

T H R I L L E R

India's answer to Dan Brown

History and mythology, codes and crimes...
all come together in a gripping read.

SUNEETHA BALAKRISHNAN

If Dan Brown can do it, we can do it much better; given the wealth of symbols and symbolism in our ancient texts. This is what Ashwin Sanghi endeavours to mould into the premise of *The Krishna Key*.

This is a true blue thriller complete with an Indian Robert Langdon, Ravi Mohan Saini, a brilliant academic, and a language code specialist. And the story launches classically, as all thrillers should, with a murder. The story swings between mythology and history, trying to establish a connection with a contempo-

rary plot involving modern 'Yadavas'.

Lord Krishna appears at the beginning of each chapter with a short commentary on the events of what we know as the Mahabharata. The chapter that follows is often a parallel in the contemporary life of the protagonists. There is a plenty of Vedic Math, and a deluge of information on myth and history.

In fact such information on the Vedic times and how far we go back in history are the stuff of e-mail forwards. Jokes apart, Sanghvi has gone beyond facts and time spans and tried to connect this Indi-

an pride to anthropological facts that actually sound plausible.

To read *The Krishna Key*, you might need some basic grounding in the *Mahabharata* because this premise uses and follows a lot of it. History and mythology run in parallel, and much of the background comes out in long dialogues between the protagonists.

The characters are specialists including linguists and people with pedigrees leading back to a Yadava lineage. Of course there are some good and bad people from the police force; like a dedicated female police officer with a penchant for milk, almonds and cigarettes and a CBI guy who is hand in glove with the villain and aspiring for a top post. In fact the chief villain's life is all about getting back a family heirloom that has a Krishna connection. Every single symbol is connected

rather neatly to the numbers of mythology. There are codes in plenty and deciphering them is the key to the climax.

The writing has no literary pretences. This is plainly meant to be a popular thriller, and the language is easy. The research is certainly extensive, but the pace is often disrupted by long conversations that tend to be info dumps. There are descriptions galore and the reader could possibly lose patience when the story is waiting to speed away.

Krishna often sounds too human and even does some name calling. At one place he even talks about how "the dimwit (Duryodhana) got angry and even tried to have me arrested", and how "my omnipotent form ... was enough to scare the living daylight out of them". There is even a scene reminiscent of *Oliver Twist* where Fagin teaches his young trainees to pick a pocket.

A mention of the book cover is in order; it's really attractive. The book is a page-turner and definitely worth a read.

The Krishna Key; Ashwin Sanghi, Westland, Rs.250.

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