

A crash course on getting published

TEAM TOI

The biggest asset new authors can have is a thick skin. It serves them well when publishers, agents reject their manuscript. As Harper Collins publisher V K Karthika said, the odds of getting picked “are very, very hard.”

Anuj Bahri, also participating in the Times LitFest discussion titled “How to get published”, concurred. To elucidate how difficult things were, he dedicated a sher to the “frustrated author”.

A budding author’s chances brighten, said Karthika, if their “writing shines” or they “write to the trend.” Either they write so well that publishers are willing “to take a risk” even if they’re “writing against the grain”. Else, publishers look for attributes that “may not add up to a good book but to a sale-



From left: Anuj Bahri, Ashok Chopra, moderator Ashwin Sanghi, Satyanand Nirupam and V K Karthika at the Times LitFest

able one.” Bookseller, literary agent Bahri (he runs the iconic Bahrison), publishing veteran Ashok Chopra, CEO of Hay House, and Satyanand Nirupam of the Rajkamal Prakashan Group, agreed.

“Don’t lose heart,” Chopra added, “some of the biggest bestsellers — Life of Pi, Lolita — were first rejected.”

Despite the vast number

of new authors throwing their hat into the ring — Bahri claimed publishers get 150-200 manuscripts daily — the industry is still small. “Our print run remains what it was 20 years ago. Publishers handle 2,000 to 5,000 copies of a book over 18 months,” Chopra said. “The main problem is the young aren’t entering bookshops.”

Youngsters have found new ways to put out their work. Sanghi talked of publishing on social media. “I don’t think there’s anything traditional anymore,” Karthika countered: “We put out e-books with the paper ones and sell on non-traditional platforms. We picked an author who wrote an entire book on his phone at airports. But one should try traditional routes too, for they get good editorial support.”

Nirupam spotted Raveesh Kumar’s tweets and realized the potential of his stories. “I don’t think any writer after R K Narayan has addressed issues of villages. Hindi authors traditionally have. For the new middle class moving to metros, small towns are stuff of nostalgia. Things also changed with use of Hindi in social media,” Nirupam said.

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