

DAN BROWN'S CITY TOUR

How aamchi Mumbai became Da Vinci Mumbai

With one best-selling writer as a visitor and another as a tour guide, here is what happened when Dan Brown and Ashwin Sanghi had a day about town

masoom.gupte@timesgroup.com

Put together a celebrated city and two marquee writers and what you get is a story worth telling.

Last month, author Dan Brown enthralled audiences in Delhi and Mumbai with talks that touched upon subjects close to his heart and writing — such as codes, science and religion. In Mumbai, he took questions from Indian author

Ashwin Sanghi about his writing process at the NCPA's Tata Theatre. The conversation between the two writers continued post-event, over dinner — and even the next day, when Sanghi gave Brown a guided tour of some of Mumbai's landmarks, away from prying eyes.

"I received a call from him (Brown) around lunchtime the next day," says Sanghi. "He asked if I had a couple of hours free to show him around." Brown didn't have a wish-list. He left the itinerary planning to Sanghi. Sanghi says that this made his job much easier. And instead of choosing the same old attractions, Sanghi put together a list befitting Brown's philosophical bent of mind.

The plan included the Tower of Silence at Kemps Corner, the Keneseth Eliyahoo synagogue

On Brown's itinerary: The Tower of Silence and Haji Ali, among others

at Kala Ghoda, the St Thomas' Cathedral in Fort, the Babulnath and Mahalaxmi temples and lastly, the Haji Ali dargah.

"I didn't want to take him (Brown) to touristy spots," Sanghi says. "I wanted to take him to places that have stories attached to them that we could share and exchange our views on."

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Aamchi Da Vinci Mumbai

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One such place was the very first on the list — the Tower of Silence. “The Parsi community has a very different ritual for the dead. Dan was fascinated by it. He even got a detailed, 10-minute walk-through from the caretaker about the process,” says Sanghi.

Next on the list was the synagogue, which offered the two authors the right setting to discuss the ancient connections between Judaism and Hinduism. Similarly, the twin temples, Babulnath and Mahalaxmi, were the ideal background for a dialogue on the concepts of Shiva and Shakti.

“During those few hours of



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Dan Brown visited the famous Babulnath temple (above). Sanghi reveals that Brown believes God is equal to ‘gaps’ in science

sightseeing, we had a 100 things to talk about,” Sanghi says.

At the end of the 100-thing conversation, the writers found themselves on the same page. Sanghi posed a question to Brown. “Do you have a definition for what is God?” Brown’s response was God equals gaps, gaps in science. Anything that couldn’t be explained by science is termed divine, he

said. And for Sanghi? Infinity (all that exists) minus knowledge (all that we know) is God. That is, like Brown, he too believes that God is equal to gaps •