

Dedication pages: A Study

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Bibliometric studies with dedication pages are hard to come by. Hence, this study was taken up to find out types of dedicatees, dedication pattern, trend of dedication, chronological distribution of dedications, subject-wise distribution of dedications and reasons of dedications. Some of the findings are quite interesting. Parents top the list among dedicatees, followed by spouses, teachers, children, friends, students, and so on. It is also to be noted that some authors of religious books have dedicated their books to gods, goddesses and saints. The country, countrymen, martyrs and leaders have also figured in the dedication pages of some books penned by patriots. Some practitioners and teachers of medicine have dedicated their books to patients whom possibly they could not forget because of their untimely death or some other reason.

Introduction

The study of the physical makeup of a printed book depends upon the different parts of a book. A printed book has several parts. They are commonly referred to as the preliminaries or prelims, body or textual part and subsidiaries or end matter of the book.

Preliminaries or prelims occur at the beginning of a book before the textual part. Body or textual part of the book lies between the prelims and the subsidiaries. This body is the principal part of the book which harbours the intellectual content contributed by the author. Readers are primarily interested in this portion. Subsidiaries or end-matter appears next to the body where certain additional materials like index and annexes are included to support and explain the text matter. Each of the three items has a number of components. Books on creative literature usually have no subsidiaries and have few of the preliminary components. Other books including research or scholarly works are likely to contain almost all the parts^{1,2}.

The dedication page, the prime object of this study is one of the components of the preliminaries. This particular page is usually the recto of the separate single right hand leaf appearing next to the title page. This is the place where the author expresses his personal

admiration, affection or homage to another person or persons under whose inspiration, guidance, help, blessings, etc., the book has been written. The words or phrases expressing dedication follows in most cases a particular style. As it has already been pointed out its location is more or less fixed. Secondly, the name of the dedicatee or the term of relationship generally appears in pleasing letters at about the level of the chapter drop or optical centre of the page. Thirdly, the author's name appears at the left side or sometimes at the right side³.

The dedicatee is the person to whom the book is dedicated by the author. Dedicatees can be parents, children, wife, husband, grandparents, grandchildren, brothers and sisters, teachers and students, friends, colleagues, country, countrymen, gods and goddesses, saints, leaders, comrades, the head of a country, martyrs, freedom fighters, patriots, fans, readers, original author, mentor, and so on.

The dedicator is the person who dedicates his book to the dedicatee. The author, editor or creator of the book is the dedicator. Usually, corporate authors are not found to be dedicators.

The dedication of a book to somebody's name is very old practice. In the 17th and 18th centuries authors were elaborate in their dedication. They would pay long compliments to their patrons either to express their

gratitude or to pay off in the form of money or presentation. In certain English books of the 16th and 17th centuries the dedication is the only place where the author's name appears. As in the olden days, dedication at present in no more elaborate and has become simple and short, turned more and less into a formality^{4,5}

Study on dedication pages is hard to come by. Dr. Aditya Ohdedar, a famous librarian and Tagore researcher studied the dedication pages of Rabinranath Tagore's books⁶. We could not ferret out any other study on the topic.

Objectives of the study

The study aims to find out: i) types of dedicatees, ii) dedication pattern, iii) dedication trend, iv) chronological distribution of dedications, v) subject-wise distribution of dedications, and v) reasons for dedications.

Scope

This study is based on dedication pages of 600 books belonging to almost all broad subjects. For the study, 500 English books of the Burdwan University library, 97 books of the Central Library of the College of Medical Science, Nepal, and three books of the first author have been considered.

Methodology

Each of 600 dedication pages was scanned and necessary data was collected, compiled and tabulated keeping in view the objectives. Finally, the entire data was analyzed to generate information.

Analysis and results

Table 1 shows that out of 812 dedicatees, 144 (17.13%) are parents followed by wives/ husbands that totals 65 (8%). Teachers occupy the third position with the tally of 41, children fourth position with the score of 36, and friends with the tally of 35 occupy the fifth position. In 28 cases, authors have dedicated their books to their students who occupy sixth position. Grand children and uncles/aunts occupy the seventh positions with the score of 12 in both the cases. Dedicatees belonging to other categories consist of respectable and beloved persons, whose relationship with author is unknown, original author, nephew, head of the state, family, sister-in-law,

Table 1 - Types of dedicatees

Types	Number of dedicatees	Percentage
Parents	144	17.73
Spouses	65	8.00
Teachers	41	5.05
Children	36	4.44
Friends	35	4.32
Students	28	3.45
Grandchildren	12	1.46
Uncle/aunt	12	1.48
Siblings	10	1.24
Grand parents	09	1.02
In-law's family	06	0.75
Martyr	06	0.75
Fans/readers	05	0.63
Leaders/comrades	05	0.62
God / Goddess	04	0.49
Country	02	0.26
Others	392	48.63
Total	812	100.00

sister's husband, fans of Rabindranath, famous scientists, youths, artists, clients of respective profession, in-laws, family members, etc.

Dedication pattern

The number of dedicatees in a dedication page varies. In many cases there is just one dedicatee in a dedication page. Sometimes it may be 10 or even more. We intend to name this phenomenon as 'dedication pattern'. Table 2 indicates the number of dedicatees mentioned on a single dedication page. Out of 600 books, 599 books have been taken into consideration leaving out only one book belonging to an impersonal dedicatee, i.e. dedication to obsession or mania. The table indicates that as many as 321 (54%) books have been dedicated to single person, followed by 134 (22.37%) books dedicated to two persons, 35 (5.84%) books to three persons, 25 (4.17%) books to four persons, etc. It is surprising that as many as 67 (11.19%) books have been dedicated to ten or more persons.

Chronological distribution of dedications

To find out the chronological distribution of dedications, the dedication pages were sorted out according to the date of publication of the books. The data is presented

Table 2 - Dedication pattern

Dedication to person/s	No. of books	Percentage
One	321	53.59
Two	134	22.37
Three	35	5.84
Four	25	4.17
Five	09	1.50
Six	05	0.84
Seven	02	0.33
Eight	01	0.17
Ten or more	67	11.19
Total	599	100.00

in Table 3. It is observed from the Table that from 1950 onwards there has been a continuous increase in the number of dedication pages, which started with 5 in 1950s, increased to 25 in 1960s, to 40 in 1970s, to 88 in 1980s, and peaked to 135 in 1990s. The present decade being incomplete, the number of printed books is obviously less. There might be other factors contributing to the small number. The number of books whose dates of publication could not be ascertained is 60.

Except in 1960s, in all other decades, parents have topped the list. Spouses category has also figured in all the decades. Teachers, children and students have also figured in all the decades except 1950s. In 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, parents, children, spouses, teachers, students and friends are found to be the most common category of dedicatees in most of the books. Dedication to brothers and sisters, grand children and grand parents is low. Possibly with the passage of time, attachment towards them is gradually diminishing. The number of brothers and sisters and also grand children is also diminishing because of smaller family size. It is heartening to note that a few authors have dedicated their books to the martyrs and also to the country. Authors seem to have lost faith in gods and goddesses. In more than 50 years there are only four dedications to gods and goddesses. As can be expected, the dedicators are the authors of religious books.

Subject-wise distribution of dedications

Subject-wise distribution of dedications presented in Table 4 is in fact the subject of the books wherein the dedication is recorded. Three-digit numbers at the top row indicate the subjects according to Dewey Decimal

Classification. It may be noted that dedicatees pertain to all broad subjects. As many as 152 (36.10%) books belong to applied sciences, followed by the books on social sciences (75) and generalia (74). It is seen that authors of all subjects more or less uniformly have dedicated their books to parents, children and teachers.

The class 000 harbours a number of different disciplines such as computer science, bibliography, library science and journalism. Authors of these subjects have dedicated their books mostly to parents, followed by spouses and friends.

The number of books on philosophy is only 11. Out of these, four books are dedicated to parents, two to children, and the remaining books to five other categories of dedicatees. Surprisingly no book has been dedicated to spouses. Why it is so is difficult to ascertain.

Books on religion number 17. It seems quite natural that the largest number of dedications (6) to gods, goddesses and saints are found in this class. Parents figure next with five dedications. Gurus and martyrs have figured in two dedications. One dedication is for the children, and the other for the siblings. No books have been dedicated to wife or husband. Possibly most of the authors do not have any family.

Authors of social sciences are many and varied and comprise among others politicians, economists, lawyers, public administrators, benefactors, educationists, and host of other categories of people. They have dedicated their books to all types of relatives including grand parents, grand children and friends. Teachers, students and friends have also figured quite prominently.

The number of books on languages and linguistics is only 11 of which three are dedicated to parents, two each to children, spouses and students and one each to a grandparent and a teacher.

In science subjects there are only 13 books, of which four books are dedicated to spouses and three books to parents. Other books are dedicated to children (2), siblings (1), teachers (1), and students (1).

In this study, applied sciences comprising medicine, engineering and technology, agriculture and related disciplines account for the largest number of books,

Table 3 - Chronological distribution of dedications

Dedicatees	Before 1950	1950-59	1960-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99	2000-06	Year not known	Total	Rank
Parents	05	03	05	20	35	51	07	18	144	I
Spouses	02	01	07	03	15	18	06	13	65	II
Teachers	01	-	03	04	06	18	04	05	41	III
Children	01	-	01	03	07	11	04	09	36	IV
Friends	02	-	06	04	07	13	-	03	35	V
Students	01	-	01	02	03	09	03	09	28	VI
"Grand Children	01	-	-	-	02	07	01	01	12	VII
Siblings	01	-	-	01	05	03	-	-	10	VIII
Grand Parents	01	-	-	01	04	01	-	02	09	IX
Martyrs	-	01	01	-	04	-	-	-	06	X
Readers/ Fans	01	-	-	02	-	-	02	-	05	XI
Gods/ Goddesses	-	-	01	-	-	03	-	-	04	XII
Country	-	-	-	-	-	01	01	-	02	XIII
Total	16	05	25	40	88	135	28	60	397	

Table 4 – Subject-wise distribution of p-books

Subjects*	000	100	200	300	400	500	600	700	800	900	Total	%
Relationship												
Parents	26	04	05	32	03	03	45	01	14	11	144	34.20
Children	05	02	01	02	02	02	18	01	01	02	36	8.55
Grand Parents	03	01	-	03	01	-	-	-	-	01	09	2.14
Grand Children	03	-	-	02	-	-	06	-	01	-	12	2.85
Spouses	13	-	-	09	02	04	34	-	03	-	65	15.44
Siblings	02	-	01	02	-	01	-	-	03	01	10	2.37
Teachers/Gurus	06	01	02	08	01	02	17	01	02	01	41	9.74
Students	01	01	-	04	02	01	19	-	-	-	28	6.65
Friends	12	-	-	04	-	-	06	01	07	05	35	6.31
God/Goddess/ Saints	01	01	06	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	08	1.90
Country/ Countrymen	-	-	-	04	-	-	01	-	01	02	08	1.90
Martyrs	-	-	02	02	-	-	-	-	-	02	06	1.43
Readers/ Fan	01	01	-	01	-	-	-	-	02	-	05	1.19
Patients	-	-	-	-	-	-	06	-	-	-	06	1.43
Youth	01	-	-	-	-	-	-	01	01	-	03	0.71
Leaders	-	-	-	02	-	-	-	-	-	03	05	1.19
Total	74	11	17	75	11	13	152	05	35	28	421	100.00

*DDC numbers

i.e.,152. Authors of these subjects have dedicated the largest number of books (45) to parents, 34 books to spouses, 19 to students, 18 to children, 17 to teachers and so on.

Reasons for dedication

For centuries authors are dedicating their books to parents, spouses, siblings, friends, teachers, gods and goddesses and so on. The question arises as to what factors are contributing for dedication. The question can

be best answered through a questionnaire survey. In the present study, that has not been done. However, on the basis of the expressions appearing on the dedication pages the following observations are made:

1. To express homage, gratitude or respect to parents, grand parents, relatives, teachers, etc. who have helped, inspired and in some cases taught or guided (in case of PhD) the authors.

2. To pay respect to gods and goddesses whose blessings have enabled the author to complete his book.
3. To express love to spouses, friends and the like without whose help in many cases the book would not have seen the light of the day.
4. To express affection to children, grand children, etc. who have always been a source of joy to authors. At times, they also render valuable help to the author in writing his or her book.
5. To pray for happy life for younger relatives.
6. To remember those who left this world because of early death.
7. To keep in mind the loving memory of those who have laid down their lives for the sake of the country.
8. To acknowledge the assistance of those who created an ideal environment for writing down the book.

Conclusion

Expressing gratefulness for any kind of help is gradually becoming a matter of the past. Many of us do not want to express gratefulness for the help we receive from others. Sometimes we forget or even pretend to forget the help others have rendered to us. Quite often we hear and sometimes even witness that the aged and disabled parents are being abandoned by their worthy children;

teachers are being insulted or beaten by students; rift between husband and wife is leading to divorces; friendships are breaking due to minor differences in opinion, and so on. These are not the signs of a healthy society. We do not really lose anything by expressing gratitude, paying homage or respect, offering blessings or showering affection to those to whom in some way or the other we are indebted. This makes them happy and ourselves satisfied with the feeling that we have been able to repay their debt at least to some extent. Maybe, this very attitude of ours can make the world a shade better.

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