

HELLO!

A TIME TO THRILL

HELLO! CHATS WITH BESTSELLING AUTHOR ASHWIN SANGHI ON HIS COLLABORATION WITH FELLOW WORDSMITH JAMES PATTERSON FOR *PRIVATE INDIA*, A GRIPPING THRILLER FROM THE *PRIVATE* SERIES THAT HAS YOU ON THE EDGE OF YOUR SEAT



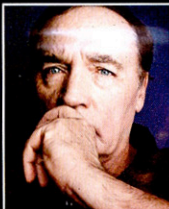
Ashwin Sanghi

Tell us about your collaboration with James Patterson for *Private India*. How did it come about?

"A dear friend who has read all three of my books and works for Random House, suggested my name to her colleague who handles Patterson's books. Given the fact that all three of my previous titles have been thrillers with short chapters, compelling pace and unexpected hooks every few pages – traits that are amply evident in James Patterson's writing, the fit seemed a natural one. We discussed the issues involved for about a couple of weeks and topped it off with a signed agreement rather quickly."

Both you and Patterson are known for your bestselling thrillers. How have you amalgamated your distinct styles of expression in this novel and made it a singular voice?

"The process of collaborating was a new one for me. James provided a guideline as well as an existing set of international



James Patterson

characters that need to be woven into my story. Using his guideline, I developed the plot outline. We discussed the outline in detail and froze it after amendments. I then proceeded to write the first draft while James wrote the final one. All this happened with periodic interactions over email. Once both James and I were done with the story, the editors at Random House took over. Working with James has been a refreshing experience. My focus

has always been on research and plot while the Patterson formula is pace and character. This book has given us a chance to combine our respective strengths and present something that represents the best of both."

What can readers expect from the pages of *Private India*?

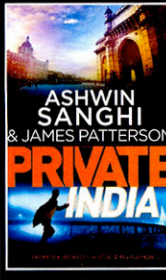
This book is the eighth installment of what is known as James Patterson's *Private* series. This series is about a global detective agency that is called in to solve criminal cases that baffle the police. The fictional head of this agency is a charismatic chap called Jack Morgan. James Patterson has co-authored all the books in the series thus far – *Private London* with Mark Pearson, *Private #1 Suspect* with Maxine Paetro, *Private Berlin* with Mark Sullivan and *Private Oz* with Michael White. All books in the series involve deadly criminals being hunted down by Jack Morgan's team in different parts of the world. *Private India* is simply an extension of that franchise to India. This particular story is set in Mumbai and attempts to convey the full impact of maximum city through Bollywood, the mafia, god men, politicians and business tycoons!"

The theme of the novel contains elements of reality. As a fiction writer, does it become difficult to manage reality and fiction?

"I have always loved fact that sounds like fiction and fiction that sounds like fact. One of my favourite fiction writers during my growing years was Arthur Hailey, a writer whose fiction was always based upon a solid bedrock of research. On the other hand, I love watching news channels that dramatise events... sensational news! It appeals to the storyteller in me. The way I see it, you can either spin a good yarn or you can't. It really doesn't matter where the yarn came from."

What factors did you have to consider while researching for this novel? How lengthy, if not tedious a process, was it?

"I usually spend months in the research of my novels but this one was different. History and mythology do not constitute the



core of this particular thriller, even though they make appearances from time to time. Yes, I did some groundwork to make the novel feel 'real.' This included visiting a morgue, speaking to a private detective, interviewing a police officer and checking up on points of law with an advocate. In addition, there were visits to key places in Mumbai that I wanted to describe. But the greater effort was on developing a detailed plot outline. This consumed far more energy and time than the research."

Any interesting anecdotes you can share with us about your experience?

"During a discussion with James, I had a chance to get a few key pointers from the master storyteller himself, before sitting down to develop the plot outline. Writing thrillers is not only about inspiration and imagination but also about craft. There are a few simple rules that make a good thriller; amplify character traits, make them larger than life, eliminate fluff, build twists and suspense ever so often, never compromise pace and build conflict until the very end. Say absolutely nothing that does not advance the plot. Less is more!"

TEXT: JEENA J BILLIMORIA