



Often when **Ashwin Sanghi** finds himself immersed in books, he wonders at the accuracy of a *sadhu's* prophecy — 'You're destined to be a hermit!' He talks to **Eram Agha** before the release of his new book, *The Krishna Key*



Meet the hermit

He went to Yale University for his MBA, returned a businessman. But the life running parallel to his business studies — reading — took over and Ashwin Sanghi became a writer. Books sent to him by his grandfather played an important part. "It all started when I was 10 years old and continued till I was 23. He sent the books to me even when I was away in Yale — from Tolstoy to Shakespeare I had them all," he says.

And now, it is the soothsayer's prediction that amuses him the most. "Long time back a *sadhu* had said that I will live the life of a hermit. Today when I see myself locked up in my study, I get surprised," he laughs.



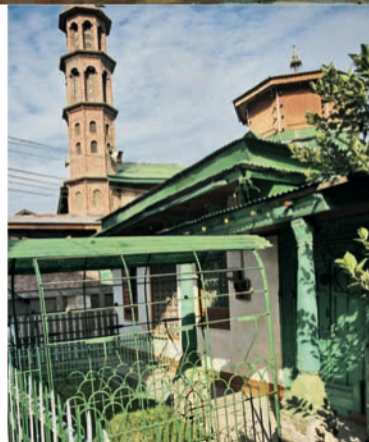
That Goa moment

Had it not been for a Goa trip, Sanghi would not have known his true calling. His grandfather told him that there are things we do to feed ourselves and others that we do to feed our soul, and one should not compromise on the latter.

So in 2005, when he set out to rejuvenate in Goa but ended up messing it all up by working instead, his wife suggested that he "de-stress by writing something". The idea clicked and by the end of the trip he had penned 6,000 words for his debut novel *Rozabal Line*.

The Srinagar scene

Srinagar has been his family's favourite holiday spot. And at Rozabal Tomb, he rediscovered the essence of faith. "As a child I looked at Rozabal as a tourist place. It was only when I grew up that I saw the bigger picture. The story doing the rounds was that someone was buried here... And that someone might be Jesus," he says. "That was the moment of Aha for me. All I did was to bring that story in the realm of popular fiction," he says.



Ancient is modern

If someone wants to savour the taste of ancient India, Sanghi says he must take a trip to Varanasi. "Our cities have a rich heritage but somewhere we seem to have lost that respect for them. That's why I love writing on themes that can re-acquaint the youth to the lost glory," he says.

Favourite theme

Sanghi would like to set his next book in the era of Independence struggle. It's quite a favourite with the writers because, "it was the time of great expectations. Every time you change government, there is hope... imagine the extent of hope during that time," he says. His favourite one is Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*.