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A fresh new narrative

Rohit Panikkar Sep 15, 2011, 12.00am IST

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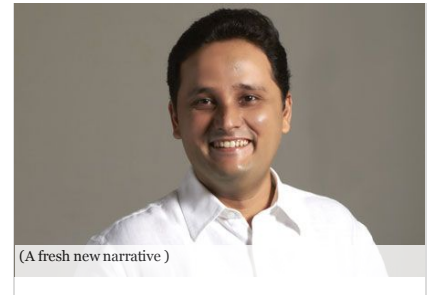
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Like every form of narrative, storytelling also tends to lose its way and ours did too. For a long time, our stories tried to look outward. Our literature was just a whole world of want and longing in one form or the other.

But now, authors have taken a look at the motherload of all stories. Look at it for intrigue, wisdom, philosophy or even quirky humour; but our indigenous literature speaks in diverse volumes. Like Amish Tripathi, who brought to life an entire culture that we have heard in passing while trying to cram for an exam or stories from that quiet afternoon as a kid when your granmum tells you stories about the righteous king Rama or about the angry God Shiva. With his Immortals of Meluha, which has already run over 125,000 copies in print and the second part The Secret of The Nagas out just recently, Amish is tasting phenomenal success by exploring fictional themes from our own epics.



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"We are no longer dissident about our own heritage," explains Amish, further adding that as a society regains its maturity, it seeks to look inward and into its own past. "There was a time when it was fashionable to write about the British Raj or about the NRI's longing for home. Maybe they lacked conviction, but that went with the flow of what the publishers wanted; and such literature did well too. That's not the case now. In the same way the angry young man went out of fashion in Indian films to pave way for the cool and confident protagonist, the publishing industry too has undergone such changes," Amish draws a parallel to movies, yet another medium of expression.

Ashwin Sanghi is another author who tasted success by exploring historic themes. With his Chanakya's Chant being picked up by a major production house to be adapted for the screen, the author is excited about the response he's received for his work. Ashwin believes that there is a spate of growth of authors who write specifically for the Indian audience. "In a country where over 50 per cent of the population is below the age of 25 and with absolutely no connect to the British rule, why are we still so caught up with this colonial hangover of ours?"

With Chanakya's Chant, which shuttles between the time periods of Chanakya, the genius of a statesman who put down the tenets of good administration with his epic work Arthashastra, to the modern age, Ashwin Sanghi has recreated an age and society that are long past. "The Indian audience has one simple need – to be entertained while also being educated. Nobody has the patience to go through heavy history textbooks to learn about their own history, heritage and culture. Instead, narrate your tales with an apt plot, develop your characters and present it to the readers and you give them what they want, information and entertainment," he says. The bestselling author adds that Indian authors are writing specifically for an indigenous audience over an international one. "That is why books which explored our colonial past did well with an international audience. Well, look at it this way; why are we so captivated by JRR Tolkien or JK Rowling when we have a bank of fascinating tales and characters of our own? Let's talk about our history and narrate our tales to the world. I'm sure everyone else would sit up and pay attention."

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