

CLOAK N DAGGER

Thriller writers **James Patterson** and **Ashwin Sanghi** collaborate for *Private India*, the detective series set in this country

JAMES PATTERSON

You are a prolific writer. How many books a year do you average?

I currently have about 25 manuscripts and screenplays in my office that are works in progress. I was just compiling the number of outlines I do and found that I write about 900 pages of outlines a year. Most outlines are three or four drafts, so it's a lot! I publish anywhere from 3 to 13 books a year.

What is the ideation process for you? Where do you find inspiration from?

I have a folder of ideas. When I am going to start a new book, I look through the ideas, pick a few I'd want to write about and then cull them down until I know what the story is going to be.

What inspires me is when they occur to me and I go, wow, now that's a neat idea for a story. I don't know how to describe the process, but I have to see the whole story in my head. Crime details and the rest fall into place later, after I've figured out the main twists and turns.

Some tips on how to write best-selling novels. What are the techniques you use to keep a reader glued to your books?

Some of the rules I follow when writing my

JAMES PATTERSON IS UNARGUABLY ONE OF THE world's most successful writers. His Private Series is almost like an enterprise worldwide where he collaborates with a local and popular author to create a detective in that country, who solves murders and mysteries. Ashwin Sanghi is the Indian author who could perhaps be called the pioneer of the mythological thriller genre in this country. Patterson and Sanghi collaborate to write a nail biting *Private India*.

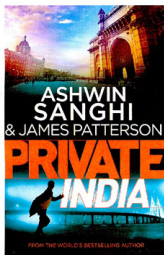
novels include writing stories the way people tell them. Make reading the book an "experience." I keep my chapters short. I always outline the book before starting to write it. I am always open to change during the writing process, always write with confidence and I always know who I am writing for and what they want.

How did the tie-up with Ashwin Sanghi come about? Why Ashwin Sanghi and not another writer of the genre?

I was looking for a collaborating writer in India and Ashwin's name was suggested. In Ashwin Sanghi, with his broad historical knowledge and his love of a fast-paced plot, there could be no better writing partner.

Which authors do you enjoy reading?

Some of my favourite authors include James Joyce, Gabriel García Márquez, Evan S. Connell, and John Fowles.



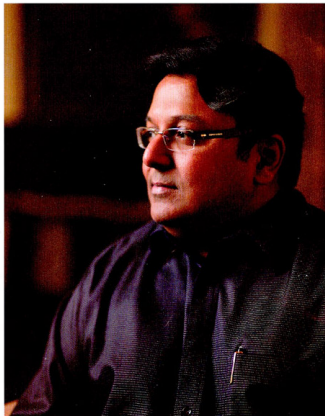
ASHWIN SANGHI

How did the collaboration with James Patterson come about?

My books as you know, are thrillers. The plot and pace are both extremely important to the story. James Patterson is master of the genre. He wanted to collaborate with an Indian writer of the genre for his Private series. Random House facilitated this.

The Private series is his brainchild. He has the idea and the template. How creative can you be when you are co-writing?

I was concerned initially, more because I have always written historical and mythological thrillers. Patterson writes contemporary thrillers. We had several chats before we were



both comfortable. While I was familiar with his novels, I had not read the Private ones, which I did subsequently. He sent me some guidelines with some 15 key points of what works.

Can you share a few?

Most writers write an outline. Patterson's outline is so detailed that fleshing it out becomes much easier. Also he writes very short chapters. Each chapter ends with a hook. That sets the pace. Then there is an element of suspense in each chapter.

Is this a one-time collaboration?

Let's see how things shape up. I look at it as a starting point. There could be collaboration with Patterson or with someone else. The stories will be within the thriller genre.

What is the ideation process? From where do you get inspiration?

It's always just in the moment. I was in Srinagar with my wife some years ago and saw the Rozabal. The possibility that there might be other theories about Jesus Christ set me on the road to reading up whatever I could about

him. I had read so much that I wanted to write a non-fiction account of it, but when I showed it to my wife she said it was boring and suggested I write a fictional account. *Chanakya's Chant* came about in the last round of elections (2009) when the images of Karunanidhi and Sonia Gandhi were being flashed. The cordiality turned out to be just for the cameras when it was reported that he had gone back in a huff when he didn't get the portfolio he was angling for. It set me wondering if that was the way it had always been. A friend suggested that it was, citing the example of Chanakya, which made me see the entire TV series that had been telecast years ago. I read up what I could about him including his *Arthashastra*. I feel there should be Chanakya-like figure in our polity. So that's where that idea came from. *Krishna's Key* came about when at a party someone mentioned the Kalki Avatar. Until then I hadn't heard about it, but then I went on to read up what I could, even a translation of the *Kalki Purana*. ■

■ RUPMA SALLUA