



A tale of two thrillers

BG member and bestselling author Ashwin Sanghi speaks about his collaboration with James Patterson, his family's reaction to his wish to write, and how Bombay Gymkhana is the ideal location for a murder mystery.

By Anaita Vazifdar-Davar

In 2007, an unknown author, Shawn Haigins, quietly published a book after having received rejection slips from several publishing houses. Soon, the novel made its way to bookshelves across the country and appeared on bestseller lists.

The book was *The Rozabal Line* and its author's actual identity was revealed as Mumbai

businessman Ashwin Sanghi. Two other bestsellers (*Chanakya's Chant* and *The Krishna Key*) followed and now, his brand new blockbuster, *Private India*, in collaboration with internationally acclaimed author James Patterson, has been released.

Patterson's fast-paced crime thrillers may seem an odd match for Sanghi's history- and mythology-

laden works, but the end result is a perfect blend. As Sanghi says, "My focus has always been on research and plot while the Patterson formula is pace and character. This book has given us a chance to combine our respective strengths."

How does such a collaboration work? Sanghi explains: "James Patterson's London-based publisher asked whether I would be interested in penning an India-based thriller along with the master storyteller. Patterson suggested I frame the plot outline, which meant I was free to introduce elements that excited me. He provided an initial guideline as well as an existing set of international characters that needed to be woven into my story." Outline decided, Sanghi wrote the first draft and Patterson wrote the final. "Once both James and I were done with the story, the editors at Random House took over," says Sanghi.



Set in Mumbai, *Private India* is a race against time — there's a killer on the prowl and the team at Private needs to spring into action before more lives are lost. Chowpatty Beach, Pali Hill, Towers of Silence, Colaba Causeway...all find mention in the novel. How about our Bombay Gymkhana? Could that feature in a future story? "It is an ideal location for a murder mystery!" exclaims Sanghi. "Just imagine a scenario in which a corpse is discovered on Bar Nite. When hundreds of guests have left, a single body remains slumped on one of the sofas..."

So will he write this for us? Unfortunately, Sanghi says his schedule is packed at the moment — apart from writing books, he has to balance



Facing page: Bestselling author Ashwin Sanghi. Left: James Patterson, Sanghi's collaborator on his latest project, *Private India*. Above: A family man, Sanghi poses with his wife and son.

them. He works in the family business, the MK Sanghi Group. "My father was particularly concerned that I might cast aside my business avatar and become a full-time writer. He probably had nightmarish visions of his MBA son wearing a khadi kurta and walking out of the family office with a jute *jhola* slung over his shoulder, ready to renounce the world on account of his passion."

But he still has time for the Club, although we'll have to wait a while for it to be featured by him. After all, Bombay Gym has played a significant role in the entrepreneur's writing journey. "During my college years at St. Xavier's, the Club was a retreat from boring lectures. Those hours on the verandah would be spent reading books and many of my later story ideas had their genesis on the verandah!" **BG**