

Turn the page

Ashwin Sanghi resurrects Chanakya in his latest historical thriller



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ASHWIN Sanghi's new book, *Chanakya's Chant*, takes the readers to 340 BC — with vivid descriptions of life in Magadh and Takshashila. However, as they turn some more pages, they are shifted to the contemporary world. What remains constant is the story of Chanakya, who is reborn as Gangasagar Mishra in a small Uttar Pradesh village nearly, 2,300 years later.

Sanghi — the author of *The Rozabal Line*, a thriller about Jesus having survived the crucifixion and settling down in India — with his second novel, once again, fictionalises history to come up with a page-turner. "I have always been intrigued by Chanakya. During my research, I felt that the political setting 2,300 years ago was not too different from what it is now. In fact, after reading nearly a dozen books on the subject, watching a series and talking to experts, I felt that there is a recurring pattern. History does repeat itself."

The book uses colloquial terms generously in its narrative. "The reality of the world is something that I do not

want to ignore. I cannot describe a street accurately without describing the filth it has. I have been asked a lot of times to tone down the language, but frankly, this is what the world is like, so why do we refrain? My readers are not children, it's a grown-up audience I address my writings to," he explains

The Mumbai-born author is currently basking in the achievement of being on the Indian bestsellers' list. An entrepreneur by profession, he writes on history, religion and politics. Talking about his fascination with Chanakya, he says, "The present-day Chanakya's character is very interesting to understand. How his mind unfolds is something I loved to deal with."

Like him, many Indian writers are now dealing with stories set in Indian contexts. "For a very long time, we were writing for western audiences. But I see a change now. My generation does not have colonial legacies to deal with. We, as a generation today, love to read voices that are Indian." The writer is currently working on another history-based novel. "I have finished writing 30,000 words for it, the DNA of the book is steeped in history," he says.