

# 'I visited a morgue and the red light area'

**Bestselling author Ashwin Sanghi on his fourth book and first collaborative work of fiction.**

**Whose idea was it to collaborate?**

The idea came from James Patterson—JP. While JP is a prolific writer, he finds that collaborating with authors across the globe helps him acquire new ideas and storylines. JP's UK publisher reached out to me with this particular proposal.

**This is your first collaborative novel.**

**Did you enjoy writing it? What is JP like to work with? Who did what in the book?**

I thoroughly enjoyed writing it. This particular story has elements of mythology and history, but at the core it is a modern whodunit. The chance to work on a page-turner with JP was very exciting. JP was very open to the idea of my plotting the story and writing the first draft. The second and third drafts were written by him.

**The book has a plenty of characters from Mumbai's world of fashion, films and crime. What sort of research did you put into getting them so right? Any adventures you'd like to share?**

The research for *Private India* was substantially less than the research that I undertook for my previous books. But yes, I did visit a morgue; speak to a couple of senior policemen; interview a private detective; and visit a couple of specific locations within Mumbai city. One of them was Kamathipura, the red light district. My driver kept wondering why I was suddenly showing interest in that part of town!

**Who are your favourite detective fiction writers?**

There are so many. Arthur Conan Doyle, Agatha Christie, PD James, Satyajit Ray, Jeffery Deaver, Stieg Larsson, James Patterson, Ian Rankin, Kathy Reichs, Lynda LaPlante, Soren Sveistrup...

**What books can you read over and over again and why?**

*All the King's Men* by Robert Penn Warren—it got me interested in politics and inspired me to write *Chanakya's Chant*. The *Yes Minister* and *Yes Prime Minister* diaries by Antony Jay and Jonathan Lynn—it was this series of books that made me appreciate the wit and wisdom of words. *Jesus Lived in India* by Holger Kersten—the book that inspired me to write *The Rozabal Line*.

**'JP was open to the idea of my plotting the story and writing the first draft. Second and third drafts were by him.'**

*The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* as translated by Edward FitzGerald—because it taught me about God through wine, women and song. *Lolita* by Vladimir Nabokov—because it made me realise the art form involved in characterisation. *Freedom at Midnight* by Dominique Lapierre and Larry Collins—because it inspired my love for history.

**Are more Santosh Wagh adventures in store? What are you working on next?**

As you know, the story ends with Wagh wondering whether he should choose Jack Morgan or Johnnie Walker. Until he makes up his mind, it's impossible to say whether we shall have more Santosh Wagh stories. My next solo venture, *Sialkot Saga*, is about a business dynasty. The story kicks off in Sialkot—modern day Pakistan—in 1947.

—Supriya Sharma

