



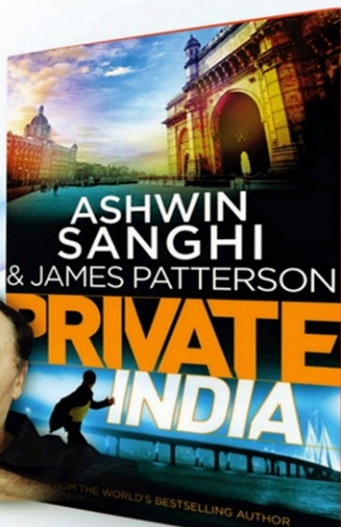
THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

# INDULGE

spotlight

## Private Patterson

The author gets candid about his latest collaboration, his critics and instilling a love of books in children



India with its vibrant and chaotic cities and rich history—there could be no better place to set *Private*'s next adventure

**H** E HOLDS the *New York Times* record for most bestselling hard-cover fiction titles by a single author—he's sold just over 300 million copies of his 96 novels. American novelist James Patterson is also renowned for his collaborations with authors—the most recent, with Indian author Ashwin Sanghi on *Private India*, which Patterson says was just waiting to happen, having observed Sanghi's "broad historical knowledge and love of a fast-paced plot".

### Reading for fun

However, along with all the fame has come a fair share of criticism. There is a running gag (a corruption of a reference from his novel) that goes: "Don't blink or you'll miss another James Patterson novel." And greats like Stephen King have infamously said that his works are that of a "terrible writer's". But Patterson is unfazed; he only asks that people give him a fair reading. "Read them and then hate me. I do my best to make sure the books are as good as they can be," he shares. Quick to clarify his stance on the purpose of reading, Patterson believes it should be treated as a fun pastime. "I don't believe in lecturing people. Reading in order to amass vast amounts of knowledge is not as important in this day and age of the internet. What is important is that we are exposed to and

develop a love for different types of books.

### The thrill of it

For him, collaborative writing is a systematic process—he provides guidelines and characters to the author in this case, Sanghi, who develops a rough plot outline. The first draft is then prepared by the author which Patterson uses to ready the final draft. And what makes this system work? "I'm very good at plot and characterisation but there are better stylists," feels the self-aware Patterson. Among his pet peeves are critics who harp about the lack of realism in his thrillers, which doesn't upset him as much as irk him to point out how it can affect their creative process. "I believe that thrillers should thrill — and most don't, at least not for me," he says.

### For the young

Alongside his publishing juggernaut status, Patterson is keen on getting children excited about reading with his venture ReadKiddoRead. Compiling lists of books that "they can really sink their teeth into", he works with schools, libraries and parents to inculcate the joy of reading. In due time, Patterson's novels might just get their own section in bookstores, but he isn't one to hog the limelight. "I just want to entertain people; it's as simple as that."

*Published by Random House India, the book costs ₹350. Details: amazon.in*

—Divya Karthikeyan