

# THE ASIAN AGE



Amplify character traits; eliminate fluff; build twists and suspense ever so often; do not compromise on pace; and build conflict until the very end



## Masters of **thrill** craft

**BESTSELLING  
AUTHORS JAMES  
PATTERSON AND  
ASHWIN SANGHI  
HAVE TEAMED  
UP AND  
COLLABORATED  
OVER SKYPE  
AND EMAIL TO  
JOINTLY WRITE  
A NEW  
THRILLER**

● ROHINI NAIR

**A**fter a series of international adventures that have taken him to London, Berlin and parts of Australia, charismatic private investigator Jack Morgan's next pit-stop is in Mumbai. The adventure, called *Private India*, has been written jointly by Krishna Key author Ashwin Sanghi and Morgan's creator, bestselling author James Patterson.

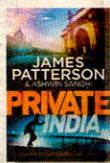
The collaboration — an unprecedented one, which has Patterson's and Sanghi's considerable fan base here thrilled — has led to a story that “attempts to convey the full impact of maximum city through Bollywood, the mafia, god men, politicians and business tycoons”. However, it is not just Indian readers that the publishers, were targeting. It is the community of global fans who have routinely made James Patterson's books sell more copies than those of authors like Dan Brown, Stephen King and John Grisham — combined. That's been made evident in the choice of title for this new Morgan adventure, for which, as Sanghi explains, “from an international perspective, India seemed like a better brand than any individual city here”. “However, this does not preclude us from developing additional stories in Indian cities other than Mumbai in the future,” he adds.

The collaboration between Sanghi and Patterson took place mainly over Skype and email, with the two writers finalising the details of the plot. The first draft was penned by Sanghi after which the second and third

drafts were handled by Patterson. Sanghi, who admits he is a big fan of Patterson's *Alex Cross* novels, says working with the writer was “a refreshing experience”. “My focus has always been on research while the Patterson formula is (all about) pace and plot. This book has given us a chance to combine our respective strengths,” he says.

The book also gave Sanghi a chance to experiment with a thriller that wasn't set against the Indian mythological backdrop that has been his oeuvre so far. “I have always worried that I would be boxed in... compartmentalised. I got bored rather easily and I need to keep finding ways to reinvent myself. *Private India* was a chance for me to do something different. There is some history and mythology in this book too, but it does not occupy centrestage,” Sanghi explains. “What also does not occupy centrestage is the realms of research that has infused the narrative of Sanghi's *Rozabai Line*, *Chanakya's Chant* and *Krishna Key*. While a fair amount of research was required for developing the historical premise of the crime around which the plot revolves, the “blazing speed” of a quintessential Patterson book leaves “little room for detailed exposition,” Sanghi says.

Instead, you have the gripping plot and fas-



**PRIVATE INDIA  
by  
JAMES PATTERSON  
AND ASHWIN  
SANGHI  
₹350.00, pp 448  
Penguin Random  
House and  
Cornerstone**

cinating characters, apart from Morgan himself. The central character in *Private India* is ex-RAW agent and lead investigator Santosh Wagh, whom Sanghi describes as “dark and brooding, with many secrets hidden away inside of him”. “Creating and fleshing out his character was by far the most interesting part of this project,” he says. “It was also, the most challenging.”

It's a challenge that Sanghi seems to have succeeded at. Ask him about the “tricks of trade” that help writers like him craft an unputdownable thriller and he enumerates: “Amplify character traits; eliminate fluff; build twists and suspense ever so often; do not compromise on pace; and build conflict until the very end.”

But beyond being a well-crafted reflection of these genre-defining rules, *Private India* signifies so much more. As Sanghi sees it, it is an indication that the Indian commercial fiction space has matured. “It means that international authors see it as an important enough market to ink such co-writing arrangements and that Indian commercial fiction is gradually acquiring a global flavour,” he says. “And that at some point in time in the future, one may see many more Indian bestselling authors on international bookshelves.”



James Patterson