

'Write drunk, edit sober... marketing is the hangover'

TEAM TOI

The bestselling writer trio of Amish, Ravi Subramanian and Ashwin Sanghi made for a crackling opening session at the Times LitFest Delhi on Saturday. Their panel, Write India, had everything for an aspiring writer—from plot-crafting techniques to advice on picking up your book from the back shelves of a bookstore and placing it in front. Sanghi conceded he'd resorted to that last trick with his first book. The trio seemed to agree they don't follow a formula. "It might sound filmy, but it just comes to me," said Amish, famous for his Meluha series. Sanghi of Chanakya's Chant fame said he was a tad structured.

Once the labour of love is produced, marketing takes priority. Amish feels the writer must be schizoid, working 'organically' while writing and 'practically' when marketing it. "Hemingway said write when drunk, edit when sober. He forgot to add marketing was the hangover — the



Two of TOI's Write India winners, Sutapa Basu and Kena Shree, are felicitated by Amish (L) and Sanghi. Ravi Subramanian's (applauding, left) pick will be announced on December 15

pounding headache you have to cope with," said Sanghi.

"You need to be your book's CEO," said banker-turned-author Subramanian, who recently moved from writing banking thrillers to a romantic one: *The Bestseller She Wrote*.

Struggling writers could take heart from Amish's story. More than 20 publishers rejected his manuscript before he opted for self-publishing. "My story was on mythology and religion, publishers said it wouldn't sell. One suggested I write my love story from IIM

Calcutta. I don't have one. I met my wife when we were 15," he said, when Subramanian interjected: "Excuse me. You don't have to be a criminal to write thrillers." The audience was in splits.

The session was named after TOI's writing competition that received over 15,000 entries. The trio was among the competition's 11 judges, picking a winner each. Amish's winner Sutapa Basu, and Kena Shree whom Sanghi adjudged the best, were felicitated at the festival.