

Kṛṣṇa: The Many Facets of Historical Narratives

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Abstract

In a world dominated by the lure of material happiness, the respite that emanates from Kṛṣṇa consciousness is undoubtedly an otherworldly experience. Śhrī Kṛṣṇa has indeed found the most comprehensive representation in Indian culture. We have many writings on the literary images of Kṛṣṇa. The stories that shed light on the multi-faceted nature of Kṛṣṇa's character describe several miracles he performed over his lifetime, which form the central theme of this article.

Keywords: Paraṁ-Brahma, Indra-Yajña, karmayogī, Samavartaka, dānava, Madhusūdana, avatāra, Vṛndāvana, Mathurā, Gunaka, Kuvjā

Introduction

The personality of Kṛṣṇa has left a deep impression on billions of people across the globe. According to the *Bhagavad-gīta*, he is the greatest of all humans and gods, the purest, eternal, and transcendental. Arjuna said in the *Bhagavad-gīta* that all the great sages, such as Nārada, Asita, Devala, and Vyāsa, confirmed this truth about Kṛṣṇa (*Bhagavad-gītā*, X. 12-13).

The verses could be read as:

*param brahma param dhāma pavitraṁ paramaṁ bhavān
puruṣaṁ śāśvataṁ divyaṁ ādi-devaṁ ajaṁ vibhum
āhus tvām ṛṣayaḥ sarve devarṣir nāradaś tathā
asito devalo vyāsaḥ svayaṁ caiva bravīṣi me* (Prabhupāda, 1972, p. 462)

He is also presented as *Param-Brahma*, the Supreme Brahman. The *Bhagavad-gīta* popularized Kṛṣṇa's philosophy by portraying him as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. We have a plethora of writings on Kṛṣṇa, but several issues deserve further attention. Kṛṣṇa is portrayed more as a spiritual being in the *Bhagavad-gīta*, which is true. However, texts such as the *Harivaṁśa* describe some of the exciting images of Kṛṣṇa's life, which are not as popular as the ones emanating from the *Bhagavad-gīta*; hence, specific other literary images derived from the text are not appropriately studied. This article attempts to present Kṛṣṇa as a cosmic victor, liberator, and savior.

Through a series of indices, it is shown that the philosopher of the *Bhagavad-gīta* is a cosmic victor who liberated human beings from pain and suffering on many occasions. The victories of Kṛṣṇa are not merely about the defeat of evil powers; they set a new paradigm. These victories established the cosmic order, where defeated evil forces took their proper place in the cosmos and became aware of their limits. Further, when they realized the strength and divinity of Kṛṣṇa, they became his devotees. The episodes of the *Harivaṁśa* could explain his cosmic victory over his enemies. This incident will not come as a surprise to anyone, especially those who are familiar with the *Harivaṁśa*, which reflects Kṛṣṇa's unique power. The text surges through various episodes where Kṛṣṇa, the champion of righteousness, defeats the evil usurper. In some of the other episodes from the exact text, Kṛṣṇa not only proved himself to be the cosmic victor but a liberator too.

The reading of the *Harivaṁśa* expresses the reason behind Kṛṣṇa incarnation as a cowherd and a milkman. The text says that his birth as a milkman and living among the cowherds have

predestined goals, and the killing of serpent-king Kāliya is one of them. Serpent-king Kāliya was a poisonous snake living in the Yamunā River. The text says that a Yogi living in Vṛndāvana cursed Garuda, saying that he could not come to Vṛndāvana without meeting his death. Therefore, Kāliya lived at Vrindavan, where Garuda could not come. The defeat of Kāliya is probably an indication of Kṛṣṇa's superior power (Dutta, 1897, pp. 280-81). The text enumerates Kṛṣṇa's cosmic victory and liberation of the masses. The story of serpent-king Kāliya, who lived in the Yamunā River and polluted its water with his venom, depriving human beings, beasts, and even gods of its water, is an example of it. Nevertheless, before directly attacking the serpent-king Kāliya, he asks a few questions that show his diligence.

"To whom does this huge and deep lake belong? Methinks that dreadful king of serpents, Kāliya, resembling a heap of collyrium of whom I had heard before and who left the ocean in fear of the king of birds, Garuda, who feeds on serpents, is living here. By him this Yamunā, flowing to the ocean, has been polluted" (Dutta, 1897, p. 280).

However, the heroic sentiments of Kṛṣṇa were immediately reflected when he conquered the king of serpents by defeating him and rendering the water of the river pure for the use of cowherds and residents of Vraja. It is essential to mention that the tussle between the serpent-king Kāliya and Kṛṣṇa was not one-sided, and the author of the *Harivamśa* attempted to reflect it. It shows that Kṛṣṇa jumped into the Yamunā to defeat the five-hooded Kāliya, but his retinue rose out of the agitated water and engulfed Kṛṣṇa with the hoods, leaving him immobile, and he was near death. The message of Kṛṣṇa's journey to the kingdom of Kāliya reached the inhabitants of Vraja and his foster parents. The text records their lamentation. Saṅkarṣaṇa (Kṛṣṇa's brother), who had not accompanied Kṛṣṇa after listening to their lamentation, angrily tells Kṛṣṇa to subdue Kāliya and redeem the fears of his relatives and the residents of Vraja (Dutta, 1897, p. 283).

Kṛṣṇa, who shares a powerful bond with his brother Saṅkarṣaṇa, rose and placed his feet on the hood of the serpent king, which later became pale, and blood came out of it. The serpent king surrendered to Śhrī Kṛṣṇa, saying,

"O Krishna of a beautiful countenance, unwittingly did I display anger against thee. But, now I have been vanquished and subdued by thee, and my venom has been destroyed. Do thou give me my life and command me whom I am to serve along with my wife, children, and friends" (Dutta, 1897, p. 284).

The narratives of *Harivaṁśa* are weaved in a way that always serves the purpose of ending an episode by showing Kṛṣṇa's extraordinary features. And here, it is essential to quote Hegel, who says,

"At the bottom of history, there is a final aim. A history without such an aim and such a point of view would be merely a feeble-minded pastime of the imagination, not even a children's fairy tale, for even children demand some interest in stories, i.e., some aim one can at least feel, and the relation of the occurrences and actions to it" (Hillis, 1974, pp. 455-473).

The story of serpent-king Kāliya is an example of it. It displays Kṛṣṇa's love for his opponent, the most unique aspect of his personality. In the battle between Kāliya and Kṛṣṇa, the serpent king lost it and asked Śhrī Kṛṣṇa to bless him. Without showing a sign of anguish, Śhrī Kṛṣṇa blessed him for any future calamity. When Kṛṣṇa got over Kāliya's head, he left his foot marks and lastly confirmed to him that if Garuda, the enemy of serpents, beholds him in the ocean, his foot marks on his head will save him from Garuda's animosity (Coomaraswamy & Nivedita, 1967, pp. 226-28). This episode from the *Harivaṁśa* served the dual purpose of both liberating the water of Yamunā for the ordinary people of the Vraja and rewarding the serpent-king Kāliya.

There are numerous other instances where Kṛṣṇa is reflected as a savior. One crucial example is Indra-Yajña, where Kṛṣṇa discovers that the cowherds are preparing for a sacrifice in honor of Indra, and he dissuades them from proceeding with it. This episode, which involves the lifting of Govardhan Mountain, is essential to highlight a significant aspect of Kṛṣṇa's personality. Here, God is presented as the destroyer of false pride. Since he was unaware of the sacrifice, Kṛṣṇa questioned the villagers as to why they were doing so. Among them, an elderly milkman replied,

"Indra, the king of the celestial and Śhrī Kṛṣṇa of the world, is the master of clouds. For this reason, from time immemorial and coming down from one family to another, this festival is being celebrated" (Dutta, 1897, pp. 292-93).

Kṛṣṇa, a *karmayogī* (a complete chapter of the *Gītā* is dedicated to this theme, chapter V of the *Bhagavad Gītā*), indulged in the debate with the locals and asked them to do their *karma* by putting in their best effort rather than performing sacrifices for any natural phenomenon. He emphasizes the duties of different social orders and asserts that one should only worship one's means of subsistence. He reminds cowherds of their means of subsistence and asks them to worship the cows, the mountains, and the forest as their prime duties and says,

Vayam vanacarā gopā godhanajivinaḥ/

gāvo's maddaivatam viddhi girayaśca vanāni ca (Benjamin, 1984, p. 89; Eck, 2012, pp. 359-62).

Here, Kṛṣṇa attempted to break the tradition of performing Indra-Yajña, or sacrifice, in honor of the God of rain. How he debated over the question of performing this sacrifice and later asked his people to stop it shows that Kṛṣṇa, being a *karmayogī*, gave preference to the notion of *karma*. Convinced by his ideas, the villagers did not perform the sacrifice. The non-performance of sacrifice could be seen in a larger framework; here, Kṛṣṇa not only told them about the importance of *karma* but also strengthened his position in society. The non-performance of Yajña made Indra furious, and he decided to punish the inhabitants of Braj by sending terrible rain clouds to flood the entire region. He called Samavartaka, the clouds of devastation and elephants, and instructed them to cause a horrible flood on the inhabitants of the region that would destroy their livelihood (Dutta, 1897, p. 302; Seth, 1984, pp. 30-33).

The plot of the episode shows an apparent animosity between Indra and Kṛṣṇa. However, it is implausible that a text such as the *Harivaṁśa*, which is primarily dedicated to Harī (Kṛṣṇa), can ever keep anybody above Kṛṣṇa. It preferably shows Śhrī Kṛṣṇa on a higher pedestal, as it mentions that even Indra's brutal and devastating instructions did not deter him from his decision. Rather than asking Indra about his insane decision, he uprooted a mountain called Govardhana and held it with his left hand like an umbrella. All the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana took shelter under Govardhana hill for seven days from the terrible rains, undisturbed by hunger and thirst (Dutta, 1897, p. 306).

This act of Kṛṣṇa is prevalent and hence finds a place in both the *Purāṇas* and the *Mahābhārata*. Thus, it became a metaphor for Kṛṣṇa's strength and power displayed for the protection of the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana. Nevertheless, this could not only be understood as an attempt to protect but could also be elaborated as a point where Kṛṣṇa could be seen suppressing the false pride of Indra. The reference from the *Harivaṁśa* clearly shows Indra's repentance over his deed, how he eulogized Kṛṣṇa for his valor, and lastly, asking for forgiveness. He saw Kṛṣṇa seated at the foot of the Govardhana hill and calmly approached him, saying,

"O Krishna, I am the Lord of Bhutas and of the gods, and I am Purandara. Being born of Aditi, I am thy elder brother. Do thou forgive me for displaying my own energy in the shape of clouds which is but the outcome of thy power" (Dutta, 1897, p.310).

Besides liberating the water of Yamunā, scoring his victory over the serpent king Kāliya, and protecting the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana from the wrath of Indra, there are abundant accounts from the *Harivaṁśa*, the *Bhāgavat Purāṇa*, and the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* that illustrate the subject under discussion. The killing of Ariṣṭa (a demon who assumed the form of a bull to attack and kill the child Kṛṣṇa) and Keśin (a horse-demon killed by Kṛṣṇa) is also cited as an example where Śhrī Kṛṣṇa himself became a medium to liberate humans and animals. The *dānava* Ariṣṭa is portrayed in the *Harivaṁśa* as assuming the form of an infuriated bull with sharpened horns and an extremely hard hump, continuously licking his lips with his tongue, and moving his tail in pride (Dutta, 1897, pp. 319-20). The *dānava* attempted to kill Kṛṣṇa by aiming his sharp horn at his belly. However, in response to his attack, Kṛṣṇa placed his feet between his two horns, uprooted his left horn, and thus humiliated his pride. Knowing the strength of Keśin, the cowherds tried to discourage Kṛṣṇa, whom they considered a child, in comparison to the irrepressible strength of Keśin. However, the undeterred, fearless, law-abiding Madhusūdana slew him. Thus, the pride of Keśin was severely struck by the Śhrī Kṛṣṇa.

Next to Keśin, the episode of the destruction of Khara and Dhenuka is discussed at length in the *Harivaṁśa*. The text shows Kṛṣṇa and Saṅkarṣaṇa were wandering in the forest after the destruction of the serpent king, Kāliya. Kṛṣṇa's victory over Dhenuka, a demon who looked like an ass and lived in the grove, is also inspiring. The grove was full of rich fruits, and the other cowherds wished to have fruits for themselves, but they dared not approach and thus requested Kṛṣṇa and Saṅkarṣaṇa to pluck some fruits for them. At this time, the enraged Dhenuka appeared on the scene and attacked Saṅkarṣaṇa. Saṅkarṣaṇa killed the demon and threw the dead body in the grove. The episode of the destruction of Pralamba (a demon) is also dedicated to Balarāma, who killed him.

The death and destruction of demons could not only be seen as the end of unrighteousness and the prevailing of righteousness but it could also be seen in the larger framework of the evolutionary process, making use of Kṛṣṇa's supernatural feats, which finally accomplish the idea of presenting Kṛṣṇa as divinely ordained, an *avatāra*/incarnation of Viṣṇu. Summarizing

his actions here and drawing a sketch to interpret his personality is impossible. He is so pervasive and omnipresent that any such attempt will finally end with no prolific conclusion. The Kṛṣṇa of Vṛndāvana is different from the Kṛṣṇa of Mathūrā and Dvārakā. The traits of his character, actions, and accomplishments vary in each phase of his life. Thus, when the savior and champion of Vṛndāvana reached Mathūrā, he suddenly became the liberator, the killer of foes. The story of his killing his maternal uncle, Kaṁsa, is essential.

With each new episode in these texts, Kṛṣṇa becomes more popular among the masses. Although it is difficult to argue that he was known as a god among the residents of Vraja and Mathurā, he inevitably started attracting people's attention because of his divinely ordained activities. Furthermore, it was this popularity that finally led him to Mathurā. The narrative of the death of Kaṁsa, the son of Ugrasena (the king of Mathurā), presents Kṛṣṇa's multi-faceted personality. The *Harivaṁśa* shows Kṛṣṇa's departure to Mathurā for a specific goal to be accomplished. By this time, Kṛṣṇa had assumed the image of a boy who could perform miracles, and hence, it was problematic that his presence in the Mathurā could long remain unknown to the king Kaṁsa. According to the *Harivaṁśa*, Kaṁsa came to know about the prediction of his death by Nārada. As instructed, Nārada informed Kaṁsa about his predestined death at the hands of the self-born (Viṣṇu), who was the eighth child of his younger sister Devakī (Dutta, 1897, p. 245). The plot of the narrative shows that a tyrant king of Mathurā and the oppressor of his subjects captivated his father, too. After listening to Nārada about his death, he laughed aloud and told his servants about his unmatched strength, which was impossible for the Vāsava to conquer. He immediately ordered his retinue to send demons worldwide to destroy his enemies (Dutta, 1897, p. 246).

The tyrant king Kaṁsa played tricks and sent his counselor Akrūra to the cowherd settlement to order Nanda and other residents to bring their tribute to Mathurā and ask them to participate in a bow festival, also inviting Kṛṣṇa and Saṅkarṣaṇa to take part in it. He had already decided to eliminate the two brothers, so he arranged for an elephant named Kuvalayāpīda to attack them. Although Akrūra arrives, he does not mention the proposed wrestling match; instead, he informs them about the plight of their parents at the hands of Kaṁsa. Śhrī Kṛṣṇa was aware of the evil plan of Kaṁsa and did not get angry over Akrūra, as he was fulfilling his duty of bringing the two boys to Mathurā. The two brothers reached Mathurā and decided that they would enter in disguise. The story is mentioned in the *Harivaṁśa* and later discussed in many secondary works. The plot of this story is primarily

drawn from the *Harivaṁśa* (Seth, 1984, pp. 15-19). This incident reminds us of a popular motif, i.e., the return of the hero, which is precisely similar to the return of Odysseus (Lord, 1960, p. 169). If one does a comparative study, it will be easier to point out the return motif in both cases of Kṛṣṇa and Odysseus, which have a similar pattern such as absence, disguise, mocking, deceptive story, and contest.

Although Kṛṣṇa and Saṅkarṣaṇa enter the city as ordinary cowherds, texts like the *Harivaṁśa* depict Kṛṣṇa's divinity since his entry into the city of Mathurā. Kṛṣṇa punished and rewarded the locals in various instances, and the text narrates those stories. The king's washerman, the garland maker, and the hunchbacked (*kubjā*) are some examples, and Kṛṣṇa interacted with them. The washerman, dyeing the robes of the king Kaṁsa, calls Śhrī Kṛṣṇa stupid as he asks him for the beautiful clothes that initially belonged to the king (Dutta, 1897, pp. 247-48). Next, he asked a garland maker to make some garland. The text does not clarify whether the garland maker had identified the two, but he was pleased and conferred several garlands upon the two beautiful brothers. Being pleased, Kṛṣṇa conferred upon Gunaka (the garland maker) a boon, saying,

"O gentle one, the goddesses of prosperity, who is my dependent, shall always live by you with profuse riches" (Dutta, 1897, p. 248).

The boon motif, primarily available in ancient literature, is usually woven into the narratives to emphasize the characters correctly. In another instance, when Kṛṣṇa and Saṅkarṣaṇa were roaming, they noticed a Kuvjā (hunchbacked) carrying oils in her hand. Out of curiosity, Kṛṣṇa said,

"O lotus-eyed Kuvjā, tell me quickly for whom you are carrying these unguents" (Dutta, 1897, p. 348).

She immediately replied,

"I am a favorite of the king and engaged in the work of smearing his body" (Dutta, 1897, p. 349).

The narratives show that Śhrī Kṛṣṇa usually conferred a boon upon those in pain. Kṛṣṇa, the benevolent one who is conversant with the art of arranging for sports, softly touched the hunch of Kuvjā with his fingers. Moreover, it was a miracle when she got cured and could walk straight.

These incidences from the life of Kṛṣṇa are not simply weaved into the text; they attempt to describe specific significant motifs in ancient Indian literature. The phenomena of boons and curses could also be visualized in these narratives. The detailed study of the "boon" and

"curse" motif in the narratives of Kṛṣṇa is a symbol of his strength and valor. However, the question is to what extent we can say that motifs like "boon" and "curse" are significant for the author of *Harivamśa* and any such text dealing with narratives of Kṛṣṇa's life. If we consider it part and parcel of narrative tradition, then we might count it as an essential device used in the process of narration. We do not have any justifiable interpretation to argue why these motifs were deliberately put into the text. The narratives of Kṛṣṇa available in the *Harivamśa*, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* seem to be intertwined in a super-celestial approach where Kṛṣṇa is not merely seen as one who controls the cosmic norms. However, he becomes a part of that belief system.

If we look at all three incidences, it is clear for all of us that despite hiding their real identities, both Kṛṣṇa and Saṅkarṣaṇa established themselves as victorious over the pain and sufferings of people experiencing poverty. However, they also proved fatal for those who crossed their limits. In the first case cited above, destiny was against the stupid washerman, who misbehaved with the brothers and lost his life. They blessed a garland maker who treated them and, in return, were rewarded with a blessing for riches. Next, they met a hunchback (Kuvjā) who worked as a maidservant in Kāmsa's palace and was cured by Kṛṣṇa. Here, scholars like Noel Sheth make the point that she (Kuvjā) is enamored of Kṛṣṇa, but he rejects her blandishments and, while laughing, sets out for the royal court. This is an example, according to Sheth, where women pose as temptresses, and Kṛṣṇa passes the test (Sheth, 1984, p. 16).

In the latter part, the *Harivamśa* shows how Kṛṣṇa slays Cāṇūra and Tosala, while Kṛṣṇa's beloved brother Saṅkarṣaṇa kills Muṣṭika and Andhra. They were the prominent wrestlers in the court of Kāmsa who challenged Kṛṣṇa and Saṅkarṣaṇa for wrestling. The deaths of wrestlers infused Kṛṣṇa's parents and audience with happiness. However, they infuriated Kāmsa, who ordered the young fighters to be banished along with the cowherds, Nanda to be shackled, Vāsudeva to be killed, and the cattle and wealth of the cowherds to be confiscated. Moreover, the *Harivamśa* mentions that Kāmsa realized that he was losing his ground and issued a harsh mandate, where he says,

"Although Vasudeva is my relative, he is evil. Therefore, punish him even today in a way that people not aged deserve. The other inferior Gopas, whom you see, are devoted to Krishna. Therefore, take away from them their kine and other riches" (Dutta, 1897, p. 368).

However, Kṛṣṇa, who is enraged over the insult of his parents and relatives, seizes Kāṁsa by the hair and drags him through the arena. The death of Kāṁsa brought sorrow to his wives, who were lamenting in grief at how their beloved could be killed by a mere mortal who was even unconquered by the gods (Dutta, 1897, p. 370).

What is peculiar about Kṛṣṇa is his justification of every action. Over the lamentation of Kāṁsa's wives and mother, he first displays his repentance over the killing of Kāṁsa. He blames himself in the assembly of the Yādavas for making widows of Kāṁsa's wives. Nevertheless, later, he justified his action of killing Kāṁsa, an oppressor engrossed in sin. He also made it clear to Kāṁsa's father that he did not slay him for the throne but for the welfare of the people,

"I do not care for the kingdom or the royal throne. I did not slay Kāṁsa for territory" (Dutta, 1897, p. 377).

Ruben comments on Kṛṣṇa's decision to decline the kingdom of Mathurā offered to him after the death of Kāṁsa. The *Harivamśa* shows Kṛṣṇa's desire while he was restoring Ugrasena as the chief of the Yādavas after the death of Kāṁsa. He says that a hero must be adorned with fame and glory, and Kṛṣṇa may have rejected this offer because, like many heroes, he did not want to be burdened by administrative duties that hindered him from giving the full scope of his valor (Noel Sheth, 1984, p. 18). So, a single person, according to Kṛṣṇa, could not perform the tasks of a 'hero' and a 'king.' Further, he says he will again go to the forest with his cattle and roam around with the cowherds like a free-willed elephant. However, Kṛṣṇa never fulfilled his dream of returning to Gokul's old days.

Moreover, this is mainly because of his changing role in the well-being of society. Although Kṛṣṇa, before the killing of his maternal uncle, Kāṁsa thought that this would be his final responsibility, he soon realized that he had to do much more for his dear ones. His career took a political turn, which made him aware that the slaying of Kāṁsa was not his ultimate task. This affair has made his many images a subject of interest among scholars.

A close study of Kṛṣṇa's activities reveals many essential points for understanding how and why Kṛṣṇa evolved as a significant personality in scholarly discussions. The episodes from the text revealed the importance of these incidences in understanding the achievements of Kṛṣṇa's life. With the slaying of the nāga king, the formidable adversary of Kṛṣṇa, the Lord proves his strength over the dragon. C.S. Hawley gives this episode, together with that of the

Govardhanadhāraṇa, the category of cosmic victory (Hawley, 1978, pp. 201-202). Like a traditional hero, Kṛṣṇa first suffered a temporary setback when he was being immobilized underwater, and his well-wishers standing nearby lamented as they were waiting on the shore to meet him again alive. However, Kṛṣṇa surprised everyone, as a 'hero' usually does (Fontenrose, J., 1968), and he came out of the Yamunā, defeating the nāga king, Kāliya. Fontenrose attempts to make a comparative study of Kṛṣṇa and Heracles and concludes that there are certain similarities in the life journeys of the two heroes. He attempted to study the images of Kṛṣṇa through the legends of Herakles and said,

"There is something distinctive about Herakles: he is specifically cast as the conqueror of death; it is Thanatos whom he meets repeatedly under many names and forms. Moreover, in saying this, I mean something much more specific than the truism that a warrior faces death when engaged in mortal combat: I mean that the original and typical Herakles legend, reflected in every legend of the cycle, is the hero's combat with and victory over the death lord himself" (Fontenrose, J., 1974, p. 358).

Although scholars like Fontenrose suggest such similarities, he fails to understand that Kṛṣṇa is a highly complex personality, and no particular phenomenon or person sharing similarities with Kṛṣṇa's life could give a straightforward formula to understand him. Kṛṣṇa and Herakles may share similarities; they belong to the class of heroes and also fight dragons (Fontenrose uses the term 'dragon fighter' extensively in his writing and ranks Herakles among the other dragon fighters, Zeus and Apollo), but this alone does not account for all the similarities in the legends of the two. These complexities within his personality incite many of us to think and write about various facets and aspects of Kṛṣṇa's personality. However, what is important here is to debate the veracity of these stories and how to establish their historicity. For a student of history, it is essential to ask why, how, and where these narratives are happening. The answer to these questions sometimes means simply reconstructing a complicated story from the scattered narratives of that time. To read a narrative and ask how, why, and where, we need to interpret the actions, meanings, and intentions of the individual who acted. This aspect of historical thinking is "hermeneutic," interpretive, and ethnographic (for a detailed description of history and historicism, see Collingwood, 1946). So, if we look at the craft of historians, in some sense, they have been talking about the history of meaning. It means that how we can read the meaning within the text is essential. For example, *Purāṇic* myths have been reinterpreted differently, and each interpretation of the same story has its purpose. These narratives have shaped myths, which over time have created their traditions.

The authenticity of *Purāṇic* narratives is highly doubtful, but historians cannot get away from them. The authenticity of a *Purāṇic* narrative depends on how we interpret it and how we incorporate events from a historical perspective. It is an experiment in the study of narratives; the meaning produced by that narrative will depend on how we narrate an action or event. The study of incidences related to Kṛṣṇa shows that a particular event of his life may have been reinterpreted in various ways in the genre of *Purāṇic* literature. It indicates that they do not belong to a specific period. *Purāṇic* accounts are said to be part of the continuing tradition of storytelling and what begins as local discourse. It is not easy to ascertain whether narratives have molded myths or whether myths have shaped narrative traditions. However, both narratives are likely complementary to each other. It also must be remembered that narratives and traditions, whether written or oral, do not emerge in a vacuum. They are very much related to contemporary times and beliefs. Thus, the multiplicity of images created by the above narratives provides a chance to reflect on contemporary beliefs. Dismissing them as mere references does not serve the purpose. However, the comparative study of interpolations and variations, which is highly significant from a historical perspective, has been neglected. Thus, a comparative study of the events related to Kṛṣṇa's life would suffice for looking into these narratives as historical facts about a person named Kṛṣṇa.

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