

# Nepal royal massacre gets 'novel' spin

Sudeshna Sarkar | TNN

**Kathmandu:** Though Bollywood's evergreen star turned director Dev Anand once wanted to make a film on the stunning royal palace massacre in Nepal that left the king, queen, crown prince and seven more members of the family dead six years ago, his closeness to the present king Gyanendra made him drop the project.

However, Nepal's national tragedy; once spoken about in hushed whispers only is now increasingly in the limelight, thanks to fiction writers who are weaving the royal carnage in their plots.

This year, a young Nepali journalist broke the prevailing taboo in the kingdom and penned a "novel" that he claims is based on actual facts.

Krishna Abiral's *Raktakunda* - meaning pool of blood - has become a bestseller with "inside" stories about the royal family that he claims were told to him by a mother-daughter duo who worked as maids for two queens. The book, unusually, triggered a reaction from the palace that denied the incidents mentioned in it as baseless and malicious.

However, there could be a more serious and better-researched book involving the killings by an American author whose earlier trilogy in Kathmandu have eerie predictions about the tragedy.

Dominic J. Cibrario came to Nepal in 1962 as an impressionistic 21-year-old with an affinity to eastern cultures, customs and languages. He stayed in Nepal for nearly two



**MURDER HE WROTE:** Birendra

years, working as a Peace Corps volunteer, teaching first in a Kathmandu orphanage and then in a school near the Indian border. The stay provided Cibrario the inspiration for his Kathmandu trilogy, three supernatural thrillers that weave into the plots customs and politics in Nepal and India.

*The Pomelo Tree*, the first of the trilogy, written in 1977 and published in 2000, has an eerie mention of a plot in the palace. "There is an attempted assassination at the royal palace, but the plot is unsuccessful," Cibrario said. "A yogi during Dasain (Nepal's biggest festival, akin to India's Dussera) predicts that that the crown prince, who is just a little boy, will assassinate the king Birendra and queen Aishwarya. This occurs while the royal family is making a public appearance at the Kumari temple."

A year after the book was published, the imaginary prediction comes true with crown prince Dipendra apparently killing his parents and seven other relatives during a dinner in the palace.

