

Exploring ancient legends

Authors Amish Tripathi and Ashwin Sanghi participated in a panel discussing Indian mythology while reflecting on their respective periods in history

by Pavithra Srinivasan

Chennai: Call it by a thousand fancy names, dissect it, analyse it, poke at its dimensions – but essentially, India is the home of a thousand legends, gods, bizarre creatures and philosophies, but most of all – the best stories ever to be told. That fact was touched upon repeatedly in the panel discussion, *Discussion on Indian Myth and Mythology*, that was held recently at Landmark in Apex Plaza.

The panelists were Amish Tripathi (author of *The Immortals of Meluha*), who is now bringing out its sequel, *The Secret of the Nagas* and Ashwin Sanghi, (*The Roza-bal Line* and *Chanakya's Chants*), moderated by author Shreekumar Varma, (*Maria's Room* and *Lament of Mohini*).

Amish Tripathi set the ball rolling with the various myths that abound in the world. "There is a set of myths which



existed in the pre-Abrahamic era, that is the Greek myths, Roman myths. I guess I would classify even the Egyptian and Celtic myths in the same kind of worldview because they do interact with each other and look back on each other. And there are, of course, the Semitic myths, the myths that got created out of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and they're all quite similar. Moses in Christianity

becomes Moosa in Islam. So I think the myths of Hinduism actually bear a lot of similarities to the old Greek, Roman and Celtic myths, in terms of attitude, the way gods were approached," he explained.

He also discussed how myths were, in essence, a direct response to events that happened at a particular period: violence, for one thing. A thousand years from now, if all literature had vanished

and only a few bare essentials were left, chances are that legend would abound of a short wiry man who walked with a stick and threw salt over his shoulder and ended a huge empire. And that man was called Mahatma Gandhi.

Sanghi pithed in with a humorous repartee, "There are lots of people who would say god was not Gandhi, but Rajnikanth," to much laughter.

Talk soon turned to the au-

thors' respective books, and their path towards publication. "For Amish, it is Shiva but for me, I can safely say that it's LSD. Goddesses Lakshmi, Saraswathi, Shakthi and Durga," said Ashwin, tongue in cheek.

Sanghi also described his own book as a conglomeration of both old and new, combining Chanakya's *Arth-sasthra* with the thought processes of a modern day Uthar Pradesh *pandit*, Gangasagar Mishra.

"It's time for us to revisit all of these ancient myths, legends and history; its time to refresh these things because it's so relevant even today," he added. "I think it's important for us to talk about these myths that have so many common factors. The Koran mentions, for instance, that Jesus was a prophet," he said, as Amish assented.

"So its time back for us to start going back to stories that remind us of unity."