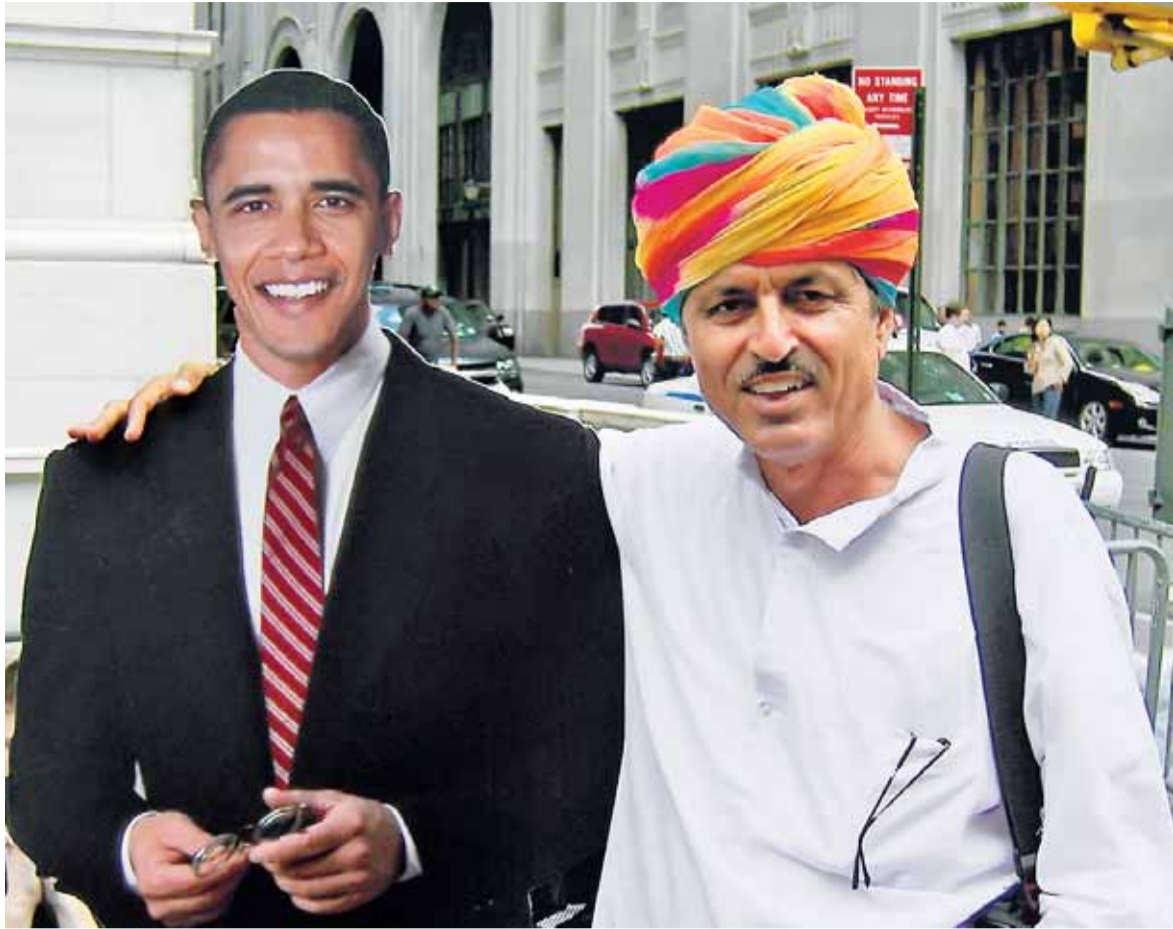




A book is a gift you can open again and again — Garrison Keillor



Ratnu outside the Democratic Party's Convention hall at Denver from where Obama was nominated as presidential 'candidate. Author presenting a copy to President Pratibha Patil.



A PRESIDENT & A FATHER...

Now, bestselling author Obama pens kids' book

Obama's 40-page book will have a first printing of 500,000 copies



New York: Coming two weeks after November elections in the US, a book from US president Barack Obama for some of the nation's non-voters: Inspirational stories for children about American pioneers.

Of *The I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters* is a tribute to 13 groundbreaking Americans, from the first president, George Washington, to baseball great Jackie Robinson to artist Georgia O'Keeffe. It will be released November 16 by Alfred A Knopf Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Random House Children's Books, which will officially announce the new work on Tuesday. Knopf declined to identify the other 10 subjects.

Obama is not the first US president to write for young people. Jimmy Carter's *The Little Baby Snoogle-Fleejer* was published in 1995, more than a decade after he left office. More in line with Obama's effort, Theodore Roosevelt collaborated with Henry Cabot Lodge on *Hero Tales from American History*, released in 1895, before Roosevelt was president.

Obama's book is illustrated by Loren Long, whose many credits include Watty Piper's classic *The Little Engine That Could*. His cover design for *Of The I Sing* is a sunny impression of presidential daughters Sasha and Malia Obama walking their dog, Bo, along a grassy field. "It is an honour to publish this extraordinary book, which is an inspiring marriage of words and images, history and story," said Gibson.

Obama's 40-page book will have a first printing of 500,000 copies and a list price of \$17.99. Both of Obama's previous works, the memoir *Dreams From My Father* and the policy book *The Audacity of Hope*, are million-sellers published by Crown, a division of Random House Inc. Obama will donate proceeds to "a scholarship fund for the children of fallen and disabled soldiers serving our nation." Obama agreed with Random House in 2004 to write a children's book, which, according to the publisher, he completed before he became president.

Of The I Sing is part of a \$1.9 million, three-book deal with Random House reached in 2004, according to a disclosure report filed in 2005, when Obama was a US senator from Illinois. The other two books were non-fiction. —AP

Did Inder Dan Ratnu pen OBAMA'S VICTORY?

Devika Chaturvedi

Ratnu's book, which questions this singularity, was released by Morari Bapu in 2004 at a Delhi Ramkatha. It included characters Beverly Hilton which is modeled on Hillary Clinton and Charak Sudama on Barack Obama. The book had two long speeches, 'Anti War' and 'Change', which he claims Barack Obama used in his campaign, and which took him to victory in the election by an unprecedented margin of votes.

"Not only that, Obama issued a major foreign policy statement that he would negotiate with Iran, Syria and North Korea, "without any pre-conditions" — words that sprang directly from the biggest highlighted portion of the speech of the African American man portrayed in the book," says Ratnu.

A copy of this book was sent to Obama, as Ratnu claims, along with a covering letter, and he showed this correspondent the receipt of the registered post as a proof of the dispatch. It was sent to Obama at the beginning of his campaign. A copy of the book was also sent to Hillary Clinton, says Ratnu, but it was ignored by Hillary's office.

Meanwhile, Ratnu feels that the Barack Obama team incorporated the 'Anti War' and 'Change' messages from Charak Sudama into their own campaign without giving due credit to their creator.

"Obama picked up many other points from the book and used them in the campaign, which anyone can find through proper research of his speeches and that of the contents of the book." Ratnu has been passive in his reaction to the use of his book by Obama, while any American writer would have raised hell and demanded heavy compensation for the infringement of his/her intellectual property rights.

Obama or his team might have thought that an Indian author back in India would have neither the calibre nor the will to 'detect' such misuse, but Ratnu has listed close to 20 evidences on his website www.firstlady-president.net that he feels would prove his claim.

Ratnu is the author of four books, two on Churchill and two on current American politics. He has the honour of receiving the personal compliments of five American Presidents and four British Prime Ministers for his first book on Churchill.

Shashi Tharoor wrote an article about him back in 1997, reviewing his first book on Churchill and he also invited Ratnu to the UNO



Inder Dan Ratnu Author, First Lady President

Obama picked up many other points from the book and used them in the campaign, which anyone can find through proper research of his speeches and that of the contents of the book."

in 2004. Ratnu presented a copy of his book to Tharoor in 2004 at the UN office and also the second edition, again in 2008, at New York University while attending the latter's lecture. Tharoor is reported to have remarked about Ratnu's book, "It was too close to reality."

However, on his website, Ratnu has called Obama's action of using his book as 'an honour' extended to him by the latter. Author Ratnu, in fact appreciated and complimented the President for making such 'good use' of his humble work. He claimed it was not 'misuse' and it did not amount to 'plagiarizing.' It would have been good, though, if Obama had acknowledged the receipt of the book, says Ratnu.

Author's profile

A college graduate in agricultural science, 60-year-old Inder Dan Ratnu is a writer, poet, cartoonist, agriculturist, banker, and scientist. Born in a peasant family in a village called Barath Ka Gaon near Pokaran in Jaisalmer district of Rajasthan, he served for 23 years as an officer in the Bank of India. Brilliant and meritorious in his studies, Inder Dan Ratnu was a topper throughout his academic career. Despite his formal college education in agricultural science, his hobbies and deep interests drove him towards literature.

Ratnu has served in Gujarat at Bank of India branches in Rajkot, Bhavnagar and Palanpur from 1974 to 1977. He was also private secretary to late BK Gadhi, a minister in the cabinet of the late Rajiv Gandhi who was chief of the Gujarat Congress until he died in 2007. Now Ratnu permanently resides in Jaipur.



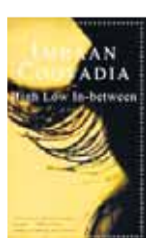
First Lady President Terraplane Publications Greenville, SC 273 pages \$17.95 US

TOP STORY

Were Obama's 2008 US Presidential campaign speeches based upon an Indian author's book written in 2003? The author feels that the Barack Obama team incorporated the 'Anti War' and 'Change' messages from Charak Sudama into their own campaign without giving due credit to their creator

All that ails the rainbow nation

Sanjay Siphahimalani



High Low In-between Imraan Coovadia HarperCollins 268 pages Rs299

The shenanigans around treating the AIDS virus, the lingering effects of racism, corruption in high places, illegal organ donations: this is the current state of South Africa highlighted in the new novel by Imraan Coovadia, in which he takes aim at a spectrum of social ills.

High Low In-between introduces us to Nafisa, India-trained doctor, who is dealing with the fallout of her husband Arif's mysterious death. Arif, an immunologist critical of the South African regime, has just undergone a kidney transplant and been discovered with a fatal bullet wound and a gun by his bed. Their son, Shakeer, a US-based photographer, also arrives in Durban and try to find the reasons behind the murder.

There's a cast of characters representing the rainbow nation — among them, the beautiful Estella, Nafisa's domestic help; Nawaz, her brother and itinerant clothes

salesman; Jadwat, Arif's close friend; Leila, Shakeer's former crush; and Govin, once Arif's favourite pupil and now a respected surgeon in his own right. Interleaved with this are descriptions of the petty crime, rough traffic and black marketing that char-

The well-off in Durban are compared to the character in Spielberg's *The Terminal*, drifting hermetically from one retail outlet to another

acterises the world they live in.

Though all of this would seem to suggest that Coovadia has selected the right ingredients, it's in their preparation that the novel is found wanting. For a start, the motivations of Nafisa and Shakeer are explained in great detail on virtually every page, which comes across as pedantic more than

anything else. The prose, too, progresses in a staccato rhythm that leaves no room for variation. Occasionally, the book can be mystifying — such as when Nafisa muses, "Between her and Jadwat, there was Jadwat". At other times, it drops down to clichés: "People were dying like flies". These flaws notwithstanding, there are moments when Coovadia does offer insights into "the continent's wells of self-pity and self-deception", as he tellingly puts it. Doctors who ought to know better, for instance, remain in denial about the seriousness of the AIDS epidemic, and the lives of the well-off in Durban are compared to the character in Spielberg's *The Terminal*, drifting hermetically from one retail outlet to another.

The murder mystery, such as it is, sputters along without too much narrative underpinning and the denouement is tepid. *High Low In-between*, then, is another example of the fact that the best of intentions and material do not a compelling novel make.

Steele yourself for this

Rupa Gulab



Secrets And Sins Aishree Misra HarperCollins 387 pages Rs299

The moment I received a review copy of this book I hastily covered it with a sheet of newspaper. Call me a snob, but I wouldn't be caught dead with a book called *Secrets And Sins*. Fortunately, the book is not trashy like the title — it's rather readable because Misra is a good story teller.

If all the characters in *Secrets And Sins* were on Facebook, their relationship status would probably be, 'It's complicated'. Three marriages are covered, and infidelity runs through all. Now for the main plot: a beautiful, gregarious British Indian has a fling with a handsome, shy, Mumbai boy at Leeds University — she dumps him for a white lad because culturally she has more in common with him. Many years later, the heroine becomes a prize-winning author, and the hero a Bollywood superstar. Both are in less than happy marriages and think about each other frequently. Then Fate, who evidently is tired of all this pointless

ping, decides to throw them together at the Cannes Film Festival. Sparks fly and there are consequences to be dealt with.

The book is a page turner, but there are a few irritants: While the concept is meaty, the treatment is superficial. There are too many happy coincidences. And no electrifying confrontations at all because Misra plays benevolent god — her wayward characters are let off very lightly indeed. Not astonishing, perhaps, because in the acknowledgements page, Misra has thanked her publishers for treating her like "a potential Danielle Steele" — ah, so that's where she's headed! And now for a spot of knuckle-rapping on the style: Misra is so sincere about creating a credible British born and bred heroine that she goes completely overboard with the Brit slang bit. What makes it all the more incongruous is that her sentence constructions are of the "Having being" school of Indian English.

Die-hard Bollywood and Steele fans will surely enjoy it on a rainy day.