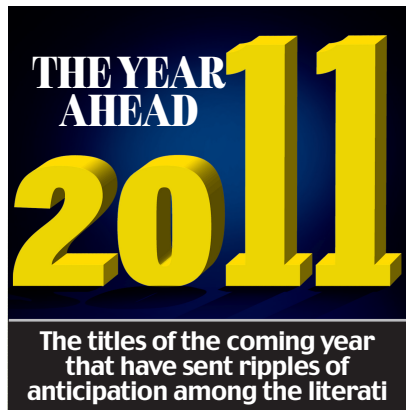
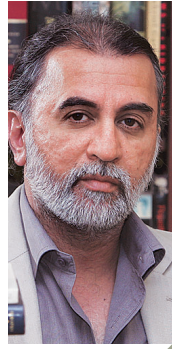


BOOKS & IDEAS



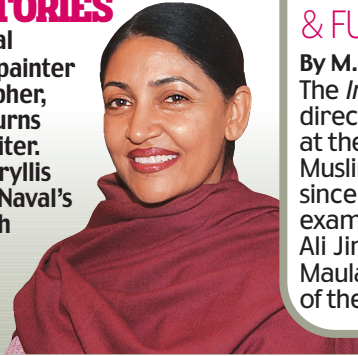
THE VILLAGE OF MASKS

By Tarun Tejpal
In an examination of the pathologies of power, purity and dogma, *Tehelka* editor Tarun J. Tejpal hits out at right-wing politics. The book is all about political power gone badly wrong.



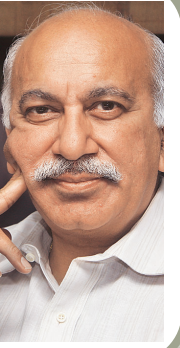
THE PIANO TUNER & OTHER STORIES

By Deepti Naval
Actress, poet, painter and photographer, Deepti Naval turns short story writer. Publisher Amaryllis promises that Naval's stories are both 'evocative and sensitive, like the writer herself'.



TINDERBOX: THE PAST & FUTURE OF PAKISTAN

By M.J. Akbar
The *India Today* editorial director takes a close look at the history of the Indian Muslim political movements since the 19th century, and examines why Mohammad Ali Jinnah lost out to Maulana Maududi, founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami.



The new writers to watch out for in the new year

An unconventional cast of authors with riveting personal stories are set to make their debuts

By Neha Tara Mehta

AFTER the humiliation of 25 rejection slips from publishers over two decades and a near nervous breakdown, Anees Salim, the 41-year-old creative director of FCB Ulka, Cochin, will run a victory lap in 2011. Not one, but three of his novels will be out next year — *Tales from a Vending Machine* (Harper Collins India), on an arrogant 20-year-old, America-hating Bin Laden fan, Hasina Mansoor; *The Vicks Mango Tree*, set amid the Emergency, and *The Blind Lady's Descendants* (Amaryllis) written as a suicide note.

For Salim, a school dropout who suffered from an acute lack of confidence throughout his growing up years, this is as good as it gets. "I didn't write all the three books together," he clarifies. "Like many debut authors, I was corrupted by the Arundhati Roy-syndrome and kept waiting for an agent to land from London with a big offer," he says. In his desperation, Salim wrote to agents in the UK and US as Hasina Mansoor, the protagonist of *Tales from a Vending Machine*, and sent the draft of the novel as an "autobiography."

While Salim awaits his moments under the sun in 2011, several other debut authors are also gearing up to see bookshelves lined with their books in the new year. Many of them have been luckier than Salim, landing their first book deals before hitting 30.

Take Judy Balan, who, at 29, is being billed as the next Anuja Chauhan/Advaita Kala. Her commercial fiction title is one of Westland's coups for the year ahead. A Chennai-based ad professional and single mom, Balan played her cards better than Salim. "I started blogging six years ago hoping I would be spotted by editors," says the soon-to-be debut author, whose blog, *quipsovercoffee.blogspot.com* reads, "I Bullshit, Therefore I am".

Balan's irreverent and self-deprecatory posts made it to a theatre

act in Chennai earlier this year. Her confidence sufficiently bolstered, she emailed a book proposal to Westland. No foreign agents as go-betweens. Not only did Balan get published in Westland's *Chicken Soup* series, but she also landed herself the contract to write one of its biggest titles for 2011.

Other debutantes have tapped their professional experience to write promising fiction titles. Kanika Dhillon, an Amritsar-born St Stephen's-London School of Economics alumnus whose sheer love for films had her homing into a career

at Red Chillies Entertainment, will be out with *Bombay Duck is a Fish* next year (Westland). Like her, the protagonist is a small-town girl, who decides to ditch a potentially successful job with an MNC to pursue her dream of becoming a filmmaker in Bollywood.

"The filming experience for *Om Shanti Om* was full of so many realisations. I got to see up close the life of the crew which is at the fringe of frame. That's where my writer's brain kicked in," says Dhillon, 28, who is now co-scripting *RaOne*.

It's quite the same story for

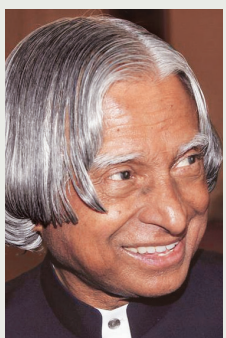
Naomi Datta, 34, a freelance TV producer whose Random House India book, *6 pm Slot*, was inspired by her decade-long career in the media. Ditto for Arjun Rao, a 28-year-old history teacher at The Doon School, whose forthcoming Hachette book draws a leaf out of his boarding school years at The Lawrence School and his seven-year-old teaching career at Doon. "I have fairly strong ideas for a sequel," says Rao.

The year ahead promises to be a launchpad for many an aspiring writer.



(Clockwise from above): Kanika Dhillon creates an SRK-like character in her novel; Doon School teacher-novelist Arjun Rao; Anees Salim, who will see three releases in 2011; Rakesh Satyal, whose *Blue Boy* will see an India launch; Judy Balan, billed as the next Anuja Chauhan

YECHURY TO LEAD ROLLOUT OF POLITICAL WRITERS



Abdul Kalam (above, left), Yechury and Manvendra Singh (far right)

■ The Office of Profit Bill and the controversial Bihar assembly dissolution of 2005 will be some of the controversial chapters of Indian political life that will find their way to former president A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's autobiography for HarperCollins India, out in 2011. The publishers are understandably excited. "His *Wings of Fire* was a phenomenal bestseller, and we expect his autobiography to be as successful," says Krishan Chopra, chief editor and publisher, non-fiction, HarperCollins India.

■ The "moral and intellectual integrity of C. Rajagopalachari", led Darjeeling MP Jaswant Singh to follow

up his 2009 book on Jinnah with one on India's last governor general in 2011. C. Rajagopalachari: A Life, an Amaryllis title, grew out of Singh's research on Jinnah, which led the BJP leader to plumb, among other sources, volumes of *Satyam Eva Jayate*, a collection of Rajagopalachari's weekly writings on politics and governance.

■ Perhaps inspired by his father, Barmer MP Manvendra Singh has also been busy writing,

though his publishers, Penguin, are tight-lipped about just what his forthcoming book, *Campaign Diary* is all about.

■ Another politician whose work will be eagerly watched in 2011 is CPI(M) leader Sitaram Yechury, who will dwell on the India that does not shine in *The Other Side of India*. "The book, which is still being written, will address the basic issues that affect the vast part of the country's population — like shelter, income and medical care," says Chopra of HarperCollins India.

