

The Rozabal Line

Ashwin Sanghi , Shawn Haigins (Nom de plume)

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A cardboard box is found on a shelf of a London library where a copy of Mahabharata should have been. When the mystified librarian opens it, she screams before she falls unconscious to the floor. An elite group calling itself the Lashkar-e-Talatashar has scattered around the globe, the fate of its members curiously resembling that of Christ and his Apostles. Their agenda is Armageddon. In the labyrinthine recesses of the Vatican, a beautiful assassin swears she will eliminate all who do not believe in her twisted credo. In Tibet, Buddhist monks search for a reincarnation while in strife-torn Kashmir, a tomb called Rozabal holds the key to an ancient riddle. Father Vincent Sinclair, has disturbing visions of himself and of people familiar to him, except that they seem located in other ages. He goes to India to piece together the violent images burnt onto his mind. Shadowing his every move is a clandestine society, which would rather wipe out creation than allow an ancient secret to be disclosed.

The Rozabal Line Details

Date : Published August 14th 2010 by Northhill Publishing (first published 2007)

ISBN: 9780615384504

Author: Ashwin Sanghi, Shawn Haigins (Nom de plume)

Format: Paperback 278 pages

Genre: Fiction, Thriller, Historical, Historical Fiction, Asian Literature, Indian Literature

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From Reader Review The Rozabal Line for online ebook

Priyanka Adhikary says

The first thing that caught my attention when I laid eyes upon The Rozabal Line are the following words:

More complex than the Da Vinci Code and a whole lot more terrifying

Little did I understand the import of these words on the cover of the book at that time. Da Vinci Code is one of my all-time favorite thrillers and the promise of a work that was not just more complex, but more terrifying as well made my spine tingle with anticipation.

Reading through the book made me realize that Rozabal Line is complex indeed, infinitely so. In the first chapter itself, the reader is catapulted across 6 cities in 6 different countries spanning 3 continents. And while he barely recovers from the monstrous jetlag associated with this whirlwind of a trip, he is flung into the eye of a cyclone in the successive chapters which spins him across the globe from one place to another while simultaneously tossing him back and forth in time over a period of 5000 years, leaving him severely disoriented, both spatially and temporally .

I was reminded of the movie Memento, where the director shows the story in two different sequences, one chronological, and the other, in reverse order, with segments from the sequences being alternately overlapped. (If you did not understand this sentence, you will probably not understand the Rozabal Line either). Wikipedia had provided much needed succor by arranging the entire plot sequentially and I was able to understand the movie on my third attempt. Unfortunately, Wikipedia does not have a similarly detailed explanation for the plot of this book and I certainly wouldn't torture myself by trying to read this a second time.

True to the comment, the book is terrifying as well. The author must have suffered from some serious paranoia that this would be the last book he will ever write. Because throughout the book, he seems to have been desperate to combine every interesting bit of trivia he has ever come across in his life, irrespective of whether at all they are relevant to the storyline. He has brushed upon almost every religion, philosophy, conspiracy theory, paranormal science, etc. in a mad attempt to connect the pieces of his plot that disintegrates faster than a Disprin (aspirin) dropped in hot water. Some of his paranoia transfers to the reader who are terrified as the pages progress that they will never really be able to comprehend the story.

New characters are whisked into and out of the plot even before the reader has had time to make acquaintance with them. While the author has unabashedly used elements and concepts from Dan Brown's novels like anagrams, Illuminati, Opus Dei, etc., he completely lacks the intelligence or the creativity to weave these together to form a thrilling read. The author believes that Jesus did not die on the cross, but the only tools he has to substantiate this theory is the past life visions of one of the 10,000 characters in the novel. That is just way too lame. The concept of karma and reincarnation have been taken to new levels altogether where the same set of people get related in different ways in each of their past lives.

I could go on and on about the many flaws of the author's writing, but to keep it short, reading the Rozabal Line is an experience I wouldn't wish upon my enemies. Good luck to all the fearless souls who will dare embark on this venture, nevertheless. You have been warned!

Sriram Srinivasan says

Oh God!!!!

I was at the library and saw this one (Having recently heard about the hype about the authors other books, I decided to try it). The cover said "Theological Thriller" alone with a quote from The Week saying "Dan Brown has an Indian challenger in Ashwin Sanghi" and I thought, will lets what its about. That was the mistake.

Where to start, this is like a 300 page novel where he introduced nearly 300 characters, about 100 places all around the globe and also just cuts across time zones and years for fun. Yes, it was really well researched, his facts were interesting, but distracting. He gives a comparison or metaphor and them goes for pages explaining how the metaphor came into existence or why he made the comparison. This made me feel like 1) he thinks I am stupid and cant understand the metaphor or comparison or 2) He wants to distract me from the story so that I will not see the millions plot holes that are there. Either way its irritating.

The writing, he repeats paragraphs throughout the book, gives you the same information again and again and the way he wants to link everything and everybody in the story. Come on dude, Its like everybody in the story know each other... Not cool... Throughout the way, I felt like why am I even bothering with this book.

Plot holes, well its full of it. for example A murdered is arrested and is in jail in Tihar, she manages to bribe the guards and escape, well good for her... but then just like that she is in THE VATICAN in ITALY.... how can an escaped prisoner travel across continents when she has been arrested as a terrorist treat is not explained by Mr.Sanghi. In the end, It seems so ridiculous and unworldly. I could give you many more, but well I guess you understand the point.

Everybody please do yourself a favor and dont read this one and as for the Dan Brown thing, if this is his competition, well, he has NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT!!!!!!

Swetha says

I hated it.

Ok honestly, I can't really say that because I am neutral towards this book. It was fascinating, yes. But at some point, I just wanted to throw it away.

WHY would someone play with religion? It shatters the utter faith that people have. Maybe it divides people but that doesn't mean you need to unify it?! Jesus in India with a Muslim hierarchy! Wow, WHO would even think of that?

While some might consider this 'AH! he is a genius', some might just say 'DAFUQ did I just read?'. I don't know in which category I belong but wait, these lines? Bro, not so cool.

'Some people spell Krishna as Christna.'

' Brahma and Abraham are one and the same. '

DUDE! NOT COOL, again.

And the endless bibliography saying 'This is a work of fiction'. It has to be, because please, you can't trace way back with regression or whatever crap!

Did I mention that this was **just like** Da Vinci Code?

The last line of the book somewhat touched me.

'If the universal oneness could be understood by all, there would be no conflict at all.'

I decided not to rate the book.

Daljit says

I was curious to read this book after reading Chanakya's Chant by Ashwin Sanghi. However, this book disappointed me.

Ashwin seems to show off his knowledge and research throughout the book. Sure he has done tremendous research on religions and has good knowledge about the subject. But he lacks the skills to present it in a way that one understands it without getting confused.

Also, he takes you to different time periods from anywhere and to many levels which takes you away from the main storyline.

This was his first attempt to writing but he drastically improved in the second (Chanakya's Chant).

Alok Gunjan says

I read this book after reading chankya chant and had great expectations from it.

Boy , I was disappointed. While in chankya chant the context switch were frequent it still did justice to the story. This book on other hand had a context switch or a era change or whatever u call them every 20 words or so . This made it very difficult to keep track of actual story. Too many character with similiar names / souls added to the confusion.

However overall the story is good and has decent research behind it. It is Indian version of Da Vinci Code.

Arun Divakar says

This book and the tale contained in it builds its foundations on two best-seller ideas: Religious fanaticism that later morphed to terrorism and the idea of a religious thriller (aka Da Vinci Code). There is a lot of information in this book about world religions and secret societies and conspiracies and so on. Meant to be a jaw-dropping- revelation genre of fiction, it ends up resembling a completely muddled and bewildered child on the eve of exams.

The author tries to weave the strands of a thriller along with an exploration into the fundamentals of world religion and how establishments have twisted truths to suit their own ends. The story line jumps across timelines, continents and different epochs in humanity's growth to what it is today. To state it bluntly, this is extremely vexing while reading. It goes like this:

NY, USA 2012

....he could never have imagined that this was what happened to a lion 15 years ago.

Masai Mara Africa, 1997

The lion is a mammal which is a descendant of the cat family. Mainly a carnivore which could have derived from the sabre toothed tigers that roamed the earth eons ago.

North America, 3.5 Million Years ago

The smilodon paused over the ledge looking at the herd of mammoth below. It's eyes roved over the herd as it chose its prey...

This is exaggerating to an extent but as a whole this is how this book works. I wouldn't have qualms about such a structure of the story line if it worked for me as a reader. After the first 100-150 pages however, there are glaring gaps in how the plotline proceeds. The success of such an interleaved storyline lies on balancing the two plots but after a good start, the balances tip and the author runs all over the place trying to balance them.

The author Shawn Haigins (pseudonym for Ashwin Sanghi) is quite good in his writing and I will try out other books by him but this definitely was not my cup of tea.

I recommend this for the aficionados of the religious thriller. Provided you do not mind the time travel jumps in the story line it is an interesting read.

Riju Ganguly says

Many moons ago, there came upon these hands a book. It talked about shocking secrets, history's greatest mysteries, conspiracies, love, and redemption. Not only my humble self, but the world itself seemed to take a collective breath, and wait for the explosion to come.

It came.

It broke all records in terms of sale. Became an unbelievable bestseller rivaling the Bible and Harry Potter series. Spawned mimics too numerous to count. Gave rise to an entire armada of pretenders and would-be-usurpers.

It was "The Da Vinci Code".

Despite all the complaints that had been hurled against it over the past one and a half decade regarding its poor writing, cartoonish characters, obsession with theological semantics etc., it has remained a steady seller, due to its plot, and actually thrilling nature.

Ever since reading it, I'm sure that every Indian would have thought, "Can't we also have one, please?" India, with its rich vein of history, and as a cultural melting pot, has tremendous potential to be utilised as the source & backdrop of such thrillers, and simply cried out for the attention of writers inclined towards such stuff.

Alas, what did we get?

Christopher Doyle's moronic books.

And this PhD thesis.

This is not a book. It's a monologue offered with the help of slides and pictures, punctuated by actual historical facts, suppositions, and ridiculously OTT narrative.

God help those who have more books of this author in the to-be-read pile.

Ah! That would include me as well. Serves me right.

Meanwhile, go read the Dan Brown books. Even as trash, they are readable.

This is total crap.

Vikas Singh says

I found this book more interesting and gripping than Dan Brown's Inferno. I am making this comment because frequently Ashwin is compared to him. For a long time there has been a theory that Jesus had escaped to India after crucification and this forms the opening of this book. The book is so fast paced that i completed it in one sitting. Too many characters keep floating. However the weakest link in the book is its ending almost too abrupt.

Abhinav says

The underlying theme that resonates throughout this book is 'History repeats itself'. Or mumbo-jumbo repeats itself. Whatever.

I really don't know what to make of this book. I appreciate the amount of research Ashwin Sanghi has put into writing his first novel & that he attempted at writing the first-ever Indian theological thriller (as far as I'm aware). He dared to write a book of magnanimous scope, which he comes really close to getting it right but eventually misses the mark.

I'm not gonna even try to explain what the plot is, given there are just so many different plots, sub-plots, flashbacks, flashes from past lives & characters throughout the book. The narrative of 'The Rozabal Line' switches between centuries & continents with ease, which can be challenging yet immensely gratifying if you're able to follow the storyline. Sanghi had a genuinely good plot on his hands but I think he created far more characters & sub-plots than he himself could handle.

You first have two secret organisations battling each other behind the scenes to protect the existence of an explosive secret (with the use of explosives, in abundance) & if that wasn't enough, another secret society enters the fray which happens to be controlled by former Yale grads (no spoilers, I swear!) You can't help but laugh at how implausible & far-fetched it all is & like I said when I started reading this, there are so many moments when you wish you could throw this book at the wall in front of you.

I'm going with 2.5 to 3 stars for 'The Rozabal Line' by Ashwin Sanghi. Despite its flaws, Sanghi's debut novel does soar in parts & remains a page-turner throughout. Recommended for fans of Indian popular fiction.

P.S. If you're reading this Mr. Sanghi, please avoid the relatively excessive use of exclamation marks. I noticed the same in your latest book 'The Krishna Key' & I really shouldn't have been surprised when I noticed the same in this too. If the plot is thrilling enough, you really don't need so many of those to stir up excitement.

Anil Swarup says

Very rarely do you come across a book of fiction so well researched. This is one such book that attempts to display the "common grounding" of all the religions. The author comes up with apparently incredible intrepretation like "How many people realise that the Hindu God Krishna's mother was 'Yeshu-da', the mother of Yeshua?". He even links Christianity to Budha: "Who recalls that Buddha's wife was 'Yeshu-dhara', the wife of Yeshua?" The author very painstakingly weaves his argument through illustrations to prove common genesis of all religions: "Isn't it possible that Abraham and Brahma were on and the same person?" He demonstrates his mastery in the art of finding similar names or at least similar sounding names. In view of the complex nature of religions and the wide period (spanning ages and civilisations) that has been covered in the book, sometimes it becomes difficult for the reader to keep track of what is going on. Despite all this, it is an interesting read.

Pooja Jeevagan says

Finally I did finish it...and that's what mattered the most to me..this has been a novel which made me resolve never to buy a novel just because u liked another one from the author...Reading Chankya's Chant, and finishing Krishna Key before I could finish this one (which took me like what...7-8 months) I knew he is not a light author...he researches, and brings in a lot of history, science, mythology and all other stuff in his novel including picture clue, anagram and all...

And then of course, he is compared to Dan Brown...all respect to the author, but Dan Brown never got so tough to finish..you don't just keep bringing 200 characters in a 300 page novel...I lost count of the time zones, religions and characters you were trying to decipher...and I still don't know how the title connects to the novel...shouldn't it still be "La Sara Kali"...

Or the heck of it, how come a novel finishes on the line this one does...I don't know if there were even 25 bakes in these 345 pages I really could connect to..

No, I am no literature freak...the book might be one artistic piece, but this one, definitely isn't a piece you can love, or really connect to...not at the normal reader lever..and rest, to each, comes his own choice:)

A pretty confusing book till now...specially when I find atleast a couple of new characters being introduced in every page...it's a struggle to actually realize which names and characters u r supposed to remember for future reference n which to take on easy...

Sighs, already finished a book before completing this...and started another...hopefully I would finish this one sooner or later...if Chanakya's chant was a lil tough to track, this is tha baap of it:)

Anubhav says

I am sorry I read this book, but not for this harsh review. It is evident that the author has put in a lot of effort in writing this, his first novel. However, effort is not the criterion on which you judge whether to read a book or not.

Was it entertaining? Mildly so.

Was reading the book worth it? Certainly not.

I really regret the time, money and energy spent on reading this book. For various reasons. Firstly, it was like a telephone directory. Too many characters with hardly any plot. By the second half, you are left wondering who's who.

Secondly it is obvious that the author believes in crap like astrology, past life regression etc. I don't mind if such pseudo-sciences are contained in a story, just like they are practised by some people in the real world. My problem is with the important role these play in the plot of this novel. For instance, an astrologer reveals a crucial piece of information to a character without which the plot couldn't have progressed further. This seems like lazy writing to me.

A character can recall, in some detail, instances of past lives. That's right, plural! I mean, how much disbelief, we, as readers, are supposed to suspend? There's a limit to everything but apparently not to the boredom which accompanied this reading experience.

Why did I finish it? because I had hopes that at some point the story will justify its existence. Alas, that moment never came.

My recommendation - Don't touch this book with a 10-feet pole.

Manikanta Avinash says

This is one of the best novels I have ever read and I am proud that it was written by an Indian. Its definitely way better than Da Vinci Code(maybe I am partial to him as he is an Indian). He is India's answer to people

who think CB is the face of Indian writing. Though his narration looks a bit similar to Dan Brown's, the way he handled the story is highly commendable. He almost convinces you on everything he tries to say though I feel he went a bit overboard in driving the point(but I am definetely not complaining!). You can't deny but get convinced about the origin of several religions after reading his book.

I liked the way he gave detailed references to all his research at the end of the book(the same thing I didn't like in Chanakya's Chant). The only complaint I have is his over enthusiasm to drive home the theory of Karma and Re-birth and also the ending was too much to take. After so many interesting theories, the ending looked just too hypothetical. I can understand his need to make it look like what he did.

But I am more than happy at such a great and successful attempt by an Indian. I rate it better than the other more famous recent Indian phenomenon 'The Shiva Trilogy'. A must-read for everyone to understand history(I am not saying religion) better.

Hats-off to Ashwin Sanghi....

Faraaz Kazi says

The Rozabal line, a brilliant conspiracy thriller was formerly a self-published book by Shawn Higgins aka Ashwin Sanghi (he used the pseudonym to connect with the foreign audience). Just goes to see, how many good books don't see the light of publication but this was just a temporary problem for the author. Seeing its success, it was introduced in India by Tata's Westland publishers and I swear, it hasn't disappointed anyone. The book at times might seem too factual but let's give it to the author for creating fiction out of facts. For a moment, it takes you back to Dan Brown's 'Da Vinci Code' but as the story goes on, you realize there is more in it than the Jesus gene code. The starting and ending thought of the reader ultimately crosses at the epicenter-The Rozabal tomb in Kashmir which is said to contain the body of Jesus, thus addressing the highly debatable topic of Jesus settling down in India. Since the time the novel has come out, there has been a sudden surge of visitors to Kashmir, as reported by media.

The book deals with Jesus' union with Mary Magadalene and their relationship. The book also seems to move towards St. Thomas, one of the twelve apostles who is said to have come to Kerala to preach religion. The book steps on a controversial nerve by keeping the reader engrossed with the query of whether Jesus really died on the cross or did he survive and was taken away to safety by Essene monks. And apart from this central theme, you then have a group of thirteen Jihadis training under a terror outfit bent on destructing the world. Then there is a secret organization, a dangerous society by the name of Crux Decussata Permuta which seems to be assisting the terror outfit. There is the involvement of the American government and the ISI and a dangerous assassin. Apart from this, there are some quite graphic scenes which can make you shut the book for an instant.

This is historical cum mythological fiction at its best and handles quite a few religious issues and even has past-life regression therapy as a bonus. You should give credit to the author on how he has integrated the ancient past and the modern day world while moving towards an imperceptible future. You can just stare in disbelief at the amount of research the author seems to have undertaken and to provide references to the reader, Sanghi has gone ahead and provided web links and references of his sources. The book has a lot of drama, and picks up pace at times and drops to a steady walk during the rest. Yet, it manages to keep you hooked onto your seat. The author doesn't waste much time in vague descriptions and complex character plottings but seems to get down straight to business. Also, the easy narrative in small parts seems to give the

reader space to breathe, especially when it deals with so much of an information overload. So, in that way the book might seem too factual but I think, the author has handled it well and above all, he's maintained that the book is a work of fiction. Ah, what can I say more about this wonderful book? Difficult to read it at one go, though you'll be tempted to (you'll know the reason when you pick up a copy). I give it a 4.2/5!!!

Samrat says

The Rozabal Line by Ashwin Sanghi

My rating: 2 of 5 stars

Seems the author is hell bent on proving the same thing in all his books that all religions originated from India and India is the cradle of civilization. A wafer thin plot submerged between verses lifted from some journals and the writer's own version of religion. For a guy who chose the pseudonym Shawn Haigins for this book, its ironical that he refers to Hinduism and India as the source from which all religions have originated. The most incredulous point was assuming Mary Magdhalene was a high priestess of Magadha!! Why the name Mary then instead of a hindu name? What crap!!

What will the next novel be about?On the way to office drove past a sign called China Bazaar.Maybe thinking like Ashwin Sanghi,China can be scrambled and written as hania-which in some obscure language means hun.lol.So the huns originated from China.Then a parchment found in 500bc says some Indians migrated to china during that time.So huns descended from India.Omg..Seems I can also write a novel on that point.

After reading that book, I am cross with myself for ordering the chanakya chant also. I am wondering what secrets the book holds. Hoping that Alexander and Chandragupta Maurya are not one and the same. LOL.

View all my reviews

Vaiibhav Nigam says

The Rozabal Line, an Indian version of Da Vinci Code, starts very well and binds the reader for the first couple of chapters. It then takes a very large number of incidents spread across space and time and knits them into a good storyline to set up a climax that could do Ludlum or Dan Brown proud. The plot is intricate and unpredictable, though not entirely new. Dan Brown's influence is evident, as is the author's interest in world history.

Ashwin Sanghi has taken up the creative liberty of using various religious facts in order to whip up an epic fictional thriller. He speculates that Jesus Christ survived the crucifixion and spent his missing years in India and that the men searching for Jesus were Buddhist Monks who were searching for the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. He mentions that the lost tribes of Israel may have settled in Kashmir. He also introduces St. Thomas as one of Jesus's closest friends and Mary Magdalene as a woman from the ancient Mauryan Empire headed by Ashoka. Sanghi's hypothesis goes on to establish that Jesus's descendants are today's Kashmiri Islamists. The author draws some similar lines between the fate of a group of terrorists and that of Jesus and

his 12 apostles. The book traces the roots of various religions and states that all their origins are closely knit. There are some great parts in the book where it is superior to 'The Da Vinci Code'. But the final parts, for me, ruined all those efforts.

You won't find any groundbreaking twists for the story but it was a great read.

Qube says

The Rozabal Line is Ashwin Sanghi's first novel, which he published under a pseudonym (Shawn Haigins) with Lulu Press, a self publishing firm. It was later published by Westland.

The Rozabal Line, an Indian version of Da Vinci Code, starts very well, and binds the reader for the first couple of chapters. It then takes a very large number of incidents spread across space and time, and knits them into a good storyline to set up a climax that could do Ludlum or Dan Brown proud. The plot is intricate and unpredictable, though not entirely new. Dan Brown's influence is evident, as is the author's interest in world history.

The plot is good and expansive, the characters are good and so is the setting. It is only the writing style that detracts from an otherwise excellent novel. The entire book is a series of extra-short scenes and snippets, some that are only a short paragraph. The constant flitting from place to place and across time makes reading tiresome and the flow jerky after a few chapters. The author's penchant for darting all over the place is also evident in his second novel, *Chanakya's Chant*, but to a lesser degree.

Despite the annoying style, I liked *The Rozabal Line* more than *Chanakya's Chant*. The incidents in this book are more credible that in *Chanakya's Chant*. I was pleased to find it available as an eBook on Amazon for Rs 58, when the physical book was priced at Rs 176 in Flipkart. I grabbed it.

A recommended read for Indian readers who will perhaps relate more to it than to Da Vinci Code. There is more exposition than is usually tolerated by western readers. As an Indian reader, I found the treatment of karma and rebirth a little bizarre.

Overall, one of the better popular fiction book coming out of India.

Overall Rating: 2.5 / 5

Sub-ratings: Setting (3); Story (3); Characters (3); Writing (2)

Muddle head says

Two and a half stars!

Can't help but compare it with Da Vinci Code. It's got a similar concept, about Jesus being a flesh n blood human and his subsequent marriage with Mary Magdalene and their lineage. That's where the similarity stops. Ashwin talks a lot of the Indian connection to Jesus and Mary, their roots in Buddhism and the links across various avatars of Gods across diff religions, all tied together by the philosophy of Karma, re-birth etc.

This book, has a feeble plot, feeble bcoz it's been dissected and the pieces flung far away from each other, so far that it makes u wonder if u r reading 2 interleaved stories. The writing follows a journal kind of style, where in the setting changes every half a page. It's very irritating as we couldn't concentrate on what the author is actually trying to convey. Because of the same reason, the central plot of the novel, that of a terrorist named Ghalib planning a nuclear holocaust along with his 12 disciples, is also weakened.

The twists in the story regarding Illuminati and the fight for power between Illuminati and the Church and the final triumph of the sacred feminine, though it's all very interesting, sadly, all of this takes place within just a span of 50-100 pages at the end of the book! Hope there had been more of that!

Manu says

I have quite a bit of interest in Hindu mythology, so I had a bias going in. It would be fair to say that it also gave me the patience to sit through the back stories that constantly intersperse the narrative.

The thing I admire most about this book is the painstaking research that the author seems to have done. (all references have been diligently acknowledged) I've read books that require research and mix fact and fiction (eg.Michener), but in this case, the research is across cultures and religions in one plane, and across time, in another. When you combine that with the requirement of having a story that should flow in concert, is when you realise the work that has gone in.

The other thing I could identify with was the author's love of anagrams and wordplay. He has put it to excellent use, when dealing with the names of gods and drawing connections between cultures.

Though the primary plot of the book revolves around what happened to Jesus after crucifixion, his bloodline and the modern repercussions including religious terrorism, it is also about the parallel themes and recurring phenomena in modern religions. (The part of Jesus-like characters in earlier religions is fascinating)

Its a superlative read, the only possible drawback being the heaviness of the content, not just in terms of historical trackbacks and comparative religion - conversations, but the twists and turns in the contemporary story itself.

Riku Sayuj says

Bit weak on story but engaging at times...