

a treasure house of surprise

L Suresh reviews *The Rozabal Line*, a book that makes the conspiracy theory about the man on the moon sound like canteen gossip



The Rozabal Line

By Ashwin Sanghi
 Publisher: Westland Books
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Vatican. Check. Illuminati. Check. United States. Check. Terrorist group. Check. Ruthless assassin. Check. A crypt with a secret. Check. Conspiracy theory. Check. Christ and his Apostles. Check. A chase across continents. Check. Anagrams and coded messages. Check.

For decades, authors have explored the contours of religion, looking for hidden crevices that would hold explosive revelations on everything from the Holy Grail to the inquisitions. But no one has made the genre more popular than Dan Brown, the father of 'new age conspiracy thrillers involving age-old beliefs'. Ashwin Sanghi follows in this long lineage of writers who not only seek inspiration from Dan Brown's formula, but also doff their hats to him by alluding to him in the cover blurb, albeit in a competitive manner.

The Rozabal Line is yet another book that takes a look at the life and times of Christ and all the key events that preceded or followed this period — and comes up with a theory that is sure to leave you tottering halfway between disbelief and dissent.

Sanghi sets his story against this elabo-

rate backdrop, pitching the unholy trinity — Aum Shinrikyo, a Japanese cult, Crux Decussata Permuta, a clandestine society and Lashkar-e-Talatashar, an arm of the Lashkar-e-Taiba — into the thick of action. What follows is a reign of terror, in keeping with the modern times.

However, it is in the coming together of the two — a wafer-thin piece of fiction on terrorism and an incredible theory based on historical facts, observations and deductions — that the book develops cracks. It's almost as if the storyline were a mere excuse to present a line of thought that borders on the preposterous, but makes for great reading.

Another aspect of the book that needs getting used to is its unusual flow — more like a website with several references, search topics and crosslinks to other pages, except that all of them have been laid out in a linear fashion. So just when you want to move on with the story, you are taken on a guided tour of background information that oscillates across time zones and offers various slices of history that vary in their relevance to the original plot. The book offers an interesting take on the Dan Brown genre by an Indian

author — a fact that not only makes us curious to see how he goes about it, but also reveals how a native would pitch his country compared to a visitor. Characters leave their comfort zones to come to India and learn Iyengar yoga, horoscopes predict the future instead of supercomputers spewing out data and mythology makes its presence felt.

The ultimate reward that *The Rozabal Line* holds for the reader is the treasure house of surprises that lie in store, as history gets presented (or distorted, as the case may be) as delightful, jaw-dropping trivia.

The lines between religions and beliefs blur and re-emerge, and revelations — bordering on the preposterous — indicate the presence of Buddhism in Egypt and of Jesus Christ in India.

At various places in the book, reincarnation makes its presence felt, making the hunter and the hunted trade places across numerous life-cycles. If this genre doesn't attain *moksha* soon, the chances are that there are many more incarnations of this book in store for us.