In the 1st century, there was no further development of the biographies after it came into existence. During the 3rd century, the Christianity in Europe was in full swing. At that time, just like the Vaiśnava reformation movement in Assam, literature was used to assist the reformers in spreading religion. At that time, all the eminent characters of the then biographies were Islam saints. As their motto was to sing in praise of Christianity, so, their biographies may be termed as "Hagiography".

Likewise, some biographies were written during the middle age. But these are not referred as biographies. They are said as 'Tales' or 'Br̥ttas'. In India also, these tales began to be written during the 1st century. Exact biographies were not written in Sanskrit, Pāli and Prākrit before that period.

In Buddhist literature also, we find some caritas of Lord Buddha and samrat Asoka. But these are not real caritas or biographies. They are the collections of legends.

We come across proper biographical literature in the 8th or 9th century. Before that period, we get enough of hagiographical

1. Gobinda Prasad Sarma, "Jīvāni āru Asamiyā Jīvāni", - P. 44
2. Ibid., P. 46
literature in Sanskrit and Prākrit - both from Buddhist and Jaina sources. The main purpose of these hagiographies was that writings inspired by devotion intended to promote it. So, we find that all the characters of the hagiographies or "the legends of the saints" are of the same types.

HAGIOGRAPHICAL LITERATURE FROM BUDDHIST SOURCE

The oldest literature of the Buddhists consists of collections of speeches or conservations of saying, songs, narratives and rules of the order.

1. The Tipiṭaka  It is nothing but a great collection of such collections. It is the oldest Buddhist work. It is not a biography not even a quasi-biography. It is a Pāli canon of the Buddhists. It is remarkable that in the Pāli canon there is no biography of the Buddha. The Mahāparinibbāna (the great discourse of the perfect Nirvāṇa of Buddha) is neither a dialogue nor a speech on one or more chief points of doctrine, but a continuous record of the later part of Buddha's life, his last speeches and sayings and his death. The memory of the later part of the Master's life was most firmly impressed on the minds of the disciples of Buddha and that have been preserved with loving fidelity.

In it, we find details of Buddha's life and activities, his speeches and sermons and all that he stood for. This Tipiṭaka (three baskets) consists of three so-called pīṭakas or baskets namely:

3 Maurice Winternitz, "History of Indian Literature", Vol II, P.38
(1) Vinayapitaka - basket of the discipline of the order.
(2) Sutta piṭaka - basket of the Suttas (Sutta means "short rule").
(3) Abhidhammapiṭaka - basket of the higher subleties of the doctrine.

The language of our Tipiṭaka can scarely be the same as that of the canon of the 3rd century B.C. ¹ Buddha himself spoke the dialect of his native province Kosola (Oudh) and it was most likely in this same dialect that he first began to proclaim his doctrine. Later on he taught in Magadha (Bihar) and preached in the dialect of this province.

2. The Mahāvastu: It is one of the most important works which still belongs to the old school of the Hīnayāna. The biography of the Buddha is the chief content of the Mahāvastu. It is more specially valuable as a treasure trove of Jātakas and other narratives.

The Mahāvastu treats the life of Buddha in three sections—the first begins with the life of the Bodhisattva at the time of Buddha Dīpaṅkara. The second section introduces to us the heaven where Bodhisattva determines to attain rebirth in the womb of Queen Māyā. The third section relates the history of the first conversions and the rise of the monastic community.

¹ Ibid., P. 12
The prose-literature of pre-Kālidāsa age can be divided into two - Avadānasāhitya and Allegory or Satire. In this part of the Avadānasāhitya, the past life activities of Bodhisattva are described. Among these, Mahāvastu and Lalitavistara are famous. The main purpose of the Mahāvastu is to relate the life-story of the Buddha. It should rather be described as a labyrinth, in which the thread of a connected narrative of the Buddha's life can only be discovered with some difficulties. This work scarcely tells us anything new about the doctrine of the Buddha. But it is more especially valuable as a treasure trove of Jātakas and other narratives. The work is written entirely in mixed Sanskrit.

3. The Lalita-Vistara: It is regarded as one of the most sacred Mahāyāna texts. It is written in prose and full of poetic verses. It not only calls itself a 'Purāṇa' but really has much in common with the Purāṇas. It sketches a splendid picture of the Buddha with divine brilliance shining around it. The life and work of Buddha on earth is thus termed as the sport of supernatural being. Actually we do not know whether the biography of Buddha translated by Dharmarakṣa in the year 308 A.D., the supposed second translation of this book is really a translation of the text. The Tibetan translation is an accurate translation of the Sanskrit text. The Lalita-Vistara is a recast of an older Hīnayāna text. The Buddha biography is enlarged here with the spirit of the Mahāyāna.

6 Maurice Winternitz, op. cit., P. 246
It is an important source for ancient Buddhism, but it is wrong to regard it as a good ancient source for our knowledge of Buddhism. Neither does the work give us information of the popular Buddhism of the early period. It is thus most informative as regards the development of Buddha legend from the earliest beginnings and it is from the ballads and episodes of 'Lalita-Vistara' that Asvaghoṣa created his epic 'Buddha-carita'. But Winternitz did not support this view.

It is therefore only correct to say that the Lalita-Vistara offers us very old traditions concerning the Buddha legend, as well as some which are centuries later. Here the narrative is interrupted by a dialogue between Ananda and the Buddha.

4. Avadāna Sāhitya: The word 'Avadāna' means a 'noteworthy deed' sometimes in a bad sense, but generally in the good sense of 'a heroic deed'. Like the Jātakas, the Avadānas, too, are a kind of sermous. It is therefore usually told, where and on what occasion Buddha related the story from the past and at the end, the lesson is deducted from the story by Buddha.

(a) Avadāna-Sātaka or the "hundred Avadānas" is a work of the former category, presumably the oldest of these books. This Avadāna Sātaka consists of ten decades, each of which deals with a certain

7. Debipada Bhattacharyee, "Bāngla Carit Sāhitya"- P. 16
8 Maurice Winternitz, op.cit., P. 256
subject. Though Buddha worship plays a prominent part in the legends, there is no trace of the Bodhisattva cult and of Mahāyānistic mythology.

(b) **Karma-Śataka:** The Karma-Śataka, "a hundred Karman Stories", is an old work which is very much like the Avadāna Śataka, and has a number of narratives in common with it, but unfortunately it has only come down in a Tibetan translation.

(c) **Divyāvadāna:** The Divyāvadāna or "the Heavenly Avadānas" is a later collection than the Avadāna-Śataka, but it also includes some very old texts. The composition of the work is very confused and disconnected. The language and style, are, by no means unified. Legends are written in good Sanskrit prose. The various parts of the work belong to different periods. There are some passages which must certainly have been written prior to the 3rd century AD. However, the collection as a whole could not have been in existence earlier than the 4th century AD. One of the most interesting legends of Divyāvadāna the Śārdulaśakaśavadyāna was translated into Chinese in 265 A.D. Divyāvadāna has many legends in common with Pāli canon.

**The nature of these works:**

These works are hagiographical or in most cases of the nature of fables and stories or tales. In most of the cases, there are no historical value.

9 Ibid., P. 285
While naming the whole Sanskrit prose-literature in English, the scholars divided these into four parts—

(a) Moral tales,
(b) Historical composition,
(c) Romance,
(d) Stories.

But these stories played a great role in the lives of human beings nearly for the last 2500 years as they had a great moral value, and were very important in the formation of their characters and careers and in helping them leading virtuous lives. May be historical or not, these types of ideal characters were before the people for centuries, and the monks and preachers of different times narrated these characters to the people so vividly and ardently that the people were heavily moved, influenced and hypnotised. As people believed them as true and virtuous characters, they became their (people's) ideals of lives. These avadānas are only the forms of Jātakas.

In "Pāṅśupradānābadānam", "Bitosokāvadānam" and "Asokāvadānam" of Divyāvadānam, we find that the king Asoka is mentioned. But these are not real caritas because we cannot learn anything about the personalities of Buddhā and Asoka from these. Like the "Jātakas", the "Avadānas" also described the great deeds of those dharmagurus.

10 Debipada Bhattacharyee, op. cit., P. 10
The position of the Jātaka book is probably not different from that of the Mahābhārata. These collections of the Buddhist tales are the utmost importance not only for the history of Indian literature but also for the literature of the world. The majority of Jātakas, in fact, belong to that type of literary work which consists of a mixture of prose and verse, which are favourite in Indian literature. These Jātakas and fables aimed at teaching "Nīty" i.e., worldly wisdom.

We find Jātakas in the texts of all Buddhist sects as they were one of the chief media of propaganda and carried Buddhism into all circles. Even today, there is no book so popular among the Buddhist peoples as the Jātaka. These are of inestimable value from the point of view of the history of the civilization.

DEFINED DISTINCTION BETWEEN MYTH, LEGEND AND HISTORY IN ANCIENT INDIA

First of all, we must know the definition of myth, legend and history.

Myth - Myth means true story. It is an ancient traditional story of gods or heroes especially one offering an explanation of same facts or phenomenon. It can also be termed as a story with commonly held belief that is untrue or without foundation. It narrates a sacred history.

11 "Chambers 20th Century Dictionary," P. 834
Legend - It is a story of a saint's life or a person having a special place in public esteem because of striking qualities or deeds real or fictitious.  

History - History is an account of an event. It is a systematic account of the origin and progress of the world, a nation, an institution, and the knowledge of past events etc.  

From the above definitions, it becomes clear that the three terms are so intimately related that it has never been the Indian way to make a clearly defined distinction between myth, legend and history. Historiography in India was never more than a branch of epic poetry. Thus the Buddhist regarded as history not only all the legends about the Buddhas of previous ages and the former births of Gautama Buddha in the Buddhavamsá, Cariya-piṭaka and the Jātaka-book, but also the whole of the Buddha legend as well. Following these legendary compositions, the monks of Ceylon told the story of the introduction of Buddhism in the historical sections of the Āṭṭakathás.

Myths and legends, too, are related for the sake of introducing some doctrine. In the Jātakas also, we find some pious legends - all of which are only partly of Buddhist origin. These pious legends led to mythical accounts of the first kings of Ceylon and also semi-historical records of Asoka, Mahinda etc.  

12 Ibid., P. 721  
13 Ibid., P. 594  
14 Maurice Winternitz, op. cit., P. 46
nearer these records approach to the historical period, the more
pre-dominent do the real historical accounts become. But the
legends are never altogether supplemented by history. Thus the
historical sections of Āṭṭakathās became, as it were, traditions as
well as of actual historical records.

The ancient authors relate things which they looked upon
as true history, but though it is true, we are compelled to regard
much of it as myth, legend and fiction.\(^{15}\)

As a work or art, Mahāvamśa (in 5791 verses) is
extremely instructive from the point of view of the history of
literature. It shows, how in India, epics were enlarged by the
addition of more new themes. Mahāvamśa-Tīkā is a commentary on
Mahāvamśa. This is not merely a commentary, but also contains
numerous myths, fairly tales and legends. These are collected
partly from popular traditions. For example, the legends of
Candragupta and Cāṇakya, which have been taken from the Āṭṭakathā
of Northern Monastery, are of popular variety.

**Hagiographical Literature from Jaina Source**

Just like the Buddhist ancient literature, the Jaina
literature is not also purely biographical, some of them are
hagiographical. Among the long lists, except Pārśvanātha and
Mahāvira, others have no historical base.\(^{16}\)

\(^{15}\) Ibid., P. 216

\(^{16}\) Debipada Bhattacharyya, op. cit., P. 18
Nevertheless, just like the Buddhist stories (etc.) the Jaina stories and the quasi-biographies have their unique and tremendous influence on the masses of people for hundreds of years for their canonical and moral value and these played an important role in the formation of the characters of masses of people of different ages in different countries.

Vardhamāna Mahāvīra (599-527 B.C) was the founder of Jainism. He formed a creed which existed during his time and was propounded by Pārśvanātha. He had twenty-three predecessors, the earliest being Rṣabha, a saint who was the originator of the doctrine.

Sthavirāvali Carita - The Pārīśīta-Parvan or Sthavirāvali Carita - i.e., Appendix-Section or 'Lives of the Series of the Elders", has a still greater wealth of fairly tales and stories of all kinds. The writer is Hemacandra. He took contents from earlier works of legendary lore. He also translated them from the Prākṛt'. It contains the life-stories of the elders.

Sumatinātha caritra - In the second half of the 12th century, Somaprabha treats the life of the 5th Tīrthaṅkara in Prākṛt.

Supāsanāha Gariyam17 Laksmana Ganin deals with the story of the 7th Tīrthakara in this caritam. This was composed in the year 1143 A.D. also contains 68 Apabhraṃśa verses.

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17 Edited by Pandit Haragovind Das Seth, Benaras, 1918
Vimala Purāṇa - In this caritam, Kṛṣṇadāsa deals with the life of the 13th Tīrthakara.

Dharmasārmābhuyudaya - This is Hemacandra's great epic which deals with the story of Dharmanatha-the 15th Tīrthakara. This epic is an imitation of Māgha's "Śīśupālavādha".

Vāsupujya Caritra - The legend of the 12th Tīrthakara is treated by Vardhamānasūrī in the Vāsupujya Caritam. In this case, the biography is stereotyped, but it forms the frame for a series.

Mahāpuruṣa-Caritra - The life-stories of the five "Great Men", Rṣabha, Neminātha, Sāntinātha, Pārśvanātha and Vardhamāna Mahāvīra are contained in the epic Mahāpuruṣa Caritra in five sargas by Merutūṅga.

Prabhāvaka-Caritra - This carita by Prabhācandra or Candraprabha is a continuation of Hemacandra's "Parisīṣṭa Parvan". It contains the life-stories of twenty-two Jaina teachers, poets and authors.

Prabandhacintāmanī - Prabandhacintāmoni or "Wishing Jewel of Stories" by Merutūṅga and Prabandhakoṣa or "Treasury of stories" by Rejasekhara can only be termed as quasi-historical-biographical works. Merutūṅga's work contains a collection of historical personages and Rajaśekhara's work contains the life-stories of twenty-four persons.
Tīrtha-Kalpa or Kalpa-pradīpa - It is another semi-historical work. It tells the events belonging to the author's own period.

Bṛhatśvayambhū-stotra or Caturvinsati-Jina-Stavana - Vidyānanda and Samantabhadra were at the same time authors of learned works of a hymn-praise of all twenty-four Jainas in this carita. There are quite a number of stotras in which all the twenty-four Jainas are extolled.

Caturvinsati-Jina-stuti - The poet Bappabhaṭṭi wrote this in ninetysix Sanskrit verses.

Śobhana Stuti - The most celebrated is the hymn in praise of the twenty-four Jinas by the poet Śobhana who lived in the 2nd half of the 10th century. The poem is usually called "Śobhana stuti" which means "Hymn of Śobhana" as well as "Beautiful hymn". Śobhana's brother Dharmaññalā himself composed a hymn to Rṣabha, "RṣabhaPañcāśikā". This is a Prākt poem in fifty stanzas. In the first twenty verses, there are allusions to events in the life of Rṣabha, whilst the following verses are exclusively devoted to the praise of Rṣabha.

Vītorāga Stotras - At the request of the king Kumārapala, the great Hemacandra also wrote "A poem in praise of the Passionless One", i.e. Mahāvīra, which is a poetical manual of the Jaina
religion. This work consists of twenty short sections generally of eight or nine slokas each or sometimes more.

Jina-Stotra-Ratna-Koṣa - MuniSundara śūri wrote a large collection of hymns, entitled "Jina-Stotra-Ratna-Koṣa". The first Prastāva contains twenty-three stotras in praise of various Jīnas in connection with their monuments at various sacred places.

Pārśvanātha Carita and Yasodhara Carita - Vādiraja wrote both the caritas.

The Jaina Literature - It is proved that the Jaina literature is very important from the point of view of the history of the Indian languages, for the Jainas always took care that their writings were accessible to considerable masses of the people. It was not until a later period that the Jainas used Sanskrit for commentaries and learned works as well as for poetry. In Prākṛt also, their contributions were unparalled.

Some of the writers used simple and lucid Sanskrit. At a later time, from the 10th to 12th century, there is a return of poetry to the Apabhramśa dialects adapted to the vernacular. In quite recent times, the Jainas also used various modern Indian languages and they have enriched more especially Gujarati and Hindi literature, as well as Tamil and Kanarese literatures in the south. The language of the post-canonical Jaina works is partly Prākṛt and partly Sanskrit. The value of all these lies in their serving as a
Sanskrit. The value of all these lies in their serving as a depository of very ancient historical or semi-historical traditions on the one hand and of a great mass of a popular narrative theme on the other. They have developed a voluminous narrative literature by writing epics, novels, dramas etc. in the simple language of the people.¹⁸

There is scarcely any province of Indian literature in which the Jainas have not been able to hold their own. They have developed a voluminous narrative literature, also written epics and novels, composed dramas and hymns, and also produced important works of scholarship. Many of the gem of the narrative art of ancient India has come down to us by way of the Jaina narrative literature.

The Jainas also preserved some interesting versions of numerous legends, tales etc. from other sources. For instance, they incorporated the Kṛṣṇa-cult into their religion. The Jainas also have produced a vast fairy-tale literature in prose and verse. All these works are essentially sermons. The great Hemacandra (also called Hemacārya) was one of the most versatile and prolific writer. It is due to him that the Jaina literature flourished so exceedingly there in the 12th and 13th centuries.

Like the Buddhist monks, the Jaina monks also were delighted at all times in adorning their sermons with the telling

¹⁸ Ibid., P. 483
of stories, in converting worldly stories into legends of saints, in elucidating Jaina doctrines by means of examples. Thus the Jainas exploit their inborn Indian love for fables in order to win over and retain as many adherents as possible for their religion. They not only turn their attention to the editing of texts which are most generously made accessible to European scholars also, but they are still productive in literature proper and are writing original works in Sanskrit and the vernaculars on Jaina philosophy and dogmatics.

They have extended their activities beyond the sphere of their own religious literature to a far greater extent than the Buddhists have done, and they have memorable achievements in their secular sciences to their credit. Thus the Jainas have occupied a high position in the history of Indian literature.