



Evoking legends

*After scripting the political thriller *The Chanakya's Chant*, author Ashwin Sanghi is back with his latest book *The Krishna Key*.*

WORDS | NITIKA BAJPAYEE

Who is the real Ashwin, a writer, a philosopher, just a common man with common ideas?

I feel like an imposter. There are times when I look at passages written by me and wonder how I wrote them. I am convinced that my writing is a blessing of the almighty and I pray each day that the creative muse will continue

to support me in my endeavours. I guess what I'm trying to say is "even though I have written three books, I still find it hard to think of myself as a writer."

Throw light on your life spent in school and college.

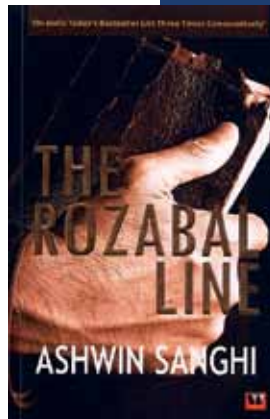
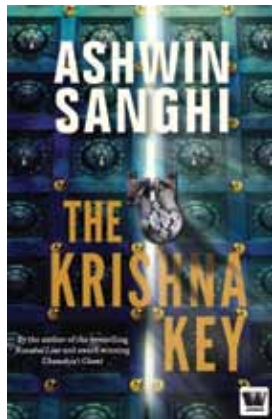
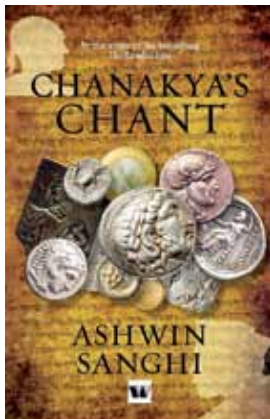
I grew up in a business family. My schooling was at Cathedral &

John Connon School in Mumbai. I attribute my love for history and the English language to my school days. I enjoyed elocution, debates and dramatics at school. I completed a BA in Economics from St. Xavier's College and followed it up with an MBA at Yale. From the very beginning my life was predestined to be

that of a businessman. By the time that I began writing my first book, *The Rozabal Line*, in 2005, I already had 20 years of business experience behind me.

What circumstances and incidents drew you towards writing?

My maternal grandfather was a voracious reader and poet who



would send me a book each week to read. At the end of the week I had to send him a one-page letter about why I liked or disliked it. Up until 2005, I had remained a voracious reader without having any idea that there was a writer lurking inside of me. In that year I visited Rozabal—a shrine in the heart of Srinagar, which carries the legend that the person buried there is none other than Jesus Christ himself. I was fascinated by the story and began reading and researching everything that I could lay my hands on. Twelve months and 57 books later I had multiple theories swimming in my head. My wife casually suggested that I should try weaving the disparate threads into a single cohesive whole and that gentle nudge got me started.



Ashwin Sanghi's latest book *The Krishna Key* released on August 24 across India

time is slipping underneath our feet. Unborn tomorrow and dead yesterday; why fret about them if today be sweet." Whenever I need a morale booster I turn to Omar Khayyam.

Your favourite authors, films, your favourite travel destination (in India and abroad) and your hobbies.

I have little time for anything besides my family. Thus I have no hobbies at all. Writing is my sole hobby. Among English films, my all-time favourites are *Godfather*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *Schindler's List* and *Elizabeth*. Among my Hindi favourites are Hrishikesh Mukherjee's *Golmaal* old *Umrao Jaan*, *Chashme Baddoor* and *Don*. My favourite travel destination in India is Mahabaleshwar—I love all hill stations actually because they inspire me to write. My favourite destination abroad is Lake District, the English countryside.

After *The Krishna Key* what next? Are you in talks with film makers who'd want to adapt *Chanakya's Chant* into a film?

The movie rights of *Chanakya's Chant* were sold by me to UTV a year ago. I also plan to revisit my unfinished manuscript, the story of which is set in post-independence India. If all goes well I hope to complete it by the end of next year. ●●

What inspired you to pen down all your books?

I find that adversity can sometimes help break the status quo of one's life and thus inspire creativity. I was going through a rough patch at work and was completely stressed out. Some individuals turn to yoga, meditation, music or golf. In my case it turned out to be storytelling. Writing fiction allows me to escape into my fantasy world. Writing is my form of prayer and meditation—an elixir.

How did you visualise the prime characters of *The Krishna Key*?

Funnily enough, Krishna is incidental in the book because 90 per cent of the story is based in the present day. Each chapter has a small flash back to the times of Krishna but the real story is driven by the protagonist—Ravi

Mohan Saini—a historian who must decipher clues to reach Krishna's secret. He must also combat a series of adversaries, both visible and invisible. I have always had a tough time viewing any given character as completely good or completely bad. Villains also have human emotions and I try to explore these along the way. I have often said that life is not black and white but shades of grey. Thus, the unprecedented success of *Fifty Shades of Grey* is not surprising.

One book that is really close to your heart and why?

It's a 1952 translation of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam by Edward Fitzgerald as it was handed down to me by my grandfather. One of my favourite verses from it is "Ah, fill the cup, what boots it to repeat; how

Author's picks

In the past decade, Dan Brown, John Grisham, Stieg Larsson, Ian Rankin were added to my list.

I enjoy reading Salman Rushdie, Ruskin Bond and R. K. Narayan.