



THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

INDULGE

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author

Teaming up with James Patterson this year, the writer comes clean on myths and famous people who matter

According to Ashwin



AFTER multiple rejections, with publishers citing "a convoluted storyline", the self-published *The Rozabal Line* by Shawn Haigins (anagram of Ashwin Sanghi) finally hit bookstores in 2006. The book, along with Amish Tripathi's series, was soon to lead the wave of historical fiction in the country after being picked up by Tata-Westland. Three bestselling novels later, Sanghi's much-awaited collaboration with acclaimed author James Patterson, *Private India*, follows the adage of less is more. "There are some chapters in this book that are just about a paragraph long. It stems from the Patterson style of saying absolutely nothing that does not advance the plot," he says. Collaborations between artistes can have their exhausting moments and creative differences, but

Sanghi assures it was a seamless process. "James provided a guideline as well as an existing set of international characters that need to be woven into the story. Using his guideline, I developed the plot outline and we divided the drafts between us," he explains. Even as Sanghi con-

siders self-publishing a boon, he cautions, "Not all books sell, and not all sell the same volume. If you get published, advances and royalties vary wildly. Plus, book prices are very low and the vast majority of books sell fewer than 5,000 copies. Do the math. It's rather depressing. Don't quit your day job," he advises, before sharing his views on the mythologies that need retelling, his favourite eras in history and possible reincarnated forms of famous people (see right).

— Divya Karthikeyan



MYTHOLOGIES THAT NEED RETELLING

- **The story of the Persian god Mithras: to understand how much it influenced the story of Jesus**
- **The story of Valvasvata Manu: He saved humanity from the great flood and it would be interesting to see the links to other flood myths**
- **The creation of the world as recounted in the *Srimad Bhagavata Maha Purana*: It would be exciting to correlate this to the big bang theory**
- **Plato's criterion: Simply because the myth of Atlantis is far too enduring**
- **The Chinese myth of Yinglong: It would be fascinating to know what caused the Chinese dragon to become so famous**