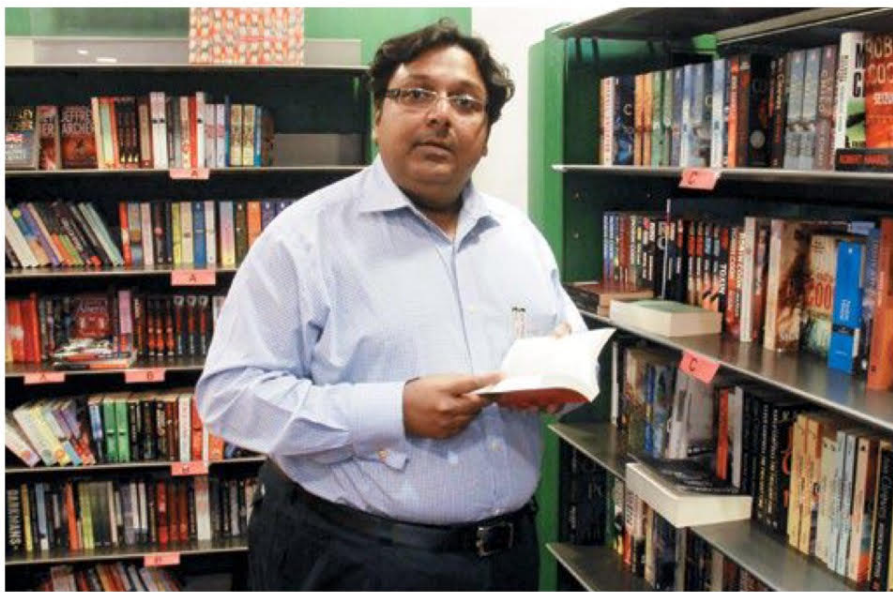


No Writers' Block

Authors who have become literary brands are now attempting to stretch their wings and create new revenue streams

BY MONICA BATHIJA



Ashwin Sanghi's career as an author was sealed when his *The Rozabal Line* sold 70,000-80,000 copies

WHEN WRITER ASHWIN Sanghi was writing his first novel, *The Rozabal Line*, it was just a matter of getting it done and published. The first print run was 2,500 copies and it was anybody's guess whether there would be a second book. It was only when sales touched 70,000-80,000 copies that Sanghi knew a second book would happen. "Once you have a successful book out there then to a very great extent your inertia is also affected because your publisher then starts following up," he says. And only when the second

one—*Chanakya's Chant*, in 2010, a year after *The Rozabal Line*—did well was he convinced that there should be no looking back. He went on to complete his third mythology-based fiction *The Krishna Key* (2012), after which he co-wrote two books in the *Private* series with American crime writer James Patterson, and a non-fiction *13 Steps* series, co-written with domain experts. Unlike Sanghi, whose writing career was more or less unplanned, author Amish Tripathi says he had

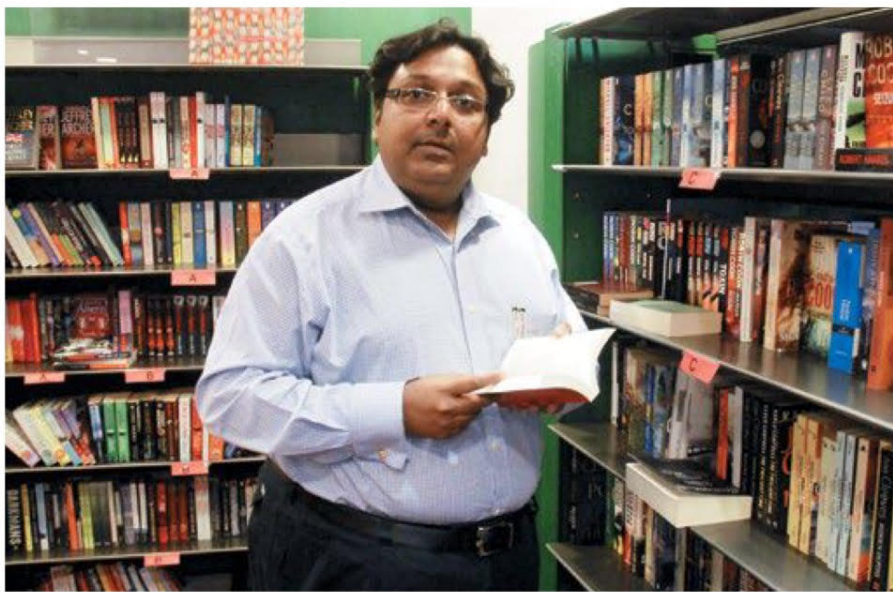
a very clear plan in his head right from his first book: To create an interconnected universe of characters, much like the Marvel Universe, over the years. His *Immortals of Meluha* was the first in a trilogy on Shiva and, two books down in the second trilogy about Ram, he points at the clues he has left in each book that bind not just the current series but also the earlier one. "If I had spoken about the clues at that time people would have said, 'yeah, yeah, you've got a 25-year plan'. They wouldn't have believed it. But now that

the *Ram Chandra* series has come out, people can see the interconnectedness. So now when I say this, they can say 'haan plan hai' [Yes, there's a plan]." The plan is to set up a sort of writers' centre. "A project I am starting, incorporating a company, involves hiring writers. I will tell them the story and they will write the book, which I will supervise. What it does is, [it] expands my capacity. It has been done abroad. I have started working on some fiction books on this model already," he says, adding his aim is to grow it into a proper media company that will then also produce movies, TV series and the like, based on his interconnected world. Even as readers don't seem to be getting enough of their work, writers who struck gold a decade or so ago with their first books are increasingly making the most of their success. This doesn't just involve churning out more pulp on their own but setting up content companies and collaborative writing. Having made a name for themselves, the attempt now is to extend the brand and create new

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