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IS KRISHNA a figment of our imagination or a character from history? Is he the naughty lover of Radha and the gopinis, or the astute politician and philosopher of the *Mahabharata* and *Gita*? These were some of the questions that led to the creation of business-

man-author Ashwin Sanghi's *The Krishna Key*. The author of two bestsellers *The Rozabal Line* and *Chanakya's Chant*, Sanghi's third book is being eagerly awaited by readers. 'I have for the longest time wanted to write something on Krishna, but I didn't know what. There is a lot of speculation about Krishna and the *Mahabharata*, did he really exist or is he

Inspiration Krishna

a myth. But so much has already been written about him. The challenge was to do something new. I think what *The Krishna Key* attempts to do is explore the nature of Krishna and the *Mahabharata*,' says Sanghi.

There is no doubt in the author's mind that Krishna did exist. 'I think the truth is more like there was this extremely talented, charismatic person and we in our typically Indian way started putting him on a pedestal and with time he assumed first a demigod and then god status,' he explains, adding, 'There is no one Krishna, there is the Krishna who is part of one's personal faith, there is the historical character, there is the Krishna from our mythologies and



there is Krishna the statesman.' To marry the four and come up with one comprehensive character was not easy. And unlike for Chanakya, where apart from the *Arthshastra*, there was no source of personal information about the character, here Sanghi was faced with a problem of plenty. 'It also meant less scope for me to play around

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with the character,' says Sanghi.

True to his signature style, *The Krishna Key* is also a thriller, filled with murder, mystery and political riddles, with the answer buried in the past. 'But unlike my other books where the narrative moves between the past and the present, *The Krishna Key* is based almost entirely in the present. The 108 chapters each start with a paragraph on the story of Krishna, but the rest is a present-day story.

In the very first chapter an archaeologist working on the Indus Valley civilisation is killed by a Sanskrit-spouting, tattooed young law student. In the next, a professor in Delhi is shown trying to prove the historical existence of the *Mahabharata*. 'Present

day historical excavations have unearthed structures similar to the description of the ancient city of Dwarka. My work was to bridge the gap between the mythologies and the historical knowledge that we have today,' says Sanghi. The book is important because the author believes that the *Mahabharata* and the sayings of Krishna are extremely relevant for us even today. 'We lead such stressed out lives, that often we miss out on the bigger universe and our place in it. This is beautifully explained in the *Mahabharata*. Also, I believe evolution is not one straight line. We move forward and then may regress a few steps. It is possible that the people in the age of *Mahabharata* and Krishna had achieved a level of advancement that we are yet to reach today. But because in subsequent years the ancient people found it difficult to explain engineering or scientific development in such terms, it was

easier for them to call it a miracle,' he says. Like his previous books, which had a strong female presence, *La Sara Kali* in *The Rozabal Line* and *Chandni* and *Suvasini* in *Chanakya's Chant*, in *The Krishna Key* too there is a strong woman protagonist. 'Shakti draws me. I don't even have to make an effort. But when I reread it after writing, I find the men are just incidental,' he laughs.

The book, that took about 15 months to be completed, will be released in August. Pre-orders have already started. 'I have had readers messaging me on Twitter and asking me how much longer I'll take with the book,' laughs Sanghi. And the author has more than the release of his third book to be excited about. His second book *Chanakya's Chant*, which won the Vodafone Crossword Award in the popular category in 2011, is being made into a film by UTV.