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## DALITS WHO DEFIED ALL ODDS

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### Published by Random House, the book profiles success stories of 21 entrepreneurs

Finally, the much awaited book *Defying the Odds: the Rise of Dalit Entrepreneurs* is out and available globally. Published by one of the largest publishing companies in the world, Random House, the book profiles success stories of 21 Dalit entrepreneurs.

Paperback edition, 336 page, and priced at Rs299, the book was launched at Delhi's India Habitat Centre on July 19, and is co-authored by Prof Devesh Kapur, D Shyam Babu and me.

A political scientist, Kapur is the director, Centre for the Advanced Study of India (CASI), University of Pennsylvania. He is doing pioneering researches on the changes taking place in the lives of Dalits, and the very caste order that is losing its grip over Dalits.

Shyam cleared his civil service examination in 1992 but didn't join. Instead, he left for the US for studies. Upon his return to India, he joined journalism and later moved to academics. At present, he is a senior fellow with the Centre for Policy Research (CPR), Delhi. Shyam is a Dalit from Andhra Pradesh.

And I, Chandrabhan Prasad, liked hunting field rats in childhood. The book has been endorsed by some of top minds Random House had approached:

*"This important and insightful book should be read by all thinking Indians," says historian Ramachandra Guha.*

*"A profoundly important account of what the struggle for social and economic mobility means in India," says Professor Pratap Bhanu Mehta, president of CPR.*

*"The heart rendering stories of success in this book offer possibilities on how we may eradicate inequalities that exist in our social fabric," says iconic business leader Keshub Mahindra.*

*"An emotionally powerful book. The authors share inspiring stories of remarkable individuals who overcome adversity to preserve and create a new path of possibility for the Dalit community and India itself," says Chip Kaye, CEO of Warburg Pincus.*

Arranged alphabetically, the book begins with Thomas Barnabas of Tamil Nadu. With Rs15 crore in turnover, Thomas' KJN Enterprises deals in plastic waste recycling. He faced extreme poverty and caste discrimination in childhood. "We starved so often," admits Thomas.

Delhi's NK Chandan did his diploma in 1994 and joined a company with a salary of Rs800 a month. In 2013, Chandan bought the same company for Rs3 crore. He has set up a state-of-the-art industrial safety helmet factory in the tronic city Ghaziabad. One of the biggest business houses in India is planning to buy one third stake in Chandan & Chandan.

Dr Umesh Chaudhary and his wife Dr Jayanti of Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh, have set up a super speciality

hospital named Chiranjiv Hospital in the town. Thirty nine years old Dr Chaudhry's father was a postman.

An IITian, Sanjeev Dangi manufactures plants that produce electricity from solar energy. Born in a business family, Dangi studied in Rajasthan's famous Mayo College. Dangi was in news for buying a flat in the Commonwealth Village complex for Rs4.1 crore.

Rajendra Gaikwad has a pest control company GT Pest, which is worth Rs20 crore and has operations in Singapore. Orphaned at a young age, Gaikwad drove an autorickshaw in Pune, and later worked as a fumigation boy.

With turnover at \$40 million, Bhagwan Gawai's Saurabh Energy is based in Dubai and deals in oil and gas business. Born in 1955, Gawai lost his father in 1964. His mother worked at construction sites and till he was in Class VIII, Gawai was raised in construction sites in Mumbai and elsewhere.

With Rs80 crore turnover, Malkit Chand began his career as a tailor and was later promoted as a master cutter in a hosiery factory in Ludhiana. His Jangal Exports manufactures T-shirts, which are exported to European and African countries.

DICCI chairman Milind Kamble has a Rs80 crore turnover too. His company Fortune Constructions builds roads, tunnels, residential and commercial towers in Pune. In his forties and born in Latur district of Maharashtra, Kamble's father was a school teacher and mother a home maker.

CEO of DAS Offshore Engineers Private Limited and employer of 5,000 workers, including over 150 BTech engineers, Ashok Khade was born in a village in the Sangli district of Maharashtra. His father was a cobbler.

Ahmedabad-based Ratibhai Mackwana group company's turnover is Rs750 crore. His Gujarat Pickers paid Rs30 crore in taxes in 2012-2013. Born in 1940, young Rati worked with his father in a home-owned tannery. Gujarat Pickers manufactures milk pouches that dairies use all over India.

Born to illiterate farm worker parents in Prakasham district of Andhra Pradesh, Mannam Madhusudan Rao (MMR) is completing a township at the cost of Rs272 crore. Aged 37, MMR began his career as construction worker in Hyderabad and lived in huts. He now resides in Hyderabad's elite locality Jubilly Hills.

Murali Mohan of Bangalore manufactures pickled gherkins and exports to markets in US and Europe. His Victuz Exports ships two containers of gherkins every week. Born to illiterate farm worker parents in the Karnataka countryside, Murali got to wear sleepers when he entered intermediate school. He worked as a help during high school to support his education.

More in the next column.