

Review: *Turbulence*

Indian superhero novel claims shelf space in U.S. bookstores

IN HIS U.S. DEBUT, Indian author Samit Basu takes on the challenge of the modern superhero story. Set primarily in India, *Turbulence* is the author's first novel that is set in his native country.

Basu is a well-known novelist in India. His books, including *The Gameworld Trilogy* and *Terror on the Titanic* were best-selling works in his homeland. *Turbulence* marks the author's first novel to be released in the United Kingdom, where the story is partially set and where the book has gained popularity. Now the book is being released in the United States. The story follows characters onboard an airplane from the United Kingdom to Mumbai, India. On the flight, the passengers are gifted with superhuman abilities, each individual's ability reflecting the deepest desire of that person.

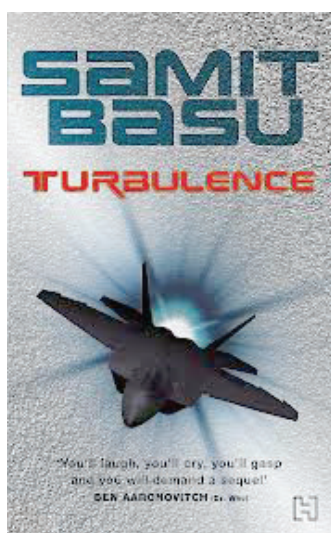
An Indian Air Force pilot now has the gift of physical flight and heroic strength, and an overwhelmed mother can create multiple forms of herself and is able to manifest in many places at one time. Other talents include the power to connect to and penetrate all private information on the Internet, incredible journalistic instincts and the ability to control a mob.

"The goal was to make a crystallized representation of what people would be like if they could really change things," Basu says.

Of course, not all the recently endowed superhumans desire to use their powers for good. Another member of the Indian Air Force is determined to use his powers as the ultimate super soldier to defeat India's enemies and take control of the military.

The challenge of maintaining morality with X-Men-esque abilities while trying to save the world leads the characters on a fast-paced adventure of twists, betrayals and super-people showdowns.

Basu thinks a superhero is the most applicable form of fantasy in a modern setting. He felt he could illustrate this



TURBULENCE

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best by setting the novel in places he is familiar with, such as India and the United Kingdom. The author studied broadcasting and filmmaking in London. "I wanted to superimpose characters on places that I had been," Basu says.

For Basu, a superhero novel told from an Indian perspective and initially for an Indian audience was a clean slate because the fantasy genre is virtually unknown in India. By the same token, comic books are not a popular form of entertainment in Indian culture. His first exposure to them wasn't until his early 20s in England.

The fantasy writer says he is happy to have his work cross over into the states this month. The superhero story is an American genre, he says, but his novel does not feature Americans or the U.S.

"It is amazing to practice an American art form without America in it," Basu says.

+ ANDREW HAZZARD

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