

Business Standard

The storyteller in Karan Singh

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Do you know politician-scholar Karan Singh's first book was a work of fiction written over 30 years ago about a spiritual quest in pre-militancy Kashmir and was even made into a television serial?

"The Mountain of Shiva" remains the 85-year-old Congressman and Rajya Sabha MP's one and only novel written till date and is being brought out again.

"I wanted to revisit the novel with an epilogue," says Singh, the heir apparent to the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir at the time of independence.

And Delhi-based Palimpsest Publishers is coming out with the new version of the novel which is described by bestselling author Amish Tripathi as an appealing narrative.

"Deep philosophies, intense wisdom and lovely descriptions of Kashmir are combined into this appealing narrative. Do read it," writes Amish in the book's blurb.

According to Singh, "The Mountain of Shiva" is a novel with a spiritual quest. Through an engaging story of friendship, love and misunderstandings between the three principle characters, Singh takes the readers on an exhilarating journey to the snow-clad peaks of the Kashmir Valley and deeper layers of philosophy. Guided by the presence of a guru, the main protagonist Ashok discovers true wisdom and the path to Lord Shiva.

"The book brings in certain philosophical concepts. It is basically based on the broad Vedanta philosophy," Singh told PTI.

Also as there was no militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, there is no mention of it in the book.

Singh, awarded Padma Vibhushan in 2005, also hopes that a film is made based on his novel.

"Decades ago, my novel was made into a seven-part television serial by Suresh Kohli. Hope Bollywood shows some interest in the book," he says. He, however, has no plans to write another novel.

"I am not a fiction writer. I write non-fiction, on a variety of subjects. Also, any fictional work about Kashmir written now has to revolve around militancy, violence and destruction. That is not my cup of tea," he says.

For Singh, spirituality is very important in today's context.

"Fundamentalism is creating a real threat to human civilisation. There a universal articulation of religion is important. Religion is also not something you can snuff out. However, if the approach is cruelty, hatred and violence, that is a total disaster," he says.

He feels accepting that there are multiple paths to the divine is the key.