

For the last seven years, a boy of Indian origin and Iranian blood, Anosh Irani, had been the centre of Canadian readers' interest. With his first novel "The Cripple and His Talismans" (Raincoast Books, U.K.) in 2006, followed by "The Song of Kahunsa" (publisher Anchor Canada), Anosh grabbed Canadian eyeballs. The latter got published in 13 countries and was a bestseller in Canada and Italy.

This August has proved a harbinger of good news for Anosh. The reason being that for the first time his novel is being published in India. By this third novel, "Dahanu Road", a Harper Collins release, was launched this week by dancer-choreographer Shiamak Davar at DLF Promenade Mall, Vasant Kunj. Anosh, the playwright of "Matka King", "Bombay Black" and the "My Granny the Goldfish", feels happier to be printed in India for a simple reason. "In Canada, when people would ask me how many of my writings have been printed in India, I used to feel embarrassed," he says.

Anosh's Indian connection is the essence of "Dahanu Road" too. The novel is the tale of a landowning Iranian clan and the Warlis, a local tribe. Zairos, a young landowner, gets the shock of his life when he sees Ganpat, a Warli tribal, committing suicide in his grandfather Shapur's farm. As Zairos gets into the matter, he finds himself falling in love with Ganpat's daughter Kusum, as also he hears some shocking revelations from Shapur about

his family.

The novel has a parallel thread of Zoroastrian history running through it in which this tale is spun. It, hence, spans three generations of the Irani clan, from 1940 to 2000.

### Flashbacks and fiction

Dahanu Road is located a few kilometres away from Mumbai, and Anosh spent his childhood days there. His father, who began as a Persian tea seller, had later owned chiku farms there. Anosh rewinds, "My grandfather used to dig holes in his farms to hide liquor bottles during Prohibition. It used to be an enticing site for me. Once when I learnt of a tribal's suicide at that farm, I connected the two to tell a story but it is not autobiographical. I wanted to tell people about Zoroastrian history, culture and glory. I don't know what will happen to such a small community in a few years from now. I felt it was my duty to document some of its fables and legends through my book," he says pensively.

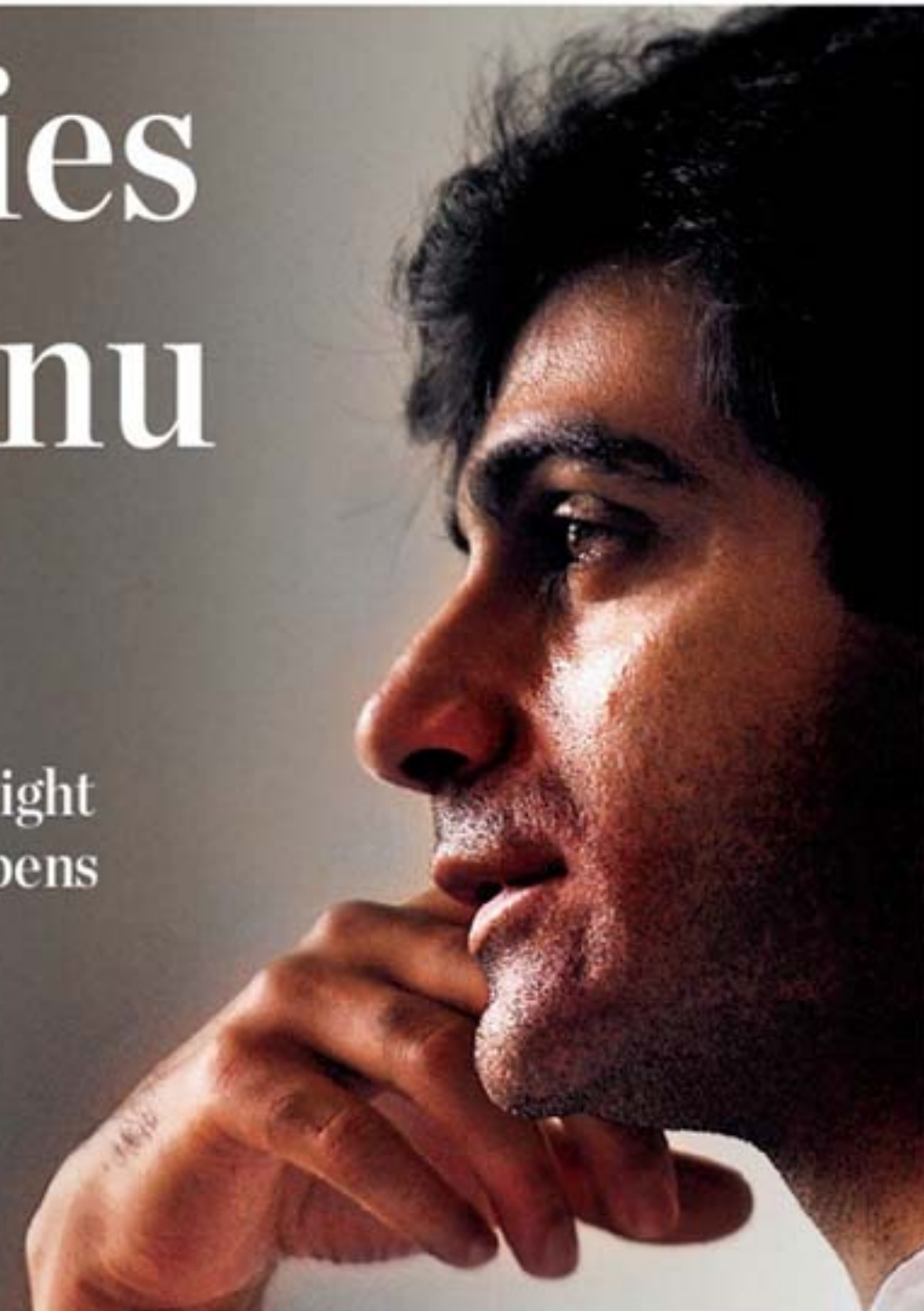
To make the tragic love story less bleak, Anosh treats it with liberal doses of "Iranian humour" defined through crisp one-liners.

Anosh, formerly an adman, migrated to Vancouver in 1998 to pursue a degree in creative writing. "I had to surrender my Indian passport to become a Canadian citizen, which is so strange. I feared the 'loss' and 'rejection' in an alien country. There was a sense of rootlessness there. I don't become a foreigner if I live in any other country,

# Memories of Dahanu Road

**BOOKMARK** Author-playwright Anosh Irani's third book opens to a massive response.

**RANA SIDDIQUI ZAMAN** speaks to him



**DEEP-ROOTED** After several bestsellers in Canada, Anosh Irani's new book becomes his first one to be published in India **PHOTO: RAJEEV BHATT**

do I? I draw my sustenance from India; all my writings have an Indian soul. But, thankfully, the government and the Canadian Arts Council sponsored me partially when it came to stage plays or writ-

ing a book," says an emotionally charged Anosh. Anosh managed his funds by working in a theatre company and a book store. Today he is a known name there. But his heart stays in India. "India is a catalyst,

Canada a canvas. I come back to draw my sustenance every year. I love India with its shortcomings. If I die sitting in an Indian auto, it will be worth it," Anosh signs off, smiling.