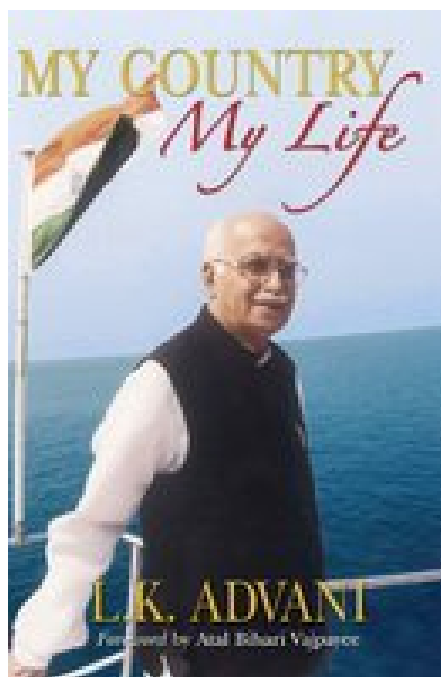




## My Country My Life

*L.K. Advani*

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# My Country My Life

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## My Country My Life L.K. Advani

My Country My Life is an autobiographical book by L. K. Advani, an Indian politician who served as the Deputy Prime Minister of India from 2002 to 2004, and was the Leader of the Opposition in the 15th Lok Sabha. The book was released on 19 March 2008 by Abdul Kalam, the eleventh President of India. The book has 1,040 pages and narrates autobiographical accounts and events in the life of Advani. It became the best seller book in the non-fiction category and Advani joined Archer as a bestseller author. The book website claims the book sold an excess of 1,000,000 copies. The book alongside mentions the event in Indian politics and India's history from 1900 till date.

## My Country My Life Details

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Author : L.K. Advani

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## From Reader Review My Country My Life for online ebook

### aditya verma says

Well written but the most crucial periods were packed with lies and half truths

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### Prayas says

Good

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### Arvind says

3.5/5. Read this book primarily to know about the rise of BJP in India and also to gain a 'right' view by the man who has been like Forrest Gump of Indian politics; Among many other imp things, i wanted to read his viewpoint on Ayodhya movement having read P.V. Narsimha Rao's earlier.

Yes, an auto-biography will be biased and a political auto-biography doubly so, but still an important book.

Also, was interesting and a very fast read. The heaviest book by physical weight i have read :)

PS:- My admiration for Guha's India after Gandhi grew even more.

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### Mansoor Azam says

this book did not live up to all the hype that surrounded it on its launch.

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### Joseph Dolphin says

Good

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### Samuel Kumar says

It was a book of man who has travelled closely in indian history since the time of independence and has seen indian growth story of democracy in close quarters. He himself has participated and contributed to the emergence of India. many of those moments of history of India being told in a perspective of his beliefs and surely a heart which panted for the emergence of India. The book reveals hearts of people who longed and saw vision for India. the post 90 era and the pangs of issues of those days and the issues that faced the BJP leadership. Excellent read !

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## Janakan Manivannan says

For all those who are interested in post independent Indian history, please check out the book “My country, My life “- An autobiography of L.K.Advani. One of the few personalities to have the ringside view of major events post 1947. Irrespective of not subscribing to his viewpoint in many issues, his struggle against the Emergency along with Jp sir and others is inspiring. Great read ?

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## Shrilatha says

found it an interesting read. my reason for picking this book was that, i didn't know much about the history of independent india - things like partition, emergency, etc. and this book certainly has been a good starting point for me. his coverage of emergency n specially the first non-congress govt, n reasons why it fell apart - is pretty good. and there is good content about the birth of the first rath yatra. and the ayodhya chapter is extremely interesting!

now, i'm no advani fanatic. and i agree the book is biased at times (i expected it to be, it's his version after all) but if u have little brains, in spite of seeing the events from his viewpoint, you can see it in your own way.

as i said, i didn't pick this book to see how good or bad advani is.. i picked it for my own education. and it certainly helped.

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## Sajith Kumar says

Lal Kishenchand Advani, more popularly known as Lal Krishna Advani is the architect that led the Bharatiya Janata Party from humble beginnings in 1980 to power in 1998. A party attaining power in a multi-party democracy is nothing new or noteworthy. Advani's real mettle lies in transforming Indian democracy that centred on the Congress in a unipolar system into a bipolar polity in line with true democratic norms. His mesmerizing leadership helped the BJP to shed its image as a communal outfit which was shunned by the so called secular parties. He was straightforward in attaining this because he didn't put the party's core ideology on the backburner at any stage. Nehru is sometimes credited with moulding Indian democracy in its infancy. In the same vein, Indian democracy must thank Advani for guiding it towards its maturity as a true two-party system. He did all the dirty work for the party while the moderates sat idle, polishing their masks. It must have been a tremendous moment of achievement for the aged leader to see his party in power after a mere 12 years subsequent to its shockingly poor show in the 1984 elections with only 2 seats in Parliament. He presents his life dedicated to the service of the motherland from his birth in Karachi in today's Pakistan till the day when he introspects on his past life after his party was unexpectedly ousted from power in 2004. Six decades of Advani's political life coincides with that of the country after independence and in this sense, the book is a summary of Indian politics till 2008.

Advani is totally devoted to and adores Sindh, the province from which his family had to flee in 1947 to escape religious persecution. Pre-independence Sindh is said to be a place full of communal harmony between all religions. People used to visit the holy places of all religions without any discrimination or reduced ardour. Sindh's strong Sufi tradition was a determining factor in this kind of marked syncretism. Advani's family was particularly devoted to a Sufi saint Sain Qutab Shah, and frequented his dargah. Even

now, his family members are said to be visiting Pakistan regularly, to pay their respects at the dargah of Sain Nasir Faqir, another widely respected Sufi saint. The author says that he was unaware of the distinction between Hindus and Sikhs in Sindh and only came to know about the differences much later in his life. He thought the Hindus and Sikhs to be the unbearded and bearded followers respectively, of Guru Nanak. This open admission of ignorance helps to enhance his image as a bridge between the two prominent religions in India. Every word in the autobiography is calculated to add weight to his stature as a great leader accessible and affiliated to people of all faiths. Advani also says that caste differences were not so prominent in Sindh and that he was astonished by its prominence in the rest of India. However, lower castes definitely existed in Sindh and it is an open question whether he had them in mind when he declares that literacy rate among Karachi Hindus was almost 100 per cent. The author portrays Sindh as a kind of Garden of Eden, whose atmosphere was vitiated by the arrival of immigrant Muslims who had to flee from India.

Indira Gandhi, who was the third prime minister of India, plunged the country into the depths of corruption and nepotism as part of her leftist policies that sought to rein in free enterprise. All major banks and insurance companies were nationalized in one stroke. The government was conceived to be totally inefficient and partisan to the interests of a few powerful politicians and industrialists. Widespread protests sprang up in all corners of the country under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as JP. He advocated the unity of Indian opposition parties whereby all warring factions planned to join him on the same platform. Indira Gandhi, who had an indelible streak of insecurity in her character, felt threatened at this and invoked Emergency provisions in the Constitution in 1975. In a span of roughly two years, the entire opposition was crushed, its leaders jailed and the morale of the masses pushed to its lowest ebb. Advani is remembered for playing a prominent part in the heroic struggle against Emergency. Even though jailed at Bangalore and Rohtak for the full 19-month term, he fought a brave legal battle along with fellow prisoners. Probably because of this, the book displays an aversion bordering on contempt to Indira Gandhi. Not only is she flayed for the excesses during the Emergency and her propensity for dynastic succession, the honour rightfully due to her on account of the historic victory in the 1971 war with Pakistan is withheld. Rather, the author praises General Manek Shaw, J S Arora and J F R Jacob for the military victory. Of course, the soldiers deserve credit, but going to war was a political decision in the first place, taken by Indira Gandhi. The book presents the fiasco of the opposition parties joining hands together to oust the Congress but falling prey to personal ambitions of its leaders. The Jana Sangh, which had the largest contingent among the legislators of the unified party had only three cabinet berths. But they accommodated the claims of other parties in a commendable way. But when the others raised the issue of dual membership as a way to target it, the party had no option but to part ways and form the BJP, which rules the country now.

Demolition of the disputed structure at Ayodhya was the event that catapulted Advani to fame and which proved to be the breakthrough for the BJP to get out of the political wilderness. The book devotes prominent space to that episode. He begins with comparing the temple construction movement to that of renovation of Somnath Temple in Gujarat during Nehru's first cabinet by asserting that the birthplace of Lord Ram, believed by devotees to be at Ayodhya is similar in stature and significance to Somnath. A temple dedicated to Ram was destroyed in 1530 by Babur's military commander and a mosque was built on the site. Similar acts of desecration was done at Mathura and Varanasi too, the other two most sacred places of Hindus. Ayodhya witnessed many struggles and communal riots over the four intervening centuries since a mosque was forcibly built. The place was not used for Islamic worship, and from 1949 onwards, worship of the idol of Ram was in vogue. Advani buttresses the Hindu claim with the argument that the mosque was just an ordinary one like any other for the Muslims, but one of the holiest places for believing Hindus. He never regrets his role in the movement, but claims to be proud of being associated with it. He was an eye witness at Ayodhya on that fateful day when the structure was forcibly pulled down by irate karsevaks (volunteers for a religious purpose) who were tired of frequent agitations not yielding any concrete results. The defied all calls of the leaders and brought the edifice down in a matter of a few hours. Advani termed the day the saddest in his life. Curiously, he shifts a part of the blame on the governments of Rajiv Gandhi and Narasimha Rao, who respectively allowed the foundation stonelaying and the karseva (religious construction) to take place. He vouches that most of the leaders, including V P Singh and Narasimha Rao were privately not averse to

the idea of building a temple at the site. The anti-Islamic surge that helped to fertilize the movement is believed to be the result of Rajiv Gandhi's humiliating submission before Islamic hardliners in the Shah Bano case. A Muslim divorcee named Shah Bano was awarded alimony by the court, but radical Muslims objected to it on the grounds that sharia does not enjoin the husband to pay any maintenance to the divorced wife. Rajiv Gandhi yielded to their demand that the law of the land be made subservient to religious diktats. He brought in legislation to sidestep the court verdict using his massive majority in parliament. This helped to consolidate Hindu sentiment throughout the country.

Advani was the second in command in Atal Behari Vajpayee's cabinet. Their relationship was always a topic of speculation for the media. It is not common to see two stalwarts each having immense popular appeal working in tandem. They were long term friends and dedicated to each other. It was Advani who proposed Vajpayee for the post of prime minister in the run up to the elections in 1996. The relationship that lasted more than half a century should serve as a model not only for politicians, but in all areas where commitment to the organization should exceed petty personal ambitions. The foreword of the book is penned by Vajpayee. The book is however, written in an unemotional way, with the events presented in a matter of fact way without any punch at all that makes it dry reading. Probably this is in consonance with the author's temperament in which he wishes to include more wit and sparkle. In the response to a question from a reporter, he expresses his desire to have the capacity to indulge in small talk. This is the reason why the book is written in a colourless, but serious way. Normally, the readers would expect a lot of anecdotes and lighter moments in a book of this genre, but Advani belies this hope. At 986 pages of text, the book is humongous, which could easily be cut down to a more manageable 400 pages by omitting several too detailed descriptions and verbatim reproductions of reports and speeches. His Ram temple rath yathra is in fact eclipsed by the long, state wise report of his less contentious and hence less remarkable Swarna Jayanti Rath Yathra in 1997.

On many occasions, readers feel that Advani has not been candid and frank. Ousting of Balraj Madhok from the presidentship of Bharatiya Jana Sangh is one such incident where he simply stops the narrative with the bland remark that his leadership caused serious destabilizing problems for the party. In 2005, after his controversial speech in Pakistan that praised Jinnah for his comments in that country's constituent assembly guaranteeing the state to be secular. Severe criticism arose from both within and outside his party. He had to resign as party boss following this incident in response to the clamour from all quarters. Advani says he was told to step down without elaborating further. Who told him to resign? Senior party leaders, or his inner voice, or the RSS? This question remains unanswered.

The book is recommended.

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### **Arun says**

The version from right ideology never gets its due in left dominated Indian history. Must read!

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### **Sonia says**

This is a long read about a very complicated period of history. Could have used some heavy editing but a person at the end of their career is allowed to indulge themselves. Some very interesting vignettes, Uncle. Good job.

## Ritesh Shetty says

Boring book....

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## Anurag says

Whenever an elite writes an auto-biography before the final retirement, he does it to gain something with the contents of the book and same can be said about this book by L.K. Advani. The person becomes aware of the fallout of the book and that is why keeps from so called controversial topics thus depriving readers of what otherwise would have been a tell-all tale. Even then I found this book very interesting as it tells the story after Indian independence from right's perspective as you feel most of the time that Indian intelligentsia has leftward leaning. So this was a good break from that.

One should read this book they want to follow the rise of a political party which was reduced to two seats in Parliament after 1984's general elections. In that rise, Advani played a major part. So this book gives a first hand account of events. You might have wanted to read about the events such as Indian Airlines plane abduction, events in Kashmir and North-east etc. Advani describes them as they happened during his tenure.

[Read my full review here.](#)

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## Prabhat says

My Country: My Life: Lal Krishan Advani : Autobiography- Lal Krishan Advani's autobiography is a description of his childhood in Sindh and about 60 years of active political life for democracy in Jan Sangh, Bharatiya Janta Party. He remained an active Shakha of Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh in his area. Before partition in 1947, he had come to India and was projected to work at the national level of the Party. He has mentioned details about history of Sindi class, King Dahar and later kings. About RSS in Sind, his sense of belonging to the land of his birth and the trauma faced by millions of Indians after transfer of power and division of the country by creation of Pakistan. He has also narrated the socio-political changes and developments in the country and his work at the grassroot level of Jan Sangh and later about the political evolution of the countrymen. During 22 months of (1975- 1977) promulgation of Emergency, he was jailed and his fight against such law and for restoration of democracy his been well described. For construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Rath Yatra performed by him and how the masses welcomed and reacted to his effort has been described. During Parliamentary election, his party succeeded and Atal Behari Vajpayee was elected Prime Minister by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) while Advani was sworn as Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister to the Government between 1998 and 2004. In the Book there is a lot of preaching of RSS ideology which distracts the reader. Wherever there is continuity of narration of political events, the Book engrosses the reader to the contents. It is a worth reading autobiography.

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## Vadassery Rakesh says

It is a piece from history of India, rather a sad part. The melancholy of a person who lost his roots owing to strange political wisdom of some, reflects not only in his writing but in his political philosophy also. Gives the impression that this man is a much misunderstood man, who is mistakenly called a Hawk.

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