

**Books**

BUSINESS INDIA ♦ THE MAGAZINE OF THE CORPORATE WORLD

# Power of the myth



*It's never easy for a full-time businessman to excel in other ventures, but Ashwin Sanghi seems to make it look easy. A director at the MK Sanghi group, he oversees some verticals of the group. A former Yale student, preceded by his Mumbai upbringing, gave little hint about his proclivity to be India's Dan Brown. His latest book, **The Krishna Key**, is another page turner that looks set to repeat the success of his first book, **Chanakya's Chant**. Suman Tarafdar spoke to him on what makes him successful and how he juggles work and writing*

journals before getting down to write this story.

**Where did the idea for this book come from?**

I was spending a quiet evening with some friends when one of them asked me whether I knew anything about the Kalki avatar – the tenth incarnation of Vishnu. Supposedly, this final avatar is meant to appear at the end of times in order to cleanse the world. I knew absolutely nothing about the subject but the question piqued my curiosity and I began researching the subject. It eventually led to a much wider research canvas – including Kalki, Vishnu, Krishna, the Mahabharata and the Vedic age.

**What kind of research was**

**involved?**

It was mostly lots of reading. I had never read the *Mahabharata* so I got myself C. Rajagopalachari's English translation and read it. I wanted to delve into the Kalki avatar so I ended up reading the *Kalki Purana*. I wanted to know more about Krishna's life so I read the *Harivamsa* – an appendix to the *Mahabharata* that contains the life of Krishna. I pored over countless research papers and journals that evaluated the undersea archaeological finds at Dwarka. I even read three alternative decipherment theories of the Indus Valley symbols! In all, I spent close to a year reading over 50 books and around 40 academic

**Why does mythology have such a popular appeal?**

It is often said that a myth is a lie that tells the truth. Most of us see mythology as a fanciful story that aims to reveal a deeper meaning. However, what excites me personally is the possibility that our mythology might be based upon actual historical characters. Add this historical connection and the story takes on an entirely different complexion. It makes us feel closer to the very characters that we have heard about from our grandmothers. In today's age when everyone is searching for a way to feel connected to one's ancient roots, mythology retold in a historical context is rather appealing.

**Is there an apprehension of some people buying into these theories, as the case with some of Dan Brown's books has been? Especially when history and**

**mythology mix?**

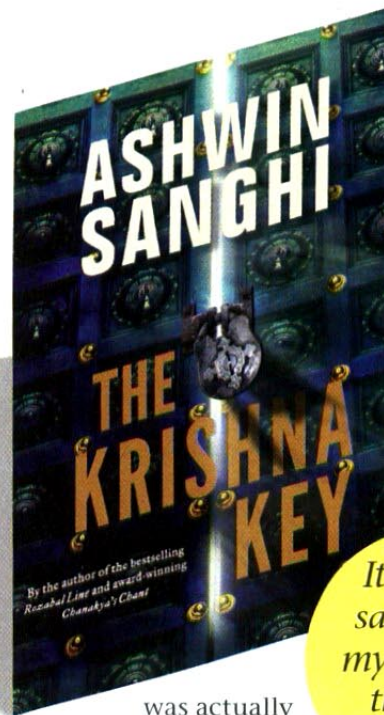
You are absolutely right, hence the need to be abundantly clear that one's work belongs to the realm of fiction and not fact. However, all over the world we are seeing a resurgence of popularity in the historical thrillers of Dan Brown, Steve Berry, Raymond Khoury, Alex Rutherford and countless others. It is now rather common to weave fictional stories into the gaps of established history and I would imagine that India is no exception to this trend.

**How challenging is it to plan such a complicated plot line?**

After completing my research I created a filing system in order to classify all the material according to the needs of the story. Given that *The Krishna Key* is a book consisting of 108 short chapters that move very fast, I created a dedicated wall in my study where each chapter's key development, twist and hook was mapped out. The plot took me around three months to finalise. It was only then that I started writing the first word.

**Was working on this one different from working on Chanakya's Chant?**

While Chanakya left us a great deal of his own written work, very little



**THE KRISHNA KEY**

Ashwin Sanghi  
WESTLAND  
₹250; Pp 485

*It is often said that a myth is a lie that tells the truth*

was actually written about him as a historical character. This gave me abundant elbow room to fill in fiction. With Krishna and the *Mahabharata* one has an abundance of material. The key challenge was to decide which parts to actually use and which parts to keep aside.

**How are you managing to take out the time out from your day job?**

I work 40 hours during the week from Monday to Friday. That still leaves me with 128 hours in a seven-day week! I write on weekdays in the

mornings for a couple of hours each day before going to work. I also write extensively on the weekends. Finally, I take a four-week sabbatical each year in order to gain momentum on whichever writing project I happen to be working on at that given time. The formula seems to work for me.

**Are you already on to your next book? Is it going to continue to be in the same genre?**

After I completed writing *Chanakya's Chant*, I had started writing a story and wrote around 35,000 words before I changed course and got sucked into *The Krishna Key* research. Unlike my other novels, this partially written manuscript deals with a subject that is not from ancient history. In fact the central event happens post-1947. It's possible that I may also write another novel that does not have any historical element at all. I fear being lumped into a very specific niche or genre. ♦

**SHELF LIFE**



**MANAGEMENT CONSULTING IN INDIA**

**Practice and Experiences for Business Excellence**

Edited by U.K. Srivastava, Pramila Srivastava

Sage

₹495; Pp xxxiii + 472

Here's a look at the emerging sector of management consulting, which is growing rapidly in India. This book is designed to fulfil the need for consulting professionals to share cross functional experiences. Leading consultants share their experience in areas such as strategic marketing, brand management, executive search and project finance among others.



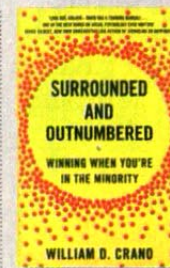
**WIFFUL BLINDNESS**

**Why we ignore the obvious at our peril**

Margaret Heffernan  
Simon & Schuster

₹399; Pp 391

Businesswoman and writer Margaret Heffernan examines what makes us blind to the obvious all around us. She looks at what it is in human nature, in the structure of our brains and of our institutions that makes us so prone to this weakness. She looks at the comforts and costs of our refusal to see and at the inspiring individuals who prove that we could see better.



**SURROUNDED AND OUTNUMBERED**

**Winning When You're in the Minority**

William D. Crano

Headline / hatchette

₹450; Pp 295

Being persuasive under even the most difficult of conditions is not easy. This book helps understand how to overcome doubt by showcasing some proven strategies, such as working from the inside and changing the game from subjective preferences to objective decisions. It also offers a set of rules that could radically affect the chances of success in any venture.