Fight between Narakāsura and Satyabhāmā in Harivaniśa and Southern Performance Tradition

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Abstract

The episode of Satyabhāmā fighting Narakāsura appears in the Narakāsuraavadha section of the Southern manuscripts of Harivaniśa. First, we compare the Narakāsuraavadha sections of the Citraśāla edition and the Southern manuscripts of Harivaniśa. Next, the latter is compared with the episode of Narakāsuraavadha in Bāṇayuddham, the sixth play of Krṣṇanāṭṭam, a temple art form performed at the Krṣṇa Temple in Guruvayur, Kerala as a votive ritual offering. The occurrence of Narakāsura-Satyabhāmā fight in medieval texts in Sanskrit and South Indian languages are also cited for comparison.

1 Preamble

Time: Sometime around midnight.
Place: Krishna Temple, Guruvayur, Kerala.

Bāṇayuddham of Krṣṇa’s Play (Krṣṇanāṭṭam [1, 2]) is in progress. Krṣṇa has become unconscious while fighting with Narakāsura. Then Satyabhāmā takes up bow and arrow and fights against Narakāsura. Meanwhile, Krṣṇa wakes up, rewards Satyabhāmā with a necklace, resumes fighting and eventually kills Narakāsura with his cakra.

In the text Krṣṇaṁiti, which is the sanskrit kāvyā with ślokas and padams which is sung in the backgound by musicians, there is no mention of Satyabhāmā fighting with Narakāsura. To the best of our knowledge, this episode cannot be located in the popular recensions of Bhāgavata, Mahābhārata and the Citraśāla, Calcutta and the Critical Editions of Harivaṁśa. This episode occurs in the Southern version of Harivaṁśa [3], which is included in the appendix to the Critical Edition of Harivaṁśa [4] by BORI. There are other texts where one can find this episode. It occurs in Madhvācārya’s Mahābhārata Tātparyaniṁṣaya [5], the earliest known commentary on Mahābhārata. It also occurs in Śrī Krṣṇa Caritam Manipravālam which is a kāvyā in Malayalam ascribed to Kuṅcan Nambiar from Kerala in 18th century. The relevant passages are quoted in Section 4. The incident occurs also in some Telugu texts as summarized in the Section 4. The most detailed account of Narakāsura’s story occurs in Kālikā Purāṇa [6]. There Satyabhāmā does not fight Narakāsura, but there are indeed some very curious ślokas which are quoted in Section 4.
A cursory search on the internet reveals that in a popular legend associated with Dīpāvali (Narakacaturdaśi), it is Satyabhāmā herself who kills Narakaśura because of the boon obtained by Naraka that he can be killed only by a woman. We, however, have not been able to locate a purānic source for this, yet.

2 Narakaśuravadha in the Citraśāla edition and Southern manuscripts of Harivaśa

2.1 BORI critical edition

For this study, our singular access to the Southern manuscripts of Harivaśa is through the appendices of the BORI Edition. For completeness, let us first look at the BORI critical edition of Harivaśa. Harivaśa edited by P.L. Vaidya and published by BORI (1971) has two volumes [4]. First volume is the critical edition and second volume contains appendices. Section 28A of volume II (pages 209-212) is titled narakasatyabhāmāyuddham and has a detailed description of the fight between Satyabhāmā and Naraka (pages 210-211) [7]. According to the editor, this episode occurs in all southern recensions, that is, four Telugu manuscripts, four Malayalam manuscripts and three Grantha manuscripts. In addition, it occurs in two Devanagari manuscripts not from the south.

Interestingly, the editor has spent an entire paragraph (page XLIV) of the Introduction to comment about the incident and his reasons to omit it in the critical edition. He says ... he (Kṛṣṇa) was accompanied by Satyabhāmā. Instances of women accompanying their husbands on similar occasions are known to Purānic literature. .... I think there are no other instances of women actually fighting on the battle field in the Purāṇa literature.

2.2 Location of the Appendices

sa babhau mūrtiṅgaṁ saṁvadaivata-bādhītāḥ |
ṛṣīnām mānuśaṁ ca pratīpaṁ kārotadāḥ || 91.6 (BORI)

Appendix No.25 is after 91.6

sa babhau mūrtiṅgaṁ sarvadeva-vābhibādhitāḥ |
devatāṁ mṛṛṣīnām ca pratīpaṁ kārotadāḥ || 2-63-6 (Citraśāla)
The one who affected all the devas lived in mūrtiṅga (prāgyotisa - see Nīlakanṭha commentary). He worked against the gods as well as the sages.

tadvadhārthāṁ mahābāhuḥ śaṅkhačakragadāsibhṛt |
jāto vṛṣniṣu devakyāṁ vasudevājjanārdanaḥ || 91.21 (BORI)
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Table 1: The general correspondence of ślokas between chapter 91 (harivaṁśa, vol I, BORI) and chapter 63, viṣṇuparva (Citraśāla edition). (Note that the ślokas may differ in some words.)
Janārdhana (Kṛṣṇa), having great arms, with conch (śaṅkha), discus (cakra) and mace (gada), was born, among the vṛṣṇis, to Devaki and Vasudeva to kill him (Naraka).

tasyāṁ devapurābhāyāṁ sabhā kāñcanatoraṇaḥ ∥
sudāśārhitī vikhyātā yojanāyutavistṛtā || 91.24 (BORI)

In that city, shining like a divine city, there is an assembly, named dāśārhi made of gold, decorated with arches, with an area, extending over a yojana (= 9 miles).

nihatya puruṣavyāghraḥ prāgjyotisamupādavat ∥
tam ca pāñcajanaṁ ghoram narakasya mahāsuram | 91.52 (BORI)

Then he (Kṛṣṇa) went near the city named prāgjyotiṣa which was sparkling with prosperity and there was a great battle.

It is interesting to note that in the Citraśāla edition, Vaiśampāyana does say

yatsaṁēna vakṣyāmi tanme nigadataḥ śrṇu 2-63-110.1
I shall tell you briefly (about the battle.) Hear what I am saying.
2.3 Summaries of the appendices

Appendix No. 25
The demon Naraka attacks heaven along with his army. A terrible battle takes place. The battle is described in detail. In the fierce battle, Naraka defeats Indra along with other devas.

The demon Naraka along with other great Asuras, entered the residence of Indra, Amaravati and summoned Urvasi and told her as follows:

O beautiful woman! Gratify me! I have defeated Indra in the battle. Now I am Indra, Yama and Varuṇa the Lord of the waters. O auspicious one! O radiant one! I am the only king of kings.

Then the best of demons, Naraka, took away divine trees and eight thousand divine women from heaven.

Appendix No. 26
Then Naraka, the best of demons, entered the human world and troubled the men, sages and brāhmins. Then Kṛṣṇa at Dvāraka was protecting the earth.

O lord sages! I deserve to be offered sacrifice. I am the lord of the world. I am Indra, the king of devas. I have defeated Indra in the battle along with the protectors of the world and other devas. Hence for the welfare of the world, offer me sacrifice, pay obeisance to me and bow to me. Hearing his words, the sages said:

O demon! We shall not offer sacrifice to you. You are a demon, having a wicked soul. Hearing this, the demon threatened to kill the sages and destroy the place of sacrifice. Yet the sages refused to offer sacrifice to the demon. The demon, Naraka became angry and...
he destroyed the sacred places. All the sages ran away. The demon took away the women. When the army of demons left Badari, the sages decided to inform Kṛṣṇa about the deeds of the demon. The sages

vaiśīṣṭho vāmadevaśca jābāliratha kāśyapaḥ | (48)
kavāṇo dhumro bṛhadārgurgo bharadvājaśca gālavah | (49)
kavaṇo dhumraketaśca kāśyāḥ kāpilakastada || (50)

left in the southern direction, bathed in Gaṅga and proceeded to Dvāraka. The sages arrived at Dvāraka and requested the palace guard to inform Kṛṣṇa about their arrival. Kṛṣṇa invited the sages to the sabha.

Appendix No. 27

Kṛṣṇa welcomed the sages and offered hospitality to them. The sages told Kṛṣṇa about the terrible deeds of the demon Naraka. Then the sages praised Kṛṣṇa with a hymn. Kṛṣṇa told the sages that he will slay Naraka with his discus and protect the sages. Then the sages returned to Badari.

Appendix No. 28

Kṛṣṇa blew his conch. Hearing the conch, the powerful Naraka came out for battle.

keśavaṁ purato dṛśtvā gadināṁ sārṅgīnaṁ tathā | (5)
uvāca narako daityaḥ ko bhavān kimihāgataḥ | (6)

Seeing Kṛṣṇa before him, with his mace and bow, the demon Naraka asked: who are you? Why have you come here?

ko ayaṁ paśī sthitah pārśve kaiśā te vada sāmpratam | (8)

Who is the bird? Who is this standing by your side?

evamukto jagannāthah prahasā suchiraṁ tādā | (10)

āloka satyabhāmaṁ tu vacanāṁ cedamabravit || (11)
The lord of the world (Kṛṣṇa) who was asked thus, laughed for a while. He looked at Satyabhāma and spoke the following words:

vāsudevaṁ asmi daityaṁ yadi te śrutimāgataḥ | (12)

eśā satrājitah putri bhārīyā mama yavīyasi || (13)

O the Indra of demons! I am the son of Vasudeva. Hearing about you I have come now. This is the daughter of Satrājit, my younger wife.

eśa tārksyaṁ garutmāṁstu vāhanāṁ mama daityaṁpa | (14)
tvāṁ hantumīha samprāpto vaḍāmī kimataṁ param || (15)

O demon! This is Tārksya (Garuḍa) my vehicle. I have come here to slay you. What else I need to say?

śrutvaitaddānava ghoro vihasya suchiram tādā | (16)

vāsudevaṁ asī samprāpto māṁ hantumī kila yādava || (17)

Hearing this, the terrible demon laughed for a while. The son of Vasudeva, the yādava has come to kill me.

diṣṭāṁ samprāptatvānadya cintanīyaḥ sadā mayā | (18)

kadāsau dṛṣyate yuddhe hanisyāmiti me mati || (19)

What I have always pondered, by good fortune, I have obtained now. I think that once I face him in war, I will kill him.

kṣanāṁ tiṣṭha yaduśreṣṭha kuru yuddhamā yadīcchasī | (20)
O the best among Yadavas! Stay for a moment. If you wish you can fight. Slaying you, I will take this beautiful woman to my city. Why delay the fight.

Krṣṇa replied, let us fight.

Appendix No. 28 A

The translation here is taken from the complete English translation of Appendix 28A by Satya Chaitanya available on the internet [8].

The battle between the demon Naraka and Krṣṇa is described in detail. The demon sent several sharp arrows at Krṣṇa and Krṣṇa shot arrows at the demon.

In the meanwhile, the very intelligent dānava pierced Garuda with nārāca. When Garuda became wounded all over by a nārāca of the dānava, blood started spurting out from every part of his body right before the eyes of Krṣṇa. The deeply wounded bird began flapping its wings again and again.

Then, furious with anger, Garuda, the best of birds, attacked the dānava with his wings.

A terrible battle took place. The demon Naraka shot sharp arrows at Krṣṇa.

Krṣṇa gave the heavy bow Śārṅgagāṁ to Satyabhāmā and said: O Devi! fight with Naraka. I am tired, tormented in the battle.

Krṣṇa gave the heavy bow Śārṅgagāṁ to Satyabhāmā and said: O Devi! fight with Naraka. I am tired, tormented in the battle.
with the evil Naraka.

3 In the Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam performance

Among the many temple arts of Kerala, Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam [1, 2] (also known as Kṛṣṇāṭṭam) deserves special attention. The creator of this art is Mānavedan, the Zamorin (Sāmūtiri) King, who lived in Kerala in the seventeenth century. Mānavedan has composed two great Sanskrit works, Pūrvabhārata Caṇḍaṇu and Kṛṣṇagītī. Inspired by Ānantabhaṭṭa’s Bhārata Caṇḍaṇu, the former work completed in 1644 A.D. deals with the incidents in Mahābhārata from the early history of Lunar dynasty upto the birth of Dhrṣṭarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura. Hence Pūrvabhārata Caṇḍaṇu, themewise, is a prequel to Ānantabhaṭṭa’s work.

Kṛṣṇagītī (completed in 1654 A.D.) deals with the life of Kṛṣṇa told in eight cantos: Avatāra, Kāliyamardanam, Rāsakṛīḍa, Kanisavatham, Svayamvaram, Bāṇayuddham, Vividavadham and Svargārohaṇam. It consists of slokas and gītis set to appropriate rāgas and tālas. The ritual performance Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam, a votive offering at the famous Kṛṣṇa Temple at Guruvayur in Kerala is based on Kṛṣṇagītī.

Kṛṣṇagītī integrates incidents from Bhāgavata, Mahābhārata and Harivaṃśa. Two important sections of Bāṇayuddham (the sixth canto of Kṛṣṇagītī), the granting of salvation to Ghanākarna and meeting of Kṛṣṇa and Śiva in Kailāsa are based on Harivaṃśa.

As already mentioned, Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam takes place in Guruvayur Temple as a votive offering. The performance begins in the temple after the last pūjā (trppuka) is concluded and sanctum sanctorum is closed for the day (usually after 10 PM). Preliminary rituals involve placing of musical instruments (Ceṅgila, Ilattālam, Śuddhamaddalam and Toppimaddalam) on the ground, lighting of the big lamp (Kalvilākku) which itself is a representation of the deity, a few beats on the Maddalam invoking Śabdabrahma, recitation of a maṅgala śloka and the performance of the auspicious dance Toṭayam behind the hand-held curtain. It is to be noted that there is no special stage set for the performance and the audience sit on the ground in front of the lamp and the performance takes place behind the lamp. The statue of Mānavedan with his folded hands offering praṇām to the diety is a permanent witness to the performance (see Fig. 2) which takes place for about three hours. Towards the end, the actors perform the auspicious dance Dhanāśī. They offer praṇāms to the sacred ground, to the flames of the sacred lamp and finally to the deity in the sanctum sanctorum. A few beats on the musical instruments conclude the play.

As noted by Rustom Bharucha [9], divinity pervades Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam which the devotee witnesses as a Cākṣusā Yajña. In the long period at night when sanctum sanctorum remains closed, Kṛṣṇa’s play affords the devotee a vision of the deity in all His splendour [10].

The episodes of Bāṇayuddham are killing of Murāsura, Killing of Narakāsura, meeting with Ghanākarna, Kṛṣṇa’s meeting with Śiva at Kailāsa and war with Bāṇa. Even though the text (Kṛṣṇagītī) has no mention of it, the events surrounding Satyabhāma’s fight with Naraka as performed (see Figs. 3, 4) follows the text of Harivaṃśa in surprising details.
(1) Garuḍa striking Naraṅa with wings: Fig. 1.
(2) Satyabhāmā fights with Naraṅsa: Figs. 3, 4.
(3) tatra pīto mahāviṣṇuḥ parisvajña ca tāṁ vibhūḥ (65)
śrāmānāṁbhāscāpi tasyāṣṭu mārjayāṁśa kesāvaḥ
tasyāṣṭu kāṇṭhābharaṇāṁ dadau pītau janārdanaḥ
Krṣṇa, the Glorious One, then became delighted and hugged her and wiped off the perspiration on her born of battle strain. Krṣṇa, the Great Soul, then, pleased with her, gave her a necklace: Figs. 5, 6.

We do note one difference in details: In the performance, Krṣṇa faints and Satyabhāmā picks up bow and arrow on her own, whereas in the Harivaṁśa text, Krṣṇa becoming exhausted requests her to do so. As detailed in the appendices, Madhvācārya’s text Mahābhārata Tātparyānirṇaya and Kuṅcan Nambiar’s text Śrī Krṣṇa Caritam Maṇipravālam agrees with the performance in this case.

3.1 Naraṅsa-Naraṅsaūdham Kathakaḷi

In Naraṅsa-Naraṅsaūdham Kathakaḷi also Satyabhāmā takes up arm against Naraṅsa [12] even though there is no mention of it in the text (āṭṭakatha). Following is the quote from the book, describing the action on stage.

page 98, scene 7 (last scene).
valiya Naraṅsa, bhīru, Krṣṇa, Satyabhāmā, Garuḍa.

(Fight. In the fight, as Krṣṇa gets tired and falls down, Satyabhāmā takes up the bow. Seeing this, Naraṅa, abandons his weapons, specially, the Naraṅya astra. Krṣṇa gets up and kills Naraṅa by his cakra.)

4 Naraṅsa-Naraṅsaūdham in medieval texts

Naraṅsa-Naraṅsaūdham whose first appearance in a text seems to be in the Southern Harivaṁśa in the early epic-purānic times, has also survived in the South of India in textual traditions.

4.1 From Mahābhārata Tātparyānirṇaya of Madhvācārya

The twentieth chapter of Mahābhārata Tātparyānirṇaya of Madhvācārya titled khāṇḍavavanadāhaḥ contains the Naraṅsa-Naraṅsaūdham episode. Here we quote the relevant ślokas. The English translation[13] quoted is by Harshala Rajesh based on the Kannada text with editing, translation and explanation by Dr. Vyasanakere Prabhanjanacharya.
Garud. a killed one part of the army with the blow of his wings. Remaining army was killed by Srī Kṛṣṇa’s arrows. Later Narakāsura rushed and faced Acyuta (Srī Kṛṣṇa) with arrows that were empowered with astras. Srī Kṛṣṇa was hit with shower of arrows. Narakāsura used the Śataghni given by Brahma. Srī Kṛṣṇa who is non cleavable, unbreakable, who is the personification of eternal knowledge and bliss, he who is always complete, he who never deteriorates, he who has immense strength, he who is the best among the deities, swallowed the Śataghni. Though he is never ever tired, he pretended to be tired just to cause illusion to ignorant people. Srī Kṛṣṇa who was THE best among the best, pretended to be tired because he wanted to make sure that Narakāsura does not look down upon Brahmadeva, whose precious boons never went waste in the case of many others. Looking at Narakāsura who was beaming with pride, Satyabhāmādevi took Srī Kṛṣṇa’s bow named Śārṅga in her hands. Despite of Narakāsura’s attempts, she rendered him weaponless and drove him out of his chariot in a fraction of a second. Srī Kṛṣṇa hugged Satyabhāmā. He thrust his discus towards violent Narakāsura who had recovered and got on his chariot and showering
weapons, which beheaded him and Narakṣura was killed instantaneously.”

4.2 From Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caritam Maṇipravāḷam

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caritam Maṇipravāḷam is a kāvyā in Malayalam ascribed to Kuñcan Nambiar from Kerala in 18th century. The episode of Satyabhāmā fighting Narakṣura occurs in this work.

Guruḍa turned back
Thereafter Mādhava fainted a little
Quickly, Satyabhāmā came with the bow
To Naraka’s presence.

Satyabhāmāyuṭe śastraṃēkkayāl
kṛttamāyī Narakanye vigraham
mattakēśinikālōtu tōkkumō
mattanākiya mahāsūrōtttamān?

Hit by the arrows of Satyabhāmā
Naraka’s body was shattered, yet
Is the arrogant, mighty, great Asura
To court defeat at the hands of women?

nillu nillu capalē ninakkahō
villetukka yudhi yōgyamalleō
collu kēḷppatinasādhyamenkil ŋan
kolluvānini maṭikkayilleō

“Hold it, hold it, you frivolous!
It doesn’t befit you
To take up arms in the war.
If you are not willing to listen
I wouldn’t hesitate to kill”

ithamuddhatamuraccu satvaram
yuddhamā́su Narakaṇa tuṭań́inān
kruddhanā́masuravairi cakrama-
ñiuddhariccu samarē vilań́inān

Saying thus,
Naraka restored to fight.
Angered,
Holding the Cakra
The enemy of Asura (Kṛṣṇa) outshone in the war.

4.3 From the Narakāsura episode in Kālikā Purāṇa [6]

Chapter 40, sloka 68. The English translation quoted is by Prof. B.N. Shastri.

āruhya garuḍaṁ kṛṣṇaṁ satyabhāmādevitiyakaḥ
prāgjyotiṣamuhkogacchad vāsavastridivarī yayau

“Kṛṣṇa accompanied by Satyabhāmā, mounted Garuḍa and had gone to the city of Prāgjyotīṣa, while Śakra (Indra) returned to heaven.”

sa yuddhyat kṛṣṇanikaṭe kālikāṁ kālikopamāṁ
raktāśyanayanāṁ dīrghāṁ khadgaśaktidharā tadā (102)
apaśyajjagataṁ dhrātin kāmākhyamapi mohinīṁ (103)
savismitastathā bhītastāṁ drśtvā jagatāṁ prasūṁ
yoddhayamityeva tadā yugudhe narakāsuraḥ (104)

“While fighting, he observed tall Kālikā by the side of Kṛṣṇa, similar to Kālikā, with red face and red eyes, wearing sword and śakti (lance), and Kāmākhyā, the protectress of the world, the enchantress.
The demon Naraka having seen Kāmākhyā, the mother of the world siding Kṛṣṇa was surprised and frightened, he then fought the battle for its sake as the fighting was the only course left.”

4.4 Instances from Telugu Tradition

The following information is from Prof. Velcheru Narayana Rao.

There are three Telugu texts that contain the incident of Satyabhāmā fighting with Narakaṣura. Two of them, Uttara-harivaṃśamu by Nacana Somana (a.k.a Somanatha), late 13th century, (1. 149-171), and Harivaṃśamu of Errapragada, early 14th century, (Part

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II, 4.125-172) describe that Satyabhāma took the bow from Kṛṣṇa when the latter was wounded from an arrow from Naraka. Kṛṣṇa was unconscious for a while, recovered and asked Satyabhāma to fight for him, because he was still tired.

*Bhāgavatamu* of Banmera Potana, late 15th century, (10.170-188) describes that Satyabhāma fought Naraka but does not say that Kṛṣṇa was wounded, or, fell unconscious.

The narrative from Nacana Somana and Errapragada has gained popularity in the oral tradition. There may be other such sources.

5 Some Observations

Even though all the texts including *Kṛṣṇagīti* which describe the episode of Killing of Naraka explicitly mentions that Satyabhāma accompanied Kṛṣṇa to Prājjyotisapura, the domain of Naraka, the reason for it is not explained. The clue is given in the Nilakantha commentary [11] in the Citraśāla edition of *Harivanaṇḍa* sloka
tataḥ sahaiva śakraṇa śāṅkacakragadāsibhṛt
prasthe garudanātha satyabhāma sahāyavān
Nilakantha comments: satyabhāma sahāyavān iti.
asyāḥ satyabhāmāyāḥ prthivyaṁśatvāt prthivyājñayaiva tasya mṛtyur vihitoṁiti
satyabhāmāyājñayaiva tam haniṣyāṁityāśayaḥ.

*Viṣṇupurāṇa* also states that Kṛṣṇa went to prājjyotisapura together with Satyabhāma:
saṅcītyāgatamāruḥya garudāṁ gaganecaram |
satyabhāmāṁ samāropya yaisyau prājjyotisāṁ puram || (5-29-14)
whereas bhāgavata just mentions wife:
sabhārasyau garudāruḍaḥ yaisyau prājjyotisāṁ puram || (10-59-2)

The identification of Satyabhāma with Goddess Earth appears elsewhere also. For example, *Kṛṣṇopanisād* [14] explicitly identifies Satyabhāma with Earth: satyabhāmaṁ ṅharetī vā. The text *Gargasamhitā* or *Garga bhāgavatam* [15] also makes this identification: satyabhāmaṁ vasūṃdharaḥ (goloka khaṇḍam, adhyāya 4).

The active role of Garuḍa in the performance of Killing of Naraka in Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam is also worth mentioning. Especially in the light of the description of Garuḍa in Kailāsāyāṭrī section of Bhaviṣya Parva of *Harivanaṇḍa* [16].

In Kālikā Purāṇa where we find the detailed account of Naraka’s life that befits a tragic hero who was a victim to the circumstances, the role of his parents Viṣṇu and Prthivi (Goddess Earth) are elaborated. Further we note that in Kālikā Purāṇa, the Book of the Goddess, all manifestations of the Goddess in various forms are amalgamated. Not too surprisingly, in Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam, the veṣam of Goddess Earth, Satyabhāma and Pārvatī are very similar. Only distinguishing feature of Goddess Earth is the crown.

A more detailed, in-depth study of this subject might reveal many enriching and enlight-
ening surprises. However, at present we are handicapped by two major factors. Firstly, the only printed edition of the southern recension of Harivaṃśa available to the BORI editor was in Grantha lipi. This may partly account for the ignorance prevalent in Mahābhārata scholarship regarding many gems [17] in the southern recension of Harivaṃśa. In the light of its extreme importance, it is mandatory to have a printed edition of this text in Devanāgarī lipi. We hope that Mahābhārata scholars will initiate an effort towards this goal. Secondly, the aṭṭaprakāram (performance manual) of Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam which was prepared many years back, remains unpublished. We hope the Guruvayur Devaswom will initiate project to publish this work.

Salutations to Vyāsa (whom Mānavedan extolls in the maṅgala śloka of his Pūrvabhārata Caṁpu [18]) who elaborated on the episode of Naraka-Satyabhāmāyuddham in Harivaṃśa, the supplement to Mahābhārata (śrimahābhārate khileṣu harivaṃśe). Salutations to Mānavedan who instead of summarising the episode in the text (Kṛṣṇagīti) elaborated on it in the performance text thereby etching it permanently in the mind of the prekṣaka.

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References

[1] Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam is a votive ritual theatre offering at Guruvayur temple, Kerala, India. For more information, visit the site: http://www.dvaipayana.net/krishnanattam


[3] We thank Prof. Velcheru Narayana Rao for helpful communications.


[10] guruvāyumandira virociṣṇuḥ sa viṣṇuḥ svayam as Mānavedan says in the maṅgala śloka of Kṛṣṇagīti.


[16] yajñamārtiḥ purāṇātmā sāmamūrdhā ca pāvanāḥ rīvedapakṣaśavānpakṣi (3-76-3)


[18] The following is the maṅgala śloka of Pārvabhārata Caṁpu by Mānavedan. Published with the commentary Kṛṣṇīyam, by Dr. K. Raghavan Pillai, Kerala University, Anantaśayana Saṁskṛta Grandhāvali, No. 209. Published by Sriramavilasam Press, Kol-lam (1963).
May that best among the sages, manifesting as Vyāsa, who, in the form of Apāntaratamās [19], is eternally engaged in austerities in the snowy mountain (Himalaya), whose body is the faultless and complete portion of Viṣṇu, who is always engaged in deeds that are beneficial to the world, from whose moon-like face quickly rushes forth the nectar stream of Bhārata, always bestow propitiousness and prosperity upon us.

Figure 1: Kṛṣṇa unconscious, being attended by Satyabhāmā and Garuḍa. Narakāsura jubilant. Note the statue of Mānavedan behind Garuḍa.

Figure 2: Garuḍa attacking Narakāsura.
Figure 3: Satyabhāmā takes up bow and arrow while Kṛṣṇa sits unconscious.

Figure 4: Satyabhāmā fighting Narakaśura.
Figure 5: Kṛṣṇa appreciates Satyabhamā's action.

Figure 6: Kṛṣṇa presents a necklace to Satyabhāmā.