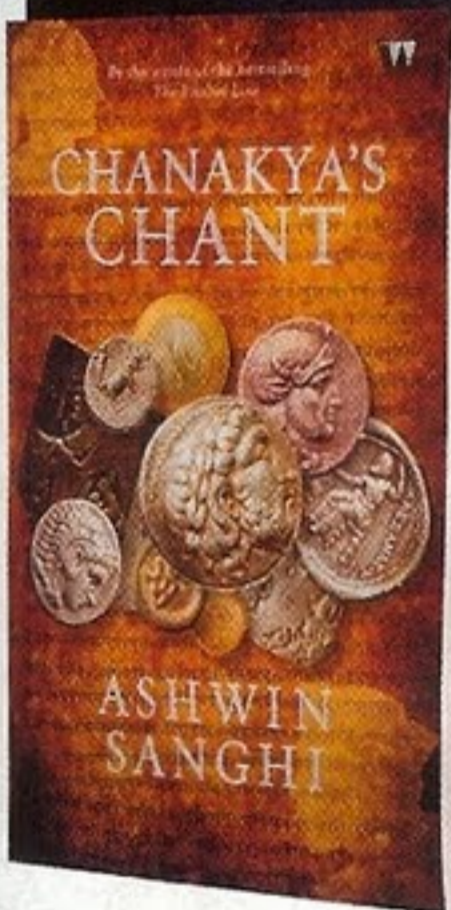




Chanakya's Chant tells two parallel political tales: one in Chanakya's era, the other in modern India.



CATCHING UP WITH...
ASHWIN SANGHI

● His bestseller *Chanakya's Chant* won the Vodafone Crossword Popular Choice Award

TELL US ABOUT YOUR WINNING MOMENT Winning a Crossword award is a great feeling, but to win on the basis of a popular vote by one's readers is an incredible high.

WHAT INSPIRED CHANAKYA'S CHANT? I was sitting in the departure lounge of Delhi airport. The general elections had just ended... On TV I could see scenes of Karunanidhi arriving to meet Sonia Gandhi. The jockeying for Cabinet berths had begun. The question that came to my mind was this: was Indian politics always

so messy? *Chanakya's Chant* was my chance to compare current politics with ancient statecraft.

DID YOU RESEARCH A LOT? Around two-thirds of the Chanakya story is based on recorded history. I spent six months reading Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and *Mudrarakshasa*.

YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF AS 'AN ENTREPRENEUR BY DAY AND NOVELIST BY NIGHT'. My grandfather used to say "your day job helps feed your family, but remember that man needs to feed his soul too". I



OTHER WINNERS

1. Omair Ahmed for *Jimmy, The Terrorist* & Anjali Joseph for *Saraswati Park* jointly won the Crossword Book Award in the Indian Fiction category.
2. V.S. Ramachandran won the award for Indian Non-Fiction for *The Tell Tale Brain*.
3. Ranjit Lal won the award for Children's Writing for *Faces in the Water*.
4. N.S. Madhavan & Rajesh Rajmohan's *Litanies of Dutch Battery* won in the Indian language translation category.

started working for my family's business (Ashwin is director of the M.K. Sanghi Group) when I was 16. By age 37, I had been working for over 20 years. I was happily married, financially secure and terribly bored! That's when I began to attempt writing... the result was my first novel, *The Rozabal Line*. I continue to work eight hours a day but I write for a few hours each night and on weekends.

REACTIONS FROM FRIENDS AND FAMILY? I'm a cultural oddity. A Baniya businessman who decides to do something besides counting money! I recently attended a family wedding and I could see that I was being pointed out to others in hushed conversations. I was almost the equivalent of a circus act!

WHAT'S NEXT? My next novel will also be a contemporary tale with its roots in history. With each of my books I hope to explore a new subject: with my first, it was religion, then, politics; with my third, it shall be business.