

Ashwin seeks ancient allure

The bestselling author, who was in the city recently, talks about breaking away from his comfort zone

RANJANI RAJENDRA

He has to his credit four racy thrillers that have all made it to the bestsellers list time and again. If one dealt with the probability that Christ died in Kashmir, the other delved into the minds of one of India's most intelligent men while yet another dealt with ancient Indian symbols and mythology. With his books becoming huge hits, author Ashwin Sanghi has been called India's answer to Dan Brown for his edgy thrillers that explore ancient India. But with his latest book *13 Steps to Bloody Good Luck* Ashwin broke away from fiction to pen a fast-paced and interesting non-fiction book that has been well received.

"The book is an attempt to demystify the notion of luck. For the longest time we've always believed that luck is something that we have no control over; but there are some parts that we can control and we can create luck for ourselves," says Ashwin, who was in the city to address a group of ISB students.

Quiz him about the shift from fiction writing to non-fiction and he says, "Even if you look at what I've done in the world of fiction I've experimented with different styles from theology to mythology. I want to keep reinventing myself and don't want to be slotted. Fiction and non-fiction are different ball games but at the end of the day they are stories. I've never thought of myself as a



ANCIENT SOUL Ashwin Sanghi and his love for history

writer, I visualise a group of people sitting around me and I'm telling them a story in a manner that nobody wants to leave."

Those who were familiar

with his earlier works have readily accepted his new book, while others who have read his work for the first time have now begun reading his earlier works, says Ash-

win. "In the long run authors and writers should not fear experimenting with their styles or genres," he explains. He does admit though that the amount of research for *13*

Steps to Bloody Good Luck wasn't as much as what he has done in the past for his earlier books.

"When you write a book with historical references the kind of research that goes into it is a lot more, since we challenge the readers' sensibilities. Also *13 Steps...* is a lot shorter than my earlier books," he says.

The author, who is a voracious reader himself, has enjoyed reading a variety of genres and says that the works that he read as a child are an influence on his works. "Both my grandfather and mother used to gift me a lot of books when I was a child. While my grandfather got me classics and historical books like Tolstoy and Dickens, my mother would bring me thrillers and mysteries. My books are a reflection of both," he says, adding, "I be-

lieve that I am an ancient soul and to that extent the past excites me much more than the present."

The best selling author, who is also a businessman, has his hands full with several invites to give talks at various institutes. "I honestly don't know how I actually do manage. It is a struggle some times, but it helps that my business is a family-run one so other members of the family can at times take on more work pressure. Also I am an early riser and wake up at 5a.m. So I have an uninterrupted four hours each morning, no matter where I am, to get some writing done," he says.

Ashwin Sanghi will be back with his next fiction offering towards the end of the year with a book called *Sialkot Saga*. "It is a fiction with a dose of Indian history," he says.

An excerpt

After completing my first novel *The Rozabal Line*, I was in the process of making submissions to literary agents and publishers. After sending over a hundred letters, I was sorely disappointed when polite and not-so-polite rejections arrived. A year later, it was evident to me that no one was really interested in my work.

I described my situation to a close family friend who was having dinner with my father. Taking a generous gulp of his third peg of Johnnie Walker Black Label, the gregarious Punjabi gentleman responded, 'In life, ninety-nine per cent is about good luck! Just remember that, son.'

In a slightly argumentative tone I asked, 'But uncle, what about the balance one per cent? Surely that must be hard work or talent?'

Laughing loudly, he declared triumphantly, 'The final one per cent? That's called

Bloody good luck, my boy! Simply keep at it and wait for your bloody good luck to kick in!'