youthful look, and interesting titles. Our upcoming Hindi novel is 'Kulfi And Cappuccino' — a love story set in Jaipur," says Bharatwasi.

