

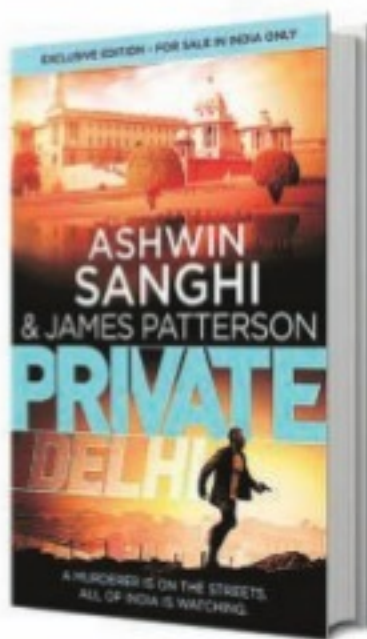
Power Trips

THE SECOND book by Ashwin Sanghi and James Patterson in the *Private India* Series (the first was set in Mumbai), is a brisk read much like a walk in one's neighbourhood park: you walk along a familiar route, looking at sights that are oddly comforting because of their sameness. So it is with *Private Delhi*.

The core story follows Santosh Wagh, chief of the Private Delhi office, as he tries to make sense of the macabre happenings around town — an organ harvesting racket, a serial killer on the loose and a paedophile minister thrown in for good measure. Everything else that happens around this plot is a cocktail of cliches and hint-nudge pointers: does a power tussle between the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi and the chief minister of the state sound familiar? One of them employs Santosh and the other employs a rough-around-the-edges-but-nice-at-heart top cop to end the stalemate between them.

There are other set pieces too. They include an Old Delhi butcher who is a suspect in the organ harvesting intrigue and a news anchor who loves grilling his guests for the truth because, drumroll, the nation wants to know. There's also a hat tip to Sherlock Holmes and *The Godfather* — referenced in passing once, perhaps, twice.

The prime antagonist of the story is a vigilante, who has been shaped by rough life events — that includes



PRIVATE DELHI
by ASHWIN SANGHI and JAMES
PATTERSON
Random House
480 pages; ₹ 309

getting molested by a priest. Now, his larger purpose in life has become the swift and lethal deliverance of justice. He goes by the incredibly imaginative label of The Deliverer.

But, in all fairness to Sanghi and Patterson, the book is still a fairly enjoyable read, an affirmation, perhaps, of the fact that pulp fiction is never out of vogue, particularly if it has an overload of cliches that we never seem to tire of.

ASADALI