

Send your life partner away for a while, sit calmly in the drawing room with a glass of whiskey...thoughts would definitely pour in, and you just need to make notes. These are the tips from the new-age authors who just stepped off the corporate ladder to live in a world of words. At the ongoing Taj Literature Festival at The Clarks Shiraz, Ashwin Sanghi, Ravi Subramanian and Piyush Jha, who all are qualified MBAs had a rather funny discussion about their transitions in careers and respective successes. "It's like three idiots sitting together without any moderator," quipped Subramanian leaving audience in splits. A banker by profession, Subramanian has written popular thrillers about banking and bankers, including two Crossword Book Award winning titles *The Incredible Banker* and *The Bankster*. "My wife was away for a month for a training purpose. I had to look after our six-year-old daughter. During my free time at home, I casually started writing. Since I have a banking background, bank-related stories were the obvious choice," he said. An alumnus of Indian Institute of Management Bengaluru, Subramanian has spent close to two decades in the financial services industry having worked with companies such as Citibank, HSBC and ANZ Grindlays.

It doesn't surprise that most of the recent bestselling authors are MBA professionals. Does being MBA give an edge in the present literary world? At least these authors think so. "MBAs tend to get their hands dirty on different things. They are exposed to marketing, sales and presentations. Corporate culture lets you disciplined and projecting in a right way," said Sanghi, the writer of three bestselling novels, *The Rozabal Line*, *Chanakya's Chant* and *The Krishna Key*. What gave these authors an advantage is the fact they write as well as market themselves. "In most cases, an author's job is over once he is done with the writing. But in our cases, we are aggressively involved in marketing and selling the book. And that we do shamelessly. I think marketing officials are shameless creatures since the agenda is to sell the product. So we don't bother about looks, and participate in different activities to popularise the novels," said Sanghi.

Author and filmmaker Piyush Jha noted an interesting distinction of MBA authors. "Unlike others, we write popular and commercial stories. We have a knack of engaging readers and audience. So that goes naturally with our writing. MBAs understand the abstract ideas and turn them into presentable formats," he said. Jha was working with an ad agency where he first got exposed to filmmaking. He also made movie *Sikander* in

FREEWHEELING TWO HOURS

'The three idiots'

Bestselling authors, ASHWIN SANGHI, RAVI SUBRAMANIAN and PIYUSH JHA, won the readers' hearts at the Taj Literature Festival. KARAN BHARDWAJ decodes their success stories



2009. However, he tasted success with his novel *Mumbaistan*.

Success in writing is not a child's play especially when nobody is willing to publish your work. Sanghi knows it quite well. He recalled how he had to knock doors to get his first book published. "Nobody was willing. And finally when I got through, I had to reach out to people myself to read and review my work. Newspapers and magazines didn't have space for me. So I approached my bloggers to review my work, which helped me tremendously. I think today you can do without print media if you are active on digital medium. That's why I am so active on social media," he said.



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Coming from a "baniya" family, his life has been that of a businessman. His schooling, graduate and post-graduate studies were entirely business-oriented, not history or mythology, which is now his prerogative. However, it was his grandfather who inspired him to read and write. That's another story how he got into history. "After 25 years in the business world, I visited Kashmir and found a tomb called Rozabal. The popular folklore around the tomb was that Jesus Christ lay buried there. I was fascinated by the story and spent the next one year reading volumes of material on the subject. It eventually resulted in my first book, *The Rozabal Line*. The success of *The Rozabal Line* prompted me to write another piece of historical fiction, *Chanakya's Chant*. History, mythology and theology excite me. I get even more thrilled when the lines between these three subjects tend to blur," he told us.