

**GOLD RUSH**  
WHY INDIANS KEEP BUYING IT

**JAFFNA**  
OLD GRAVE, NEW SKELETONS

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NOVEMBER 2, 2025

# THE WEEK

**THE ASCETIC IN ART**  
HOW ARTISTS PAINTED  
INDIAN SAGES



## HOW KEN FOLLETT MAKES HISTORY

The bestselling author on completing  
50 years as a master storyteller and on his  
new novel about Stonehenge

**EXCLUSIVE  
INTERVIEW**

**On James Bond,  
R.K. Narayan, and why he  
is nervous about writing  
a story set in India**

# THE BISHOP OF ROMP

Spy thrillers, cathedrals, champagne and politics—how Ken Follett, with his ambition and imagination, has been rebuilding history for the past 50 years

BY NAVIN J. ANTONY

**A**pril 15, 2019. An evening in Paris. A Monday mass is underway at the Notre Dame, the cathedral church of the Catholic Archdiocese of Paris. Surrounding the majestic Gothic edifice are scaffoldings; on the ground below lie cigarette butts—workers are in the midst of a major restoration. Inside the limestone walls, the fragrant smoke of incense permeates the cathedral's spacious nave and aisles, curling up towards the high, vaulted stone ceiling.

A fire alarm goes off. There are no sprinklers on the cathedral's centuries-old ceilings, but only an elaborate system of perforated tubes that draw in air to detect smoke. In an emergency, help will have to come from outside.

A security guard, only three days into his job and working a double shift because his relief had not arrived, is despatched to investigate. He fails to detect the fire. Amid confusion, nearly half an hour passes before the flames are found.

Too late. By the time the fire brigade arrives, smoke is billowing from the cathedral. Tourists and Parisians watch in disbelief.

One of them, Yvette Cooper from Scotland, watches from the banks of the Sienne as the fire gradually engulfs the cathedral and Paris begins to weep. As the spire begins to collapse, she turns away, unable to watch. She calls a friend who lives outside London and says, "Turn on the TV."



**ENDURING LEGACY**

Ken Follett near the Notre Dame, Paris, on December 5, 2024, two days before the cathedral's official reopening

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