

Have you heard of Amitabh Chalisa?

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It was in a smoky, blue lit lounge in Mumbai that Shashi Tharoor had launched author Ashwin Sanghi's first book 'Chankaya's Chant' which went on to become a bestseller. So, on Saturday, when Tharoor appeared to launch Sanghi's latest 'Keepers of the Kalachakra'—this time at the sophisticated sunlit, green front lawn of JLF—the latter called the former his “lucky charm”.

Full of repartee, mirth and Tharoor's signature wordplay, this heaving session saw the two authors cover a vast ground spanning history to the dark web. Space-time continuum, quantum physics, the idea that everyone may have a twin, whiskey as cure for writer's block, 'deja vu' and 'deja lu' were all part of the territory.

“I've found that the most delightful question to ask is 'What if'," said Sanghi, about the way he energises the writer in him. Once, for instance, he visited a temple in Kolkata and realised the deity looked like Amitabh Bachchan. On stepping out, he saw a boy selling—besides agarbattis and pooja items—so-



Ashwin Sanghi

omething called the 'Amitabh Chalisa'. This left the author wondering: “What if a thousand years later, the cult of Amitabh has caught on and there are several temples and people start to wonder—just as we now do about our Ramas and Krishnas—“Could this have been a real man?” Such an overlap of mythology and history is what gives rise to “mystery”, said Sanghi, who has made the concoction his go-to genre.

What the panelists seemed to disagree on was the formula of success. While Sanghi said he swears by the words of a Patiala-peg-loving friend told him— “Success in life is 99% luck and 1% bloody good luck.”—Tharoor felt hard work couldn't be ruled out. “All the luck in the world cannot make up for a lazy person,” he said.