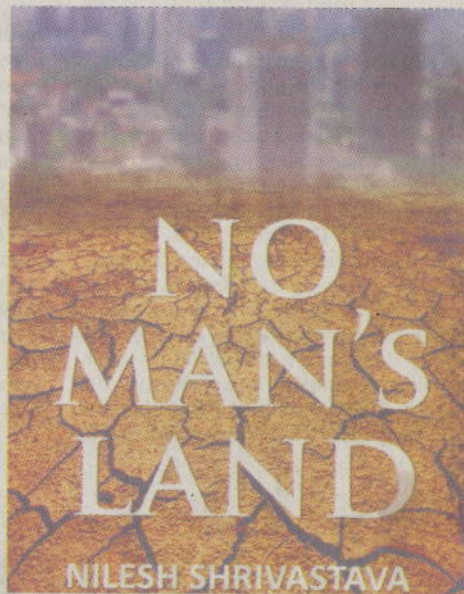


# Immortal land and mortal men

**BOOKMARK** *The second novel of Niles Shrivastava deals with the real estate development of Gurgaon and its consequent effects on human relationships*



**LUST FOR LAND** is the main theme of Niles Shrivastava's latest book, "No Man's Land"

Thousands of cine-goers go to see a film simply because it stars John Abraham. Now comes a chance to pick up a book he so warmly recommends. "This book has all the makings of a page-turner: an interesting setting, strongly-etched characters, thought-provoking writing, and a very compelling storyline," says the actor; the book in question being Niles Shrivastava's "No Man's Land" which incidentally also comes with a must-read tag from filmmaker Rensil D'Silva.

So who is this Niles Shrivastava? He is a computer engineer from Lucknow University and a degree holder from Indian Institute of Management Calcutta, who has recently brought out his second novel "No Man's Land". The story is about two step brothers, their greed for a stake in their father's agricultural land in the suburbs and a woman who divides them. The fiction is inspired by

certain characters from the world renowned "Mahabharat" and the author's observation of Gurgaon including its denizens while the area was going through its transformation from a rural to an urban landscape. Land - for which the battle of Kurukshetra was fought - is the bone of contention between the two male protagonists of Niles's work and all the others connected with them.

Niles refers to the Indian epic as "inspirational" and said that he loosely transposed a part of the plot in the contemporary setting wherein he has etched out the feelings and emotions of those who have disposed off their generations-old land to developers. The work took

him about two-and-a-half years to complete.

From his college days Niles contributed short stories and science fiction pieces to the in-house magazine and said: "Writing is a passion for me." Despite his busy professional life which entails travelling extensively, he manages to take out time to write during his stay in the hotels, flights and weekends.

The first novel "The Second Hand" was biographical with Bundelkhand forming the setting - Niles's family hails from there - and depicts the urban-rural divide among the populace. This split has been very evident in our country with mass urbanisation and migration of people from villages to

cities. The fall of Babri Masjid forms the backdrop of the novel. The author termed the response to his first work as "average" and said the tremendous encouragement he received from his family, friends and well-wishers kept him going and made him write his second novel. He described his effort at writing as a "process of improvement" and said the second novel is being well received by all.

Fond of reading both fiction and non-fiction, he counts Somerset Maugham and JRR Tolkien among his favourite authors. Done and dusted with "No Man's Land", Niles is now making time and space for a fantasy-based fiction that he is piecing through.

S. RAVI

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