

Ashwin Sanghi joins the book factory

The 'Indian Dan Brown' on trying a new genre and working with the prolific James Patterson

Ashwin Sanghi, the bestselling author of *The Rozabal Line*, *Chanakya's Chant* and *The Krishna Key*, became one of several writers to collaborate with James Patterson when he agreed to co-write a novel called *Private India*, a crime thriller about a serial killer in Mumbai, which will be released in July. Patterson is the highest-selling author of the 2000s, achieving his success by releasing a staggering number of books – there are over 120 books published with his name attached to them, a number of them collaborations. MW spoke to Sanghi about what it was like working with the man who seems to churn out books as if from a factory.

How did you come to co-write *Private India*?

Each book in Patterson's *Private* series is set in a different country and is co-written by Patterson and a local author. He was looking for someone to co-write *Private India*, and an editor at Random House who was familiar with my work suggested he do it with me. *Private India* was to be a contemporary crime thriller and did not deal with any elements of mythology or history, which has been my domain till now. But, I had been meaning to try different genres, so I didn't take much convincing from Random House to get me on board.

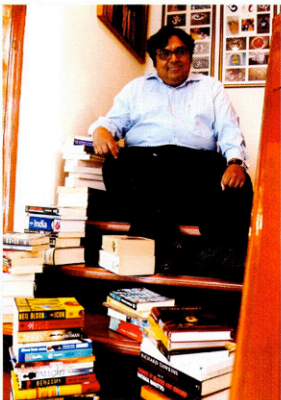
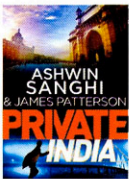
Your previous books have involved a lot of research. How was this

one different?

I worked on my three previous titles for 18 months each, out of which the first nine were spent doing research, the next three plotting and the final six writing. *Private India* took 15 months from start to finish. Six months of that was spent on plotting. The research was minimal as it is a contemporary crime thriller. It involved a few elementary things, such as finding out how a mob works in Bombay city, following a private detective for a couple of days in Mumbai, speaking to police officers about how they deal with the media when it comes to a murder case and learning how forensic evidence is tagged. We wanted to make the book as realistic as possible.

How did the dynamics of co-writing with James Patterson work?

I corresponded with James throughout the plotting process. He wanted the central idea of the story to come from me, which put additional pressure on me to make sure the plot was flawless. With my previous books, the plot description was not longer than 5,000 words. For this one, it was almost 12,000 words.



long. After I was done with the plot, James spent a lot of time working on amending it. Before we wrote a single word in that book, we had put in six months of work just finalising the story.

I wrote the first draft of the book, which was around 90,000-words long. James did the second and chopped it down to 75,000 words. He wanted to tighten up the pace. So, a lot of stuff was cut out. James has a DNA of his own. His books always have a very tightly woven plot and do not compromise on pace.

Patterson is releasing more than 15 books this year with various other authors. Was working with him a bit like working in a book factory?

(Laughs) When I was first approached to collaborate with James, I had my apprehensions. I didn't want to be producing a book that was like factory output. But, by the time I was done, I realised how much of himself James invested into this title. Just because someone else is

co-writing it, does not imply that James puts in any less work on a book. This system of co-writing allows more ideas to come out of the James Patterson stable, as he can use local writers' knowledge of different countries rather than doing the research himself. However, he still invests himself completely into the collaboration, which is why the formula works for him.

What will this book do for you?

Working with James will give me a wider window in the US and UK market. Also, this book has helped me break the pattern of only writing books in the area of history and mythology. I want to be able to write crime thrillers, adventure, suspense, maybe even romance. This book gave me an opportunity to do something else. After working for several months with James Patterson, I hope I have absorbed some of his experience and skills. I consider myself a work in progress. So, maybe I am better off today than I was 18 months ago.

FIVE NEW THINGS WE LEARNT ABOUT THE ROLLING STONES...

... from *A Prince Among Stones*, the memoir of Prince Rupert Loewenstein, financial adviser to The Rolling Stones for more than 30 years.

The Rolling Stones might not have been as rich if it wasn't for Loewenstein, who made sure they received and spent all their money by the law book.

Mick's first wife, the Nicaraguan-born Bianca, was "ravishingly pretty," according to Loewenstein, but he didn't approve of her personality. "She often acted like a child if she was in company – a deliberate choice on her part, to shock or draw attention to herself," he writes. During the couple's separation in 1978, Bianca told Loewenstein she wanted to kick Mick where it hurts: "in the money".

Real fans will always put guitarist Keith Richards above frontman Mick Jagger, at least in terms of song writing and intelligence. Thankfully, Loewenstein also agrees.

Like any bunch of young, reckless rockstars, the Stones needed nannies, and Loewenstein often had to play the role. He did not like drinking or drugs. Loewenstein writes, "Although I enjoyed a good vintage wine, I was never a heavy drinker, nor a drug-taker. I always aimed to maintain a strict discipline backstage, for security reasons.

They might now be regarded as one of the greatest things to happen to rock music, but, in the 1960s, a lot of people considered the The Rolling Stones noise. Legendary violinist Yehudi Menuhin left a Stones show within 10 minutes saying, "I can't take this anymore. I have to leave."

A PRINCE AMONG STONES: THAT BUSINESS WITH

THE ROLLING STONES AND OTHER ADVENTURES BY PRINCE RUPERT LOEWENSTEIN, BLOOMSBURY, 272 PAGES, Rs 400

