

Chant of all good times

The makers of racy political thriller *Rajneeti* are back in action. This time with Chanakya's *neeti*. Known for their path breaking cinema, UTV pictures are all set to mould Ashwin Sanghi's best selling novel – *Chanakya's Chant* into a big screen drama. **DEEBASHREE MOHANTY** chats up with the author about his novel and his perception

■ What inspired you to write *Chanakya's Chant*?

As a fiction writer, I find the personality and character of Chanakya very interesting. Here's someone who penned reams of statements on Government policy, Statecraft, strategy and diplomacy almost 1,800 years before Machiavelli! Chanakya was efficient yet ruthless, principled yet amoral, intelligent yet devious, magnanimous yet vengeful. In short, the ideal complex character for a novel!

■ What kind of research went into this novel?

The research was at two

levels because there are two parallel stories in this book. The first one traces the rise of Chanakya 2,300 years ago and ends with him having succeeded in installing Chandragupta Maurya to the throne. The second traces the life of Gangasagar Mishra, a Brahmin teacher from UP, who makes it his life's purpose to make a girl from a slum into the Prime Minister.

■ Are Chanakya's *neetis* relevant today?

Too much attention is being given to the political machinations of Chanakya but not his seminal work,



Arthashastra, which was about good governance. To answer your question: Yes, Chanakya's *neetis* are more relevant now than in his age.

■ UTV will be developing this into a motion film... are you confident they will do justice to the novel?

I am more than happy that UTV will be making the film. They are known to have produced cinema across genres and I am confident that they will do justice to the plot of my book. They produced *Rajneeti*, which was a political yet entertainment thriller.

■ Who is going to direct this film and who are in the lead?

They are in the process of scripting it and scouting for a director. They are looking for an actor who can play both Chanakya and Gangasagar Mishra, and he will be someone significant.

■ What are your forthcoming books?

The typical elements that get my attention are history, conspiracy, religion, mystery,

and mythology. My next novel will be a mix of these.

■ Entrepreneur by day, novelist by night. How does that work?

I started working for the family business in 1993 after completing my MBA from Yale. I was encouraged to read all sorts of books by my grandfather. He would always say that there are some things one does in life to feed one's family, and other things that one must do to for the soul. For me, business is the former and writing novels the latter.

■ Are you coming up with a book on finance anytime soon?

Never! Every writer has a unique DNA. The nucleotides of my DNA are mystery, history, religion, myth and conspiracy. Ask me to deviate from my DNA, and I wouldn't be me any longer.

■ What is your favourite novel and author?

All the King's Men by Robert Penn Warren is my all time favourite.