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The latest in Ashwin Sanghi's Bharat Series, *The Sialkot Saga* is out! Sanghi, who likes to call himself a storyteller rather than a writer, talks about the book, which is a business thriller and explores man's insatiable lust for gold. It has been interspersed with a generous dose of mystery and history.

Tell us about *The Sialkot Saga* and what inspired you to write it.

The Sialkot Saga is a story of two businessmen. One is a guy called Arvind, who grew up in Calcutta in a Marwari family, and the other one is Arbaaz, who has been brought up in the chawls of Dongri in Mumbai. Both lead exceedingly different lives but one thing they have in common is their love for money.

The book traces their life from 1947 to 2010, a good 60 odd years. While these gentlemen carry on with their usual business shenanigans, they don't know that a deep secret unites them. That is revealed at the end of the story. It was my quest to examine the issue of man's insatiable lust for gold.

How much of *The Sialkot Saga* is inspired from real life and people?

Many of the incidents that happen to these characters and the situations that they go through are inspired by real life — what I might have experienced or stuff that I've heard about. I also give credit to the newspaperwalas for the inspiration I get from them!

Considering you come from a business background, this book was long due. Is that why you have previously referred to it as a slow cooked Dum Biryani?

When I conceived it, it was a massive project by my yardstick. There is a parallel story that is set in the ancient times that covers Emperor Ashoka's period. And the rest of the book, that is the 90 per cent, is about the life of these two gentlemen.

The period between 1947 and 2010 is known to many of us and some of us have lived through it. As a result, I can't afford to write or say something that is incorrect. I feel the need for accuracy goes up the moment you write

All that glitters is GOLD

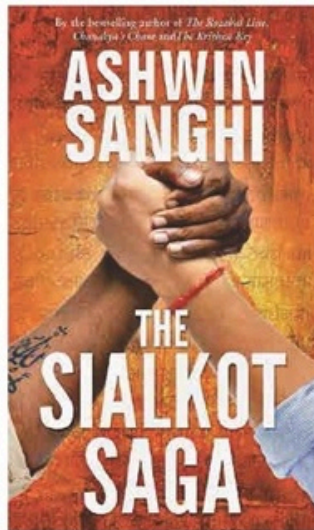
In a telephonic interview, **Ashwin Sanghi** talks about his latest book, *The Sialkot Saga*. The business thriller explores man's insatiable lust for the metal



Ashwin Sanghi

about a period that is closer to the present one. If I have to write about a man who wanted to have Puchka

(Pani Puri) in Calcutta, I should know the price of the dish in that year! That required a lot of work. What should



have gotten over earlier, stretched to about three years.

You once said you like 'fact that sounds like fiction and fiction that sounds like fact'. Does this reflect in every book of yours?

Yes, I always try to bring a factual element and weave it into the story. For example, in *The Sialkot Saga*, former Indian PMs Atal Bihari Vajpayee and PV Narsimha Rao make an appearance. In one sequence, a person traveling from Bombay to Hyderabad, drops in to meet the pilot in the cockpit — who turns out to be Rajiv Gandhi. Similarly, historical and cultural events of that period also form a part of that story. So when you are reading the book, the story sounds that much more real.

I would say *The Sialkot...* is a lot like my previous book *Chanakya's Chant* — which was a story of conflict in the world of politics. This is a story of conflict set in the world of business.

Are you working on your next book already?

2015 was the most strenuous year as I was not only completing *The Sialkot...*, but also wrapping up a crime thriller. It is likely to come out before the end of this year. I suddenly feel like I have a lot of time on my hands in 2016!