

# 'Writing Transports Me to a Happy, Indulgent Place'

*Like his previous works, The Rozabal Lines and The Chanakya's Chant, Ashwin Sanghi's latest novel, The Krishna Key, is part of the growing trend of mythological-historical thrillers set in Indian settings. In a conversation with Saroj Gaur, the novelist, who hails from a prominent business family but has taken to story-telling, talks about what makes him pick such unusual subjects. Excerpts:*

## **Why you chose Krishna to tell a contemporary story?**

Krishna has so many interesting traits. He is evocatively romantic but also the slayer of demons. He is a spiritual preacher as well as a politician. I accidentally heard from a friend about his supposed incarnation in the present era of Kaliyug and thought his traits could be adapted in a contemporary fiction. *The Krishna Key* is the story of Ravi Saini, a histo-

rian, who embarks on a quest to find Krishna's treasures to prove his innocence in the murder of his best friend.

## **How and when did the idea of this story germinate?**

My visit to Dwarka set the plot for the book. I had picked up the research work by Professor Shikaripura Ranganatha Rao from whom I got to know more about the submerged city of Dwarka. It urged me to write a book through which I could answer questions like, was Krishna more than a mythological figure? Could he not be a historical figure? Could the *Mahabharata* have been a real event?

## **Was he a historical or mythological figure?**

It isn't entirely impossible that

Krishna's legends of heroism became so famous that people began to make his statues and worship him as a deity. I am just saying that's a possibility we cannot ignore.

## **Did the book require a lot of research?**

I read three volumes of research material on the city of Dwarka by Prof Rao. Since most of the ancient books were in Sanskrit, I picked up Rajagopalachari's *Mahabharata* which gave me a fair understanding of the events and its significance. I also ended up reading a translated version of the *Harivansh* which talks about the life and times of Krishna. I read some non-fiction works, including that of N Rajaram. In about eight to nine months, I

must have devoured about an excess of 50-odd books. But I fitted facts to suit my story.

## **Tell us about yourself**

My grandfather, Motilal Sanghi had started the business from Jodhpur in the 1920s. Later, different branches of the family went their own ways. In 1961, my parents shifted from our hometown in Jodhpur and came to Mumbai. By the time I entered the business, my father was independent. I was born in 1969, the youngest of three. When I was 16, I started working almost full-time alongside him, but I continued my studies and went to Yale before resuming my business responsibilities.

## **What turned you on?**

In the slightly modified words of

Descartes, I write, therefore I am. I was always fond of reading, not writing. I work in a business environment 40 hours a week, and writing is what I do to unwind. It transports me to a happy, indulgent place where I can indulge my hopes, beliefs, aspirations and fantasies.

## **When did it start?**

A visit to Srinagar brought me to a tomb called Rozabal in 2004. I was fascinated and started researching. I had multiple threads and theories in my head. My wife suggested stringing them together and a further 12 months later *The Rozabal Line*, my very first novel, was born.

## **Why suspense thrillers?**

I was brought up on a diet of commercial fiction and thrillers.

## **What's next?**

I had started working on a story that revolves round an incident in 1948. I plan to finish that story in the next one year.



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