



AINAK Dhar's first published work was when he was in class seven in Canada. He had stapled together maths solutions, with his collection of poems on the back, and sold it to his classmates at 50 cents a piece. "That day, I came home and told my mother that I had become a professional author," the MD at General Mills, and author of more than a dozen books, fondly recalls. Due to his father's government job, the Mumbai-based author travelled a lot during his childhood. "I think that had a lot to do with me relying on my own imagination. When you move so much you don't have a stable group of friends," says the author of the recently-released *03:02*, a contemporary thriller based in Mumbai.

Under attack

03:02 is set in Mumbai during a blackout—so, no working phones, television or the internet—and the world is facing a terror threat. When terrorism is a daily part of our reality today, the book seems very relevant to our times. Dhar, who had also conducted a survey on India's preparedness for terror attacks, explains that today there is a "heightened awareness and concern about this." His book deals with not only the prospect of a terror attack, but how ordinary people react when something happens. None of his protagonists are people with special skills because, as he puts it, in the event of an actual threat to our lives, "no superhero is going to come and save us. What if something happened where you didn't have a choice of changing the channel or logging off on Facebook?"

in conversation

Keeping it real

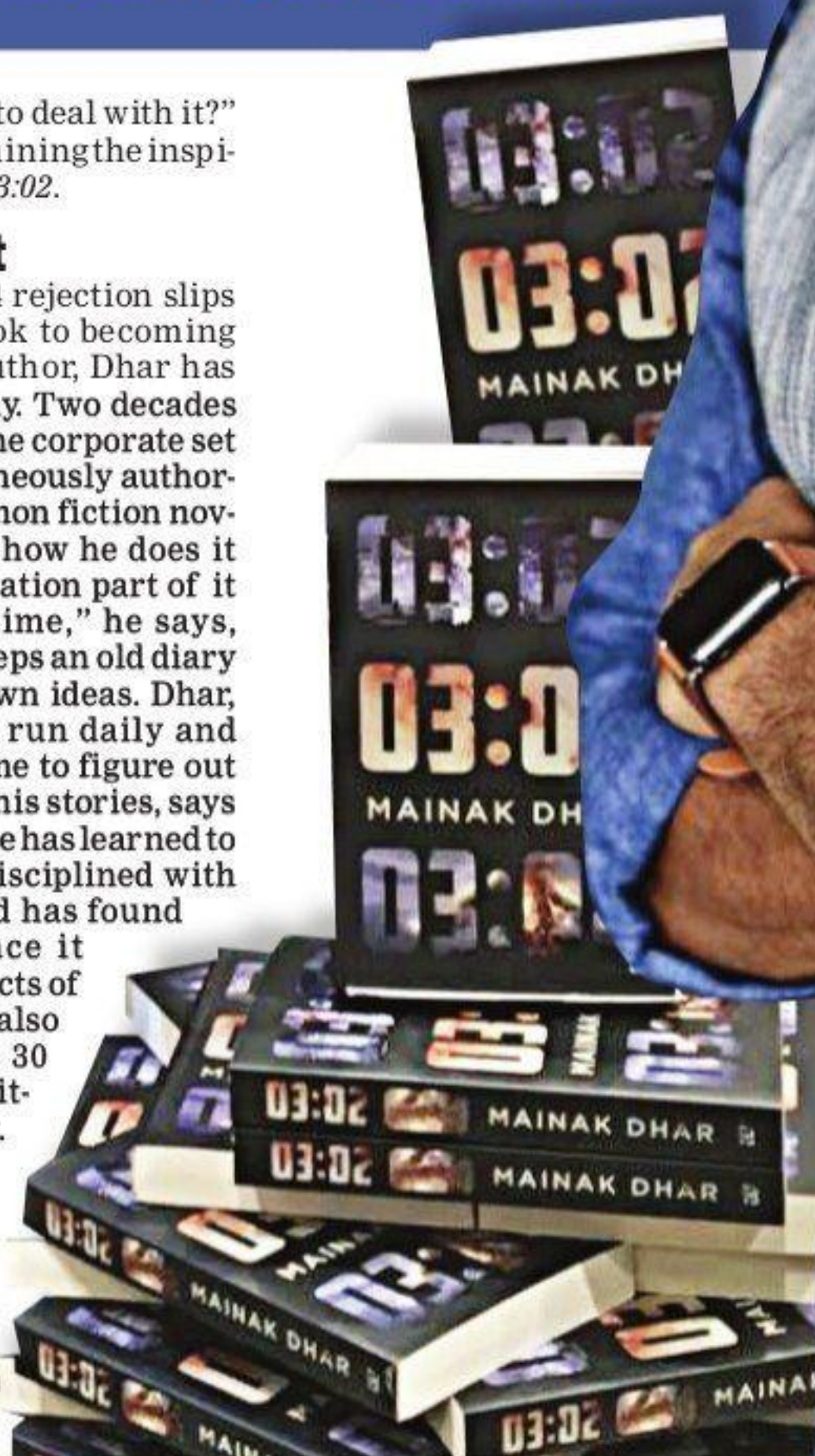
Novelist and corporate honcho Mainak Dhar on his new book and his journey as an author

Where you had to deal with it?" asks Dhar, explaining the inspiration behind *03:02*.

Juggling act

From getting 54 rejection slips for his first book to becoming a bestselling author, Dhar has come a long way. Two decades of working in the corporate set up and simultaneously authoring fiction and non-fiction novels, I ask Dhar how he does it all. "The inspiration part of it can come anytime," he says, for which he keeps an old diary handy to jot down ideas. Dhar, who goes for a run daily and devotes that time to figure out how to develop his stories, says that with time he has learned to become more disciplined with his writing and has found ways to balance it with other aspects of his busy life. He also tries to get in 30 minutes for writing every day. Available at *Higginbothams*. ₹295 Details: 28513519

—Simar Bhasin



exhibition

Red for resistance

Artist Soghra Khurasani on why her paintings are filled with passion and protest



SHE may come across as shy, even soft-spoken, but when it comes to her art, Soghra Khurasani is anything but. The Vadodara-based artist, who is exhibiting her third solo work, *Cratered Fiction*, at InKo Centre, is vociferous with her woodcut prints on paper—they are almost like emotional outbursts, depicting her frustration at how society treats personal freedom and women's rights. "Every day we see how women are being treated—the violence, the discrimination. But they do so much, they give their bodies for the next generation; we need to give them respect," says Khurasani, speaking to me from Khoj, where she is participating in an Indo-Iranian residency and experimenting with photography. "When I give expression to my thoughts, the way I handle my tools is quite hard. And I find it easier to let it all out on wood," she says, adding it takes her over

a month to make one woodcut print.

While her first two solo projects came out in the aftermath of the Delhi rape—where she used the violence of volcanoes to portray turmoil—her latest is a more cathartic one. The craters show what happens after the "eruptions", the more silent protests and the change that can come from giving women equal voices. "I have so many colours in my studio, but I gravitate towards reds and pinks as they denote passion," says the 32-year-old, who will also be displaying her wood blocks, so people can get a better idea of how she works. Organised as part of Emerging Frame, InKo's arts-in-partnership initiative with select galleries across India, this exhibition is with Mumbai's Tarq Gallery.

From July 13 to August 16. Details: 24361224

—SPK

what's on



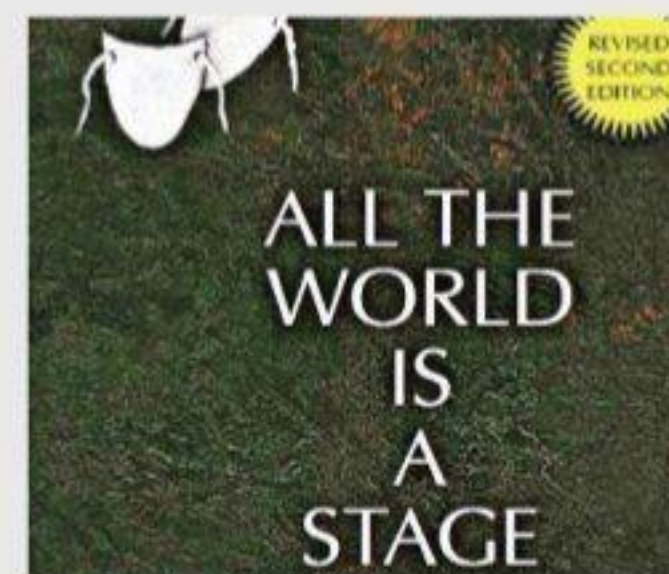
Sweet deal

Short+ Sweet South India is back with its fifth edition. Forty-seven plays, carefully filtered from over 150 scripts, will be performed at the Édouard Michelin Auditorium till July 31. Don't forget to catch Lalitha Dharini's *Manidha Uruvagul* (July 8-10) and *Goon* written by Pete Malicki (July 13, 15, 16 and 17). From 7 pm onwards. ₹200. Details: eventjini.com



Sound check

Head to Phoenix MarketCity to catch the Sax Duet today. The LA-Chennai duo of Basanth and Naveen has also performed with the likes of AR Rahman and the Raghu Dixit Project. End the weekend with Stevie, Ganesh, Reswin and the artists from Humphrey and the Aglets, as they perform popular rock 'n' roll numbers. Details: 30083007



New horizons

An interesting take on the importance of expression in organisational environments, T.T. Srinath brings in his experience as a sensitivity trainer to understand the importance of dramatics in opening up one's mental horizons. Grab your copy of the second edition of *All The World Is A Stage*. ₹350. At Starmark. Details: 64550262



SPY

Dakshina Chitra is holding two workshops this weekend. The two-day Macrame jewellery making session will teach you braiding techniques, while the one on Thappattam will teach you the basic beats of the folk instrument, thappu. ₹1,500 onwards. Details: 9841777779