Prior to a discussion on the religious and philosophical aspect of the Rukmini-haraṇa legend, it is felt essential to provide a brief note on religion and philosophy.

It is not easy to give a specific definition of the term 'religion'. For an average Indian, religion is what is known as 'Dharma'. In ordinary sense it means 'virtue'. V. S. Apte provides various meanings for the word. 'Dharma' (i.e. religion). According to him, it is the customary observance of a caste, law, usage, virtue, righteousness, justice, morality, devotion to God, etc. ¹

Again, 'The Encyclopaedia Britannica', defines religion as 'man's relation to that which he regards as holy.' ²

It is further explained there that the term 'relation to the holy', conceives variety of forms. Worship is regarded as the most basic of these. Further, moral conduct,  

¹ The customary observance of a caste, law, usage, virtue, righteousness, justice, morality, devotion to God, etc.  SSFD. p.268
² 'man's relation to that which he regards as holy'  EB. Vol.19. p.108.
right belief, and participation in religious institutions are generally also constituent elements of the religious life as practised by believers and worshipers as directed by religious sages and scriptures. Maxmuller, who is a pioneer in comparative philology as well as in comparative religion explains 'faith' as religion. He observes that religion becomes a primodial form of doctrinal belief. Thus Emile Durkheim, who regards religion as the unified system of beliefs also maintained that religion is 'essentially social'. According to Swami Vivekananda, as is pointed out by Late V. V. Giri, it is religion that teaches man to be good and to do good. Further, in another place, Swamiji remarks in respect of religion that 'it means so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realise the infinite'.

DHARMA IN SCHOOLS OF INDIAN TRADITION:

We may also discuss in brief the meaning of the word 'Dharma (religion)' in accordance with the religious

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3 'The term relation to the holy, may be conceived of in a variety of forms. Worship is probably the most .... as commanded by religious sages and scriptures'. Ibid. p. 108.

4 'It (religion) is primodial form of doctrinal belief.' Ibid. p. 109.

5 'Religion is essentially social'. Ibid. p. 109.

6 'To be good and to do good that is the whole of religion'. VRM. p.4.

7 '... religion means so many attempts of the human soul to grasp and realise the infinite' Ibid. p.40.
tradi tions of Indian thought. The term 'Dharma', is formed from the root 'dhr'. The simple meaning of the root 'dhr' is 'to hold', or 'to support' or, 'to sustain'. Therefore, the great Mahābhārata states that due to the power of holding 'Dharma' or virtue (i.e. religion) is called so. It is said that Dharma again holds or sustains the beings. Every being has its own Dharma or virtue.

Thus Dr. Radhakrsnan observes that every form of life, and every group of men has its Dharma which is the law of its beings. Manu defines Dharma as that path which is always followed by the learned who are devoid of attachment and that to which the heart assents. Manu, further asserts that the whole Veda is the root, or source of Dharma (i.e. sacred law). Moreover, Manu remarks, 'Sūtī is Veda and the 'Dharmaśāstra' (i.e. Manusmṛti etc) is Smṛti. A person who obeys the sacred law, prescribed in these two, gains fame in this world and after death, attains unsurpassable bliss'.

8 Vide. SSFD. p. 274.
10 every form of life, every group of men has its dharma which is the law of its beings. HVL. p.78
11 vidvadbhiḥ sevitaḥ sadbhir nityā̄madveśarāgibhibhiḥ / hṛdayenaḥbhyanujñāto yo dharma ā̄stam nivodhata // Manu. II. 1. p.57
12 vedā̄śkīlō dharmaṁulaṁ..............
   Ibid. II. 6. p.60.
Jaimini also observes that the Vedic sacraments, like the 'Jyotiṣṭoma' etc., constitute Dharma. In the same manner, Govindaṛāja also observes that the sacred institutions performed by the persons, learned in the Veda undoubtedly are what is real Dharma. Thus it is found that the Hindu religious works try to assert that the Veda is the actual source of Dharma.

WHAT IS VEDA?

The Veda is the earliest literary and religious work of the Hindus. The Rgveda is undoubtedly the oldest literary monument not only in Indian literature but also in the whole literary sphere of the world. The term 'Veda' forms from the root 'Vid', which means to know. With the primary suffix 'ac' the word becomes 'Veda', which means knowledge. But Veda, means not ordinary knowledge, it means supreme knowledge, or sacred knowledge (Paramajñāna). As this knowledge is attained beyond bodily organs (Indriya) like, eyes, nose, ears etc. so this Paramajñāna, is at the same time known as 'Aṭindriyajñāna'. So, Vedic texts lead men to know regarding the eternal or the supreme divinity of the universe.

14 'codayaṁ lakṣaṇasyaḥ dharmā iti /
15 gwivarājaṁ mate vedaṁbhiranuśthitaḥ sansāyṛahitasya dharmā iti dharmālakṣaṇam syāt'/
16 Vide VP. p. 1.
In the 'Samhita' portion of the Vedic literature (specially, in the R̄ṣya-Vedā-Samhitā) many a God headed by Agni, Sūrya, Indra, Mitra and Varuṇa have been prayed through various Mantras in different Sūktas. But gradually, the Veda comes to admit that there is only one supreme power which is called 'Sat' (i.e. Brahmān in the Upaniṣads) above all the Vedic deities. In a famous Mantra of the R̄ṣya-Vedā it is said that one 'Sat' (the ever existence one, or paramānanda brahmān) is called by the Vipras (wise ones) differently like Agni, Yama, Mātaris-vāna etc. In another Mantra it is stated that 'the great one brahmān becomes all this.' Thus Yāśkācārya also remarks in his Nīruktā that one supreme God is dedicated or prayed in various forms of Gods.

The Upaniṣads, which are also called Vedānta, or Rahasya, or Brahmavidyā reveal the 'Sat' (or ever existent). the supreme brahmān. These Upaniṣads explain the nature of Brahmān variously. Thus the Taittirīya Upaniṣad explains, 'Brahmā is true, full of knowledge, and it is endless.'

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17 ekām sadviprāh vahudhā vadanti agnirī yāmaṁ mātarisvānamāṁ-
huḥ // RV. 1. 164. 46.
18 Vide. Ibid. 7.58.2.
19 mahābhāgyāt dvvatāyāh eka ātmā vahudhā stūyate // Nir. 7. p.334.
20 satyaṁ jñānamanantarāṁ brahma
The Maitri Upaniṣad defines Brahma as 'Sat', 'Cit' and 'Anandamaya'. The Nṛsimha Pūrvatāpanīyopaniṣad also, however, seems to support this view. Again, Brahma is explained as Satya (true) and Anandamaya (full of bliss, or pleasure) in the Brhadāranyakopaniṣad. Further, the Kaṭhopaniṣad states that Brahma is that which never dies, nor be parishable and which is permanent one etc.

It becomes clear from the Upaniṣads that the brahman is absolute, permanent, unparishable, true, Nir-guṇa (devoid of attribute), Anandamaya (full of bliss or pleasure) and 'Sat' (ever existent). To know this brahman one must know the soul or Ātman. The soul is always divine. But due to 'Māyā' or 'Avidyā' (i.e. ignorance) the Jīva (being) never sees or, realises it. Thus one of the salient features of the Upaniṣads is to teach the 'Ātmajnāna' or 'Brahmajnāna' (self-realization) by way of repelling the 'Avidyā' (i.e. ignorance). The Mundakopaniṣad declares, 'Men, within the domain of Māyā or Avidyā are really ignorant. But they consider wrongly themselves as learned out of attachment to senses and to 'Karmaphala'

21 'nityaṁ cinnātrarupagṝṣmi sadaṁ saccinmayo'smyahām'/
22 tasmād idaṁ saccidanandamayo' parama brahma ..............
   US. NU. 1.6. p. 219.
23 veda satyaṁ brahmaeti ........................................
24 na jāyate mṛtyate vā vipaścīnayaṁ kutaścinna vabhūva
   kaścit /
   KU. 1. dvitiya vallī. 47//18// p.74.
(the fruit or result of deeds) only they are unable to get 'Ātmatattva' or 'Ātmajñāna' and finally fall down from Svargaloka (Heaven). Similarly, the Isopanisad remarks - 'He who knows both knows both knowledge and ignorance together, crosses death by 'Avidyā'(ignorance) and attains immortality by knowledge.'

A 'Jīva', generally is always in search of pleasure. But as he is covered with 'Māya' or 'Avidyā-Sakti' of Paramabrahman, he is unable to attain the eternal pleasure, which is only with the Paramātman. So, he seeks pleasures with the earthly objects, which is not at all permanent, but he gets absorbed there in by considering it real due to ignorance. As soon as his ignorance goes away, he comes to the state of self-realization and then he attains the 'Paramātman' which is full of eternal pleasure. This is the essence of Vedānta, and that path to attain the supreme divinity is the aim of Hindu religion.

It is to be said in the words of Swami Vivekananda, one of the famous Vedantist saints of India, that man is always divine by his nature, but this divinity is covered. The way of realization of divinity is religion.

25 a vidyāyām vahudā varttamānā .................
   MuU. 1.16.9. p.81.
26 vidyānāvidyānca..........vidyayāmṛtamasnute //
   ṬU. 11. p.29.
27 Man, in his true nature is already divine, but this divinity is covered. Realization of divinity is religion. VRM. p.44.
The path of Hindu religion is shown not only by the Vedas (including Upaniṣads) but also by the epics and purānic works of Indian literature. Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan also observes this view. 23

The teachings of the Upaniṣads have found clear expression in the Mahābhārata, specially through the Śrīmad-Bhagavadgītā which is met with in the Bhīṣmaparva of the epic. In the 'Gītāmāhātmyam' (the greatness of Gītā) it is stated in a verse thus - 'All Upaniṣada are cows; the cow herd's son (i.e. Kṛṣṇa) is the milk man to milk them; pārtha (i.e. Arjuna) is the cow-calf to drink milk and the milk is the great Gītā which is eternal'. 29 In another verse, again, it is expressed by Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa, 'Gītā is My 'Paramā Vidyā' which is undoubtedly in the form of Brahma itself'. 30 Therefore, it is obvious that through the Śrīmad-Bhagavadgītā the 'Brahmajñāna' (realization of the absolute reality), the path to attain the grace of God, or to attain the 'Paramapada' (the supreme absolute) is taught.

The Paramēśvara, who is not other than the Paramātmā or Brahmān is one as it is stated above. That is called

23 Hinduism is the religion not only of the Vedas but of the epics and Purāṇas. HVL. p.20.
29 sarvopaniṣado gāvo dogdha gopālanandanaḥ / ..............
Geeta, Gitamāhātmyam. 5.
30 gītā me paramāvidyā brahmārupā nasaṁśayaḥ //
Ibid. Gītā māhātmyam. 47.
'Puruṣa' in the Sāṅkhya philosophy. That 'Puruṣa' is absolutely devoid of quality. But appears as many and creates the universe by means of His own power which is called 'Māya', or 'Prakṛtisakti'. It is observed so by S. Dasgupta also 'Prakṛti', which is the creative force of the Puruṣa or God, possesses three Guṇas (qualities) viz., 'Sattva' (honesty), 'Rajas' (rationality), and 'Tamas' (animality). With these three qualities (which belong to Prakṛti, the power of God Himself) the supreme Puruṣa, or God manifests in three forms, e.g. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rūdra (Śiva), which is well-known as 'Trinity' in the philosophical sphere of the Sanātana or eternal Hindu religion. Thus Brahmā, with the quality of Rajas is in the charge of 'Srṣṭi' (creation); Viṣṇu with the quality of Sattva is in the charge of 'Sthiti (protection)' and Rūdra with the 'Tamas' quality has the power of Saṁhāra (destruction). This three-fold manifestation of the Lord has been described in the Purānic works vividly. For instance, the Brahma-Vaivarta-Purāṇa states that Viṣṇu is the protector (of the creature) in Sattvaguna, in Rajaguna Brahmā becomes creator and that marvelous Rūdra annihilates the universe with Tamaguna.  

The Vaiṣṇava saint Śrī Mādhavadeva of Assam too states

31 The Puruṣa is one though it appears as many through confusing power of māya due to the will of God... Prakṛti is in its primary sense identical with Brahmā; it is a nature of Brahmā by which He creates the world. HIP. Vol.VI. p. 335.

32 Viṣṇu sattvagunapātā brahmā sraṣṭā rajogunāḥ /............
similarly in his work 'Bhakti-ratnāvalī' (the gems of devotion), where he shows the supremacy of Lord Viṣṇu in particular.

It is noticed that apart from the great Mahābhārata, the purāṇas vastly delineate the manifestations and activities of the Lord in various forms. Thus the ten-fold incarnations of Lord Viṣṇu viz., Matsya, Kūrma, Narasimha, Vāmana, Parasurāma, Halirāma, Varāha, Śrīrāma, Buddha and Kalki are described in the same purānic works. Lord Viṣṇu is regarded as the supreme God among other Gods with His all qualities. Thus W.J. Wilkin observes how Lord Viṣṇu Himself possesses three-fold qualities. Again, in the Viṣṇupurāṇa it is stated that Lord Viṣṇu is the Paramātmā, He is the support of all beings. His holy names (i.e. songs) are sung in the Vedas and Vedāntas. Similar verses are found in the Śrīmad Bhāgavatgītā, where Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself expresses before Arjuna, - 'I exist in the hearts of all, Smṛti and Jñāna arise from Me, I am the object of knowledge of all the Vedas, and I Myself is the creator of Vedas and Vedāntas. The Viṣṇupurāṇa, further regards Lord Viṣṇu as the other form or Paramabrahma.

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33 satvarajatama prakṛtīra tini gune / dharā tini mūrti eka puruṣa āpūne //...eke. bbagavanta // SMMV. bhakti ratnāvalī: bhakti viracan.31-32. p. 45.
34 In the beginning of creation, the great Viṣṇu desirous of creating the whole world became three-fold creator, preserver and destroyer. HM. (vedic and puranic). p. 116.
35 VSP. 6.4.40. p. 373.
36 Geeta XV. 15. p. 279
37 VSP. 6.7. 69. p. 402.
The Bhāgavata-purāṇa asserts that Kṛṣṇa is no other than the Lord Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa Himself. This purāṇa also maintains that the worship of Lord Viṣṇu, or Kṛṣṇa is true. The utterance of even a single name of the Lord is able to abolish the grave sin and the sinner also attains the 'Para-mapada' (i.e. the grace of God). Here in this purāṇa tress is given on devotion of Lord Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa in particular. Nāmaśaṅkīrttana (uttering of holy names) of Lord Nārāyaṇa is the real Dharma, which is also called 'Nirguṇa Dharma' (religion, devoid of quality or attachment), by which one can cross the ocean of grave sin after death and attain Paramapada. In this regard, the attractive story of Ajāmila narrated in the sixth Skandha of the Bhāgavata-purāṇa is a suitable example. Through the story it is stated how sinful Ajāmila got the supreme bliss of the Lord even by the utterence of the word 'Nārāyaṇa'. The greatness of Nāmaśaṅkīrttana is explained through the speech of the Viṣṇudūtas (the attendents of Lord Viṣṇu) and that of Lord Yama (the God of death).

Thus it is obvious that the supremacy of Lord Viṣṇu, the dweller of Vaikuṇṭha is established through a great many

40 Ibid. VI. 2. 9-10. p. 669-670.
major religious scriptures including the Bhāgavata-purāṇa for which Indian mind. In this regard, modern scholars also put views upon the supremacy and vast popularity of Lord Viṣṇu among all other deities.  

DIVINITY OF Kṛṣṇa, THE HERO OF THE LEGEND:

Kṛṣṇa is the hero of the Rukmini-haraṇa legend, as stated in earlier pages of the present work. Not with standing, though He showed human behaviours, yet He was the full incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa, the supreme God as mentioned above. The main cause of the Kṛṣṇāvatāra (i.e. incarnation as Kṛṣṇa) of the Lord is to lighten the burden of Dharitṛi (mother Earth). Regarding this an interesting story is met with in some of the purāṇas. The story may be stated in brief as follows:

Viṣṇu killed oppressive Kālanemi. But after him, Karīsa, the son of Ugrasena became very strong and tyrant. Moreover, that Kaṁsa was supported by the powerful demons like, Ariṣṭa, Dhenuka, Keśi, Pralamba and the powerful demon kings headed by Naraka and Bāṇāsura.  

The burden

Vāsuđeva or Kṛṣṇa has been regarded as a supreme God and he is identified with Viṣṇu, Indra, Śiva and many other Vedic Gods have been represented in the purāṇa as holding inferior position in comparison to Kṛṣṇa. VSFRA. p.135.

43 Vide. VSP. 4.1. 22-23. p. 130.
of these became unbearable for Medini (Earth). She approached the Gods and narrated the cause of her grief. Then the Gods, being accompanied by creator Brahma approached Lord Viṣṇu and delivered the sad message of Dharani with prayers. Pleased with them the Lord got determined to come to the Earth through incarnation of Kṛṣṇa in order to kill the oppressive ones and thereby to relieve the Earth of her burden. He declared that He would be the son of Vasudeva and Devakī as their eighth issue. Further, Viṣṇu asked Yogamāyā to go to Gokula (or the cow-station) and to transfer the seventh womb of Devakī to Rohini by means of her spiritual power. He advised Yogamāyā to take birth herself in the womb of Yasodā. Thus Lord Viṣṇu Himself appeared on Earth in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa to administer the wiks, to protect the nobles and to establish the Sanatana Dharma. Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself explained to Arjuna this truth as it is found in the Śrimad Bhagavadgītā.

Lord Kṛṣṇa, the supreme personality of God-head played many a pastime, which were regarded as His 'Līlā' only. This Rukminiḥ-hāraṇa legend possesses much religious

44 Ibid. 4.1. 13. p. 128.
45 vasudevasya ya patnī devakī devatopamā / ...............
   Ibid. 5.1. 63-64. p. 136.
46 tatāhāmi saṁbhavisyāmi devakī-jaṭhare ..................
   Ibid. 5.1.76. p. 133.
47 yadā yadā hi dharmasya.......sambhavāmi yuge yuge //
   Geetā IV. 7-8.
and philosophical value as because Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the hero of
the legend was of supreme divinity and He was not an ordinary
human being. Kṛṣṇa was the Gold Himself. So, Sanat Kumar
Ray Chaudhury rightly pointed out that Lord Kṛṣṇa may be
regarded not as an Avatāra, or incarnation, but as God Hīm-
sel. Kṛṣṇa is Paramabrahma, revealed in the Vedas
(specially, in the Upaniṣads).

The supreme character of Lord Kṛṣṇa is asserted in
many of the major Purāṇas also. As for instance, the
Brahma-Vaivarta-Purāṇa states thus, "As by the wink of eyes
that Paramatman originates, so He is Parama brahma and He is
therefore, called Kṛṣṇa. Or, the term 'Kṛṣṇ' means devotion
to God, 'Na' means the 'Dāsyā' (sense of slavery) to
Him. So, the term 'Kṛṣṇa' means that who is the offerer of
devotion as well as the sense of Dāsyā together. Moreover,
the term 'Kṛṣṇ' means all beings, the term 'Na' indicates
'Vija' (seed). So, He is Paramabrahma who Himself is the
cause of all creatures (of the universe); and He is Kṛṣṇa.

In other words Kṛṣṇa means Paramabrahma Himself.

49 lord Kṛṣṇa is regarded not as an avatar, or incarnation
but as God Himself.

HEV. p.18.

50 Vide VSP. 6.7.69. p. 402.
He (Kṛṣṇa) combines in him the supreme brahman of the
Upaniṣads a popular God Vāśudeva and Viṣṇu, the highest
deity of Brahmaical mythology.

EIR. p.18.

51 brahmaḥsvay−sa yaśya nimesa upacaryate/
sa ca ātma paramaḥ brahma kṛṣṇa ityabhidhiyate //
kṛṣṇ tad bhakti vacano... sa kṛṣṇa parikirtitaḥ //.....
pāram brahma kṛṣṇa ityabhindhiyate.

Br.VP. (As.ed) Prakṛti Khaṇḍa 2. 24-26. p.95.
The *Viṣṇu purāṇa* also states that Devakī held in her womb that Paramabrahma Kṛṣṇa who protects this whole universe.  

It is the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*, which elaborately describes the manifold pastimes or Līlās and activities of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the supreme personality of God head. At the very moment of so called birth (or Avatāra) that wonderful baby (Kṛṣṇa) appeared before Vasudeva with His four armed divine form taking conch-shell, disc, club and lotus.

On the other hand, the pastimes and activities performed by Kṛṣṇa just from the time of His Avatāra, or birth, were not of ordinary nature. These were wonderful and quite unnatural for any human baby or child. For instance, Kṛṣṇa suggested Vasudeva, His father to carry Him to the castle of Nanda and Yaśodā. The miraculous happenings were seen on the way. Thus the royal snake Ananta saved Him from rain, a jackal led the way, and the river Yamunā too helped Vasudeva to cross herself etc.  

Further, Kṛṣṇa slayed the gigantic female demon Putanā by sucking her life together with the poison-milk, when He was a mere baby of the age of a few weeks. Thus He

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killed Aghāsura, Bakāsura, Trnavaṭa, Dhenukāsura, Keśī, Kāṁsa and others through which Kṛṣṇa demonstrated His divine power. In view of these traits of Kṛṣṇa, A.C.B. Vedanta Prabhupada observes that though Kṛṣṇa performed may pastimes resembling those of ordinary cowherd boy as son of Nanda and Yośodā, yet through His extra-ordinary feats He showed His supreme power as the Lord.55

KṚṢṆA'S DIVINITY IN GĪṬĀ:

The Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā, the prominent religious and philosophical scripture of Hinduism establishes Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the supreme personality of God-head. The teachings in the Gītā have been put in the mouth of the Lord Himself. It is found that Lord Kṛṣṇa declares - 'Oh Dhanañjaya, there is nothing (in this universe) other than Me. All (creatures) depend (or take support) on Me as the gems (used in a necklace) entirely depend upon the thread.56

Again, He asserts, 'Oh Kaunteya (the son of Kuntī), I am Rasa in water, and light or ray in the moon and the Sun,'57 and 'Oh Pārtha, you consider Me (or, do know Me) as the absolute seed or cause of all the beings'.58

55 As the son of Nanda and Yośodā, Kṛṣṇa performed many pastimes resembling those of an ordinary cow-herd boy. Yet he exhibited extra-ordinary feats demonstrating his power as the supreme Lord.


56 mattah paretarar̥h nanyat kīcicadastīdhanañjaya /............

Geeta VII.7. p. 149.

57 rasaḥhamapsu kaunteya.............

Ibid. VII. 8. p. 150.

58 Ibid. VII. 10. p.150.
Kṛṣṇa further observed, 'I extend Myself over whole of this universe without any exhibited form.' Thus in the eleventh chapter of the Gītā, otherwise called as Visvārūpa-Darsāna-Yoga, He reveals to Arjuna that He is the cause of Srṣṭi Sthiti and Pralaya (creation, preservation, and destruction) of all. He can be attained only by means of firm devotion and not by Tapa (austerity), Dāna(sacrifice) etc.

Thus it is stated that Arjuna was advised to surrender himself at the Lord's feet taking aside all his other Dharma (duties). Bhagavān Kṛṣṇa further declared that 'Arjuna should not be worried, as he would be saved (or released) from all the sins by the Lord.' Here is the reference to 'Ekaśaraṇa' (complete surrender), the most essential condition for the devotees to obtain supreme bliss.

As in the Upaniṣadic texts the supreme Brahma is called the creator and protector of this Viśva or Bhūvana (i.e. of the universe), so also in Gītā, Lord Kṛṣṇa is described as 'the protector of the eternal religion'.

Thus the 'Śrīmad-Bhaqavadgītā', establishes that Lord Kṛṣṇa was not an ordinary human being, but He was the

60 bhaktyā tvananyāya śakyah ahamevaṁ viśho arjuna ...... Ibid. XI. 54. p.233.
61 sarva-dharmāṁ parītyajya māme kam śa raṇaṁ vṛaja / .... Ibid. XVIII. 66. p.328.
absolute, Sanātana-Parama-Brahma. It is observed so by modern scholars also. Therefore, as the Lord Kṛṣṇa's activities are regarded only as His Lilās (pastimes) to extend the knowledge among the ignorant human beings. As Kṛṣṇa is the hero of the Rukmini-harana legend, so naturally, and consequently the legend comes to bring in its fold these philosophical and religious elements.

DIVINITY OF RUKMINI:

The character of Rukmini, the heroine of the legend can also be analysed in the light of religion and philosophy.

Outwardly, Rukmini has been depicted as a human lady. She was a beautiful princess, the daughter of king Bhīṣmaka of Vidarbha. As youngest and only daughter of the king, she was very beloved to the king as well as to the queen. Rukmi, her elder brother loved her very much as his only sister. Rukmini, as related in the story exhibited human behaviours in every situation. She loved Kṛṣṇa deeply as an ordinary human lady does. She was a best friend to her friends (i.e. to the girls like Lilāvatī and others, as stated in the later works). When her elder brother, Rukmi opposed her marriage with Kṛṣṇa and invited Śiṣupāla, the king of Cedi as the bride.

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64 Kṛṣṇa, who is a local chieftain or the head of the Vṛṣṇi clan appears as a supreme deity in the Bhagavadgītā. EIR. p.17.

65 The Bhagavadgītā which seems to contain the earliest dogmatic exposition of the religion characterised by Bhakti that may be called Vaiṣṇavism, represents Vāsudeva otherwise called Kṛṣṇa and identified with God Viṣṇu... SRAMI. p.17.
groom for her then a clash occurred. At that time, Rukmini sent a Brähman messenger (who was Vedanidhi in Sri Saṅkara-deva's works) to Dwārakā with a letter so that Kṛṣṇa might favour her by way of accepting her hands. Further, at the time when the Brähmaṇa messenger delayed and Rukmini was waiting for him then quite naturally for a lady of such slight, she lamented very much out of grief apprehending the unbearable separation from Kṛṣṇa. Again, as she came to know of Kṛṣṇa's arrival at Kundina she rejoiced like a common lady. In this way her behaviour in the Svayamvara, her fear in the battle field are also depicted as quite natural to a human lady. Kṛṣṇa was almost prepared to kill Rukmini in the battle with His sword. At that time also Rukmini fell down on the feet of Kṛṣṇa and requested Him to save the life of Rukmi, her brother even at the cost of her own life. Such behaviours delineate Rukmini as a kind-hearted lady. Though proud Rukmi vehemently opposed her marriage with Kṛṣṇa, though she was displeased with him, yet she could never push Rukmi, her own brother to the jaws of death. These and such other examples clearly testify that Rukmini, the heroine of the Rukmini-haraṇa legend was of human nature.

On the other hand, it is noticed that different works of both earlier and later period tend to establish the spiritual character of Rukmini. Many versions of Kṛṣṇa—

The Rukmini episode reveals the fact that Rukmini was none other than the incarnation of Lakshmi herself. Thus in the Bhagavata-purana, Sukadeva narrates the legend of Rukmini-haraṇa before king Parīkṣita. He says, 'Bhagavān Govinda (i.e., Kṛṣṇa) married in the Svayamvara Vaidarbhi who was the daughter of king Bhīṣmaka and who was the Lakṣmīdevī herself.'

Further, it is stated that after the marriage of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmini being over happily, the inhabitants of Dvārakā were highly pleased having seen the happy union of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmini, which was the union of Lord Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī herself. The Padma-purāṇa describes Rukmini as the incarnation of Kamalā (i.e., Lakṣmī). It is further clearly stated that in the Rāghava Avatāra of the Lord, she was Sītā, in the Kṛṣṇa Avatāra she became Rukmini.

Further, the same purāṇa maintains, 'Lord Kṛṣṇa sported with Rukmini as Nārāyaṇa with Lakṣmī.' Like wise, the Brahma-Vaivarta-purāṇa gives an excellent description of Rukmini where she is called Mahā Lakṣmī.

In another place of the same work Satānanda, a Brāhmaṇa instructed king Bhīṣmaka to offer his beloved daughter Rukmini who was Mahā Lakṣmī to Kṛṣṇa. In a later chapter of the same purāṇa, again the fight between

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67 Ibid. X. 52.16. p.456.
68 Ibid. X. 55.60. p.474
69 kamalāṇaṃ saṃbhūtā sarva-lakṣmaṇa sahyukta / Pad.P. UK. 94. p.1879
70 Ibid. UK.
71 tasya kanyā mahālakṣmī rukmini../ Br.VP.(Ss.ed).98.3.p.332.
Bānāsura and Aniruddha is described. There, Bānāsura rebuked Kṛṣṇa for the abduction of Rukmini. In reply Aniruddha declared that Rukmini was Maḥā Lakṣmī who came from Vaikuṇṭha. The Harivaṃśa also describes Rukmini as the other form of Lakṣmī herself. Thus the puranas delineate Rukmini as the incarnation of Lakṣmīdevī and thus her divinity is established.

Apart from the purāṇas mentioned above, the great epic Mahābhārata also declares that 'Śrī' or Lakṣmīdevī(i.e. the Goddess of fortune) came to the Earth in the form of Rukmini for the pleasure of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Thus it is maintained that Rukmini, the heroine of the Rukmini-harana legend was not an ordinary lady, but an incarnation of Lakṣmī, or Sītā herself.

RUKMINĪ, THE MOST BELOVED WIFE OF KṚṢṆA:

Lord Kṛṣṇa married sixteen thousand wives. The real number of wives as noted by some of the purāṇas was sixteen thousand one hundred and eight (16,103). Thus describes the Mudgala-purāṇa - 'Kṛṣṇa had sixteen thousand one hundred and eight wives who were of graceful forms and charming eyes.'

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72 bhiṣma-kanyā maḥālakṣmīḥ śrī kṛṣṇasya priyā sati / . . . .
Ibid. (Ss.ed) 104.72. p. 443.
73 rukminiya-gīya mūrtitvam . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
HVP. 51.27, 31. p. 280.
75 soroṣā strī sahasrāni sātamasṭamottarantathā / . . . .
Among the wives of Kṛṣṇa there were eight prominent beloved ones headed by Rukmini. They were Rukmini, Satyabhāmā, Satyā, Nāgājītī, Subhāmā, Śāivyā, Gāndhārī, and Lakṣmāṇā. This list occurs in the Matsya-pūrāṇa we also find the names of these eight principal wives (Asta Mahiṣī) of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the Devi-Bhāgavata-pūrāṇa with some difference. There the names met with are - 'Rukmini, Jāmbavatī, Satyā, Mitravidā, Kālindī, Lakṣmāṇā, Bhadrā, and Nāgājītī etc. It should be noted that these Aṣṭamahīṣī of Kṛṣṇa were the representations of 'Aṣṭaprakṛti' of the Lord.

RUKMINI, THE BEST DEVOTEE:

In many places, specially, in the twelveth chapter of the Srimad-Bhaqavadgītā the nature and qualities of the best devotees are described. For instance, the Lord says Himself, 'Such a devotee as is beloved to Me and as attains Me is he who is free from any desire (or, ambition), who is of self-controlled, content and pleased with whatever he gets.'

Rukmini was also a real devotee of the Lord and was devoid of any earthly ambition. In this respect, the tenth

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76 rukmini satya-bhāmāca satyā nāgājītī tathā ...... / MP. 25. 12.
78 Geeta. XII. 1-20.
Skandha of the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa states how Lord Kṛṣṇa tested the depth of Rukmini's devotion towards Him. Kṛṣṇa said that being a beautiful princess of Vidarbha, Rukmini should have married the rich king Śisupāla and not Kṛṣṇa, a poor one. Then taking seriously these pinching words of her Lord Rukmini got fainted. After consolation offered by Kṛṣṇa, the best lover of devotees, she answered, - 'My dear lotus-eyed master, You are really self-satisfied. I know, You need not care whether I am beautiful or not. So when You cast a glance upon me passionately I consider it always as the greatest favour to me. I am only ambitious to serve Your lotus-feet always etc.' 80 At this the Lord was highly satisfied and He said that He expected such an explanation from Rukmini. Kṛṣṇa, further told Rukmini that due to her extraordinary devotion (Ekānta Bhakti) she would be able to get from Him whatever she wanted. 81

With the grace of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the supreme personality of God-head, the Ātmārāma (self-satisfied), Rukmini was endowed with all the opulences of a carefree devotee as He did with Lakṣmīdevī at Vaikuṇṭha. It is explained so in a verse of the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa. 82 In this respect A.C. Prabhupāda also remarks that the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmini may be accepted as those of Nārāyaṇa and Lakṣmī which

80 Bhāg.P.X. 60.46. p. 511.
81 Ibid. X. 60.50. p. 512.
82 Ibid. X. 60.58. p. 513.
were of an exalted opulence. 83

RUKMINI, THE PRAKRTI-SAKTI OF THE LORD:

It is already stated that the Lord performed His manifold Lilas through His 'Māyā-Sakti', or 'Prakṛti-Sakti'. The 'Māyā-Sakti', or Avidyā covers the absolute reality, but it is so only in the eye of the ignorants. Actually, the supreme power does not undergo any change under the influence of the Māyā. Therefore, in actuality He has no any ambition or desire for any Karma (activity). Thus it is stated in the fourth chapter of the Gītā. 84 Yet for Lilas He appears to be covered by Yogamāyā or Māyā. So, it is said in Gītā, 'I am not visible for all with the cover of Yogamāyā. The ignorant one never knows My absolute form of Brahman.' 85 Again, in the tenth Skandha of the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa, the description of the 'Rāsalīlā' of Kṛṣṇa goes vividly specially, in five chapters which are known as the 'Rāsapūrṇādhyāyī' (the five chapters relating Rāsa). There in one verse it is stated that on the full-moon night of the autumnal season, Kṛṣṇa intended to make sports with the aid

83 The pastimes of Kṛṣṇa and Rukminī in Dvārakā are accepted by great authorities as manifestations of those of Nārāyaṇa and Laktśi which are of an exalted opulence. Kr. Vol.II.p.176.
85 nāhanī prakāśaḥ sarvasya yogamāyā samāvṛtaḥ / ........ .... Ibid. VII. 25. p.156.
Thus the Brahmanda-Purana also relates how Lord Krsna, being Nirguna played with His Mâyâ-Sakti in the sports of 'Râsa'. Srî-Caitanyadeva, a saint of Bengal regards the amorous sports of Gopîes and Krsna, specially, of Râdhâ and Krsna as the real Lîlā of the Lord, which is none other than the union between Jîva and Brahma. K.N. Mitra remarks in this regard that the love between Râdhâ and Krsna may be allegorically interpreted as the relation between the individual and the universal. The Brahma-Vaivarta-Purana also regards Râdhâ as the Vâmânsa (the left part of the body) of Lord Krsna. Thus as P.C. Bagchi observes, Candidasa of 14th century A.D., describes Râdhâ as the 'Sakti' and Krsna as the supreme reality. Moreover, the Nimbarka Sampradâya, worships the Yugalarupa (dual forms) of Râdhâ and Krsna in the same way. Thus in the commentary of the Vedanta Ratnamanjuśa of Purusottamâcârya it is stated that 'only that form of Śrî Krsna is adorable

87 Ibid. X. 29.1.p.209.
89 The love of Râdhâ and Krsna may be interpreted allegorically as the relation between the individual and the universal (âtmâ and Paramâtma).
Cul.HI. Vol.IV. p.524.
90 Br.VP.(Ss.ed). 66.36. p. 115.
91 Candidasa was the earliest vaisnava sahajiyā, and lived most probably in the fourteenth century. In his Sri Krsna Kirttanaras it can trace some of the fundamental doctrines of the Sect, Râdhâ is the 'Sakti' and Krsna is the supreme reality.
accompanied with Rukmini, Satyabhama and Sri Radha.  

After a careful study, however, it is found that like Radha, Rukmini, the heroine of the Rukmini-harana legend is also regarded as the 'Prakrti Sakti' of Lord Krsna. Thus, as Radha is regarded as the Prakrti Sakti of Lord Krsna in respect of His 'Vrndavana Lilä' (the sports in Vrndavana, or the Radha's wood) so also Rukmini may be regarded as the same with regard to His Dvaraka Lilä (i.e. The sports in Dvarka).

In the 'Madhurabhava' of the Bhakti cult that stands predominantly treated in the mediaeval literature of India Laksmi, Sita, Radha, and Rukmini are regarded as the 'Sakti' (i.e. Prakrti Sakti) of the Lord. Thus in the Bhakti Cult of Sri Caitanyadeva, as stated earlier, Radha is the Parama Sakti of Lord Krsna, in Ramana's cult Sita occupies the place of Prakrti, and in the cult of Harivyasa of Maharastra, Rukmini is regarded as the Sakti of Sri Krsna and thus she is prayed with Lord Krsna by the devotees. This view is, however, forwarded by Sri B.C. Mahanta also. It is of course, also a notable point that Mahapurusa Sri Sankaradeva of Assam does not admit any need to pray some Sakti with the Lord (Krsna). According to him only God Krsna should be prayed and none-other else. A.C. Prabhupada also regards Krsna as the supreme personality of

92 rukmini satyabhama vrajastrivistath shribhajavanpuranas tamaḥ .................. sadā upāsanīyāḥ // SGVS. p.12.

93 Vide. BDS. p.194.
God-head, and Rukmini as the supreme Goddess of fortune.

RUKMINI, A GODDESS:

Rukmini is also prayed as a Goddess in Hindu tradition of India. In an edition of the Devībhāgavata-Purāṇa Rukmini is presented as the Goddess where she is prayed in a benedictory verse together with the Goddess Uma, Rādhā, Sītā and Durgā. Thus, these evidences prove that Rukmini is worshipped as Goddess.

REFERENCE TO RUKMINI-TĪRTHA, RUKMINI-HRADA AND RUKMINI-KUNDA:

In some purānic works, considerable importance is attached to Rukmini from the viewpoint of religion. The Skanda-Purāṇa refers to the holy 'Rukmini-Tīrtha'(Rukmini pilgrimage, or the holy place of Rukmini) It states that one will become beautiful, lucky and happy (devoid of grief) after taking bath in the Rukmini-Tīrtha. Further, he who donates or sacrifices Vāstra (i.e. cloth) and Pādukā (chappal) at this Tīrtha will surely attain Svargaloka (Heaven) as he desires.' This purāṇa presents an elaboration

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94 Just as Kṛṣṇa is the supreme personality of God-head, Vāsudeva, Rukmini is the supreme Goddess of fortune, Māhā Lakṣmī. Kṛ. Vol.II. p.115.
95 dūrgati nāśini durgā jaya jaya............................ SDBP. Prelude
96 tat agacchet mahābhāgah rukminīśirthanyuttamah / yatraiva snāna matrenā..... svargapipsitaḥ // SK.P. ānanda khaṇḍa of the revakhaṇḍa. 142.1,94.
description of the greatness of this Rukmini-Tirtha.

Moreover, in the Prabhâsa Khanda of the Skanda purâna the greatness of Rukmini-hrada (Lake of Rukmini) and of Rukminidevi are beautifully stated. It states thus 'One woman will never meet her family-dissolution up to the seventh birth if she worships Rukminidevi after taking bath in the Santodaka Kuṇḍa.' 97 Again, in another place of this purâna there occurs a clear description of the Rukmini-Kuṇḍa (the Pool of Rukmini), where Rukmini herself resides with her Lord Kṛṣṇa. Thus it is stated, 'Whoever takes bath there in the Rukmini Kuṇḍa will surely attain riches, son, and will be able to enjoy happiness on this Earth and in the Svarga-loka (Heaven) or Hariloka (abode of Hari). 98

REFERENCE TO RUKMINI-VRATA:

Similarly, next to Rukmini-Tirtha, the reference to the Rukmini-Vrata (celebration of the fastation of Rukmini) is also met with in some puranic works. Thus the Kalki-purâna 99 presents a description of the 'Rukmini-Vrata'. In course of the description of this Vrata Lord Kṛṣṇa and Rukmini are prayed with auspicious prayers or stotras offering 'Yajña-Utra' (the sacrificial thread), Dadhi (curd),

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97 snātvā saptodake kunde ......ṛhaṁ bhaṅgo naṁjāyate //
Ibid. Prabhâsa Khaṇḍa. 132. 1.3.

98 etaddaksine munīreṣṭha rukminī kūndamuttaṁmam /......
..īhaloke sukham bhūktvā hariloke ca modate //

99 Vide KP. 17. pp.244-251.
Khira (milk), Guda (molasses), Dhūpa (the perfumed and frag-
gment sticks offered to Gods or Goddesses) and Karpūra (a
piece of camphor) with the intention of getting a good
master (i.e. husband). Thus, it is found that some of the
Mantras states — thus, 'Oh you Vāsudeva, I offer to you
this Yajña-Sūtra, composed by Prajāpati; you please accept
it with Ramā, the Rukmini-devī.' Again, in another verse
it is stated, as 'Oh offerer of boon, I offer you these
Karpūra, Guda and Gandha which give pleasure; you accept
these all with your beloved Vaidarbhī (i.e. Rukmini)'.

Thus the prayers in the Vrata are described.

Existence of the statue of Rukmini:

A great stone image, which is regarded and worshipped
as of Rukmini, is found at Naukhas in the Etah District of
Uttar Pradesh. This statue, which is identified as Rukmini
is a beautiful female figure. Through its head portion is
not so discernable yet it looks very beautiful with neck-
lace, bracelets, Vāju (a sort of ornament), long chain in
the neck and with the beautiful pearls on the waist.

Thus, the character of Rukmini, the heroine of the
legend is of great philosophical and religious importance.

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100 yajñasūtramidanī deva prajāpati vinirmītām / I
Ibid. 17.30. p.249.

101 Ibid. 17.33. p.249.

102 The greatest master piece of the North Indian Art of the
Kanauj school, however, is the image, said to be of Rukmini
found at Naukhas in the Etah district of Uttar Pradesh.
But the slender lines of the long-limbed body are
carved with rare delicacy. ITS. p. 23.

Vide. AIA.Vol.II. Series XXXIX. Plate No. 323.

Vide A copy of a photo is incorporated here in Annexure D of the present work.
The conflict between Kṛṣṇa and Sisupāla, narrated in the versions of the Rukmini-harana legend bears religious significance. Sisupāla, the powerful king of Cedi is also a major character by way of introducing as the rival against Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the hero of the legend. Sisupāla was specially invited to the Svayamvara of Rukmini by proud and brave Rukmi, the eldest son of king Bhīṣmaka. As Kṛṣṇa abducted Rukmini; Sisupāla resisted Him, and finally engaged himself in a fierce fight with Kṛṣṇa. This conflict that occurred in the Svayamvara of Rukmini, between Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Sisupāla is also of much significance with sufficient philosophical and religious implications.

The subjugation of Sisupāla with Lord Kṛṣṇa is one of the major Lilās of Lord Viṣṇu. This Sisupāla, who is a rival character of the Rukmini-harana legend was none-other than Jaya, the Mūkhya Pāriṣada (the chief portcullis or attendant) of Lord Viṣṇu in the Vaikunṭha Dhāma (i.e. Heaven). Thus the Brahma-Vaivarta-Purāṇa states that Sisupāla and Dantavaktra were the two door keepers of Śrī-Hari at Vaikunṭha.103 Due to the fierce curse of the four Siddhas they took their birth as demons and in accordance with the advice of the Lord, for the sake of early emancipation,

103 śiśupālo dantavakṭo jaya vijaya eva ca / Br.VP. (Ss.ed). 104.75. p. 443.
they used to remember (i.e. treat) Viṣṇu, their master as enemy. Thus Śiśūpāla passed his prior birth as Hiraṇya-Kaśīpu, the fierce demon king and Rāvana, the Lord of the Rākṣasas.

Lord Viṣṇu, in His gigantic 'Nṛsiṁha-incarnation' slayed wicked Hiraṇya-Kaśīpu (i.e. Daitendra) sportively as mighty Garuḍa killed a snake. Thus Rāvana was also killed in the Rāma incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu.

In the third and last birth Jaya and Vijaya came to the earth as Śiśūpāla and Dantavaktra with more dominating power. Regarding Śiśūpāla, the Mahābhārata states attractively. The Bhāgavata-Purāṇa also relates the 'Rājasūya' sacrifice of Yudhīṣṭhira, where Śiśūpāla's attainment of Mokṣa (liberation or salvation) is described. The Viṣṇu-Purāṇa also makes mention regarding Śiśūpāla's 'Śayujya Mukti'.

The very birth of Śiśūpāla is also very interesting. The Sabhāparva of the great Mahābhārata presents a description of Śiśūpāla's birth in the speech of Bhīṣma.

105 Ibid. VII. 8.29. p. 819.
106 Vide. Ibid. VII. 3.43-44. 778.
109 VSP. 4.15. 1-2. p. 86.
given below in brief.

The mother of Śisunāla was the younger sister of Vasudeva, married to Damaghoṣa, the king of Cedi. She was aunt to Kṛṣṇa by relation. At the very birth, Śisupāla appeared four-armed, or Caturbhujā and Trinayana (three-eyed). Then a voice from the Heaven was heard—

'Sisupāla will meet his death in the hands of that person at whose lap he will get loss of his two arms and the third eye.' Many a king and other persons came to the palace of king Damaghoṣa to see the newly born wonderful baby, Śisupāla. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the full incarnation of the Lord who knew all of His own Lilās visited with Balarāma the castle of aunt late. Because, He knew that Śisupāla was Jaya, His former pārīṣāda and he would attain Mokṣa (i.e. liberation) at His hands. Then as soon as the baby Śisupāla was placed on the lap of Kṛṣṇa, two arms and the third eye came to miraculously disappeared. At this all were astonished highly. Then the mother of Śisupāla became very sad remembering the dreadful prediction made through the Ākāśavāni (the aerial voice). She requested Kṛṣṇa to offer boon and not to kill Śisupāla, his own brother. She further asked Him with tears to forgive Śisupāla for his faults. Kṛṣṇa, then gave consolation to His aunt with a smile saying—

'Oh My dear aunt, I shall forgive a hundred of faults of your son Śisūpāla even though he will deserve death; and so. You need not lament for this.'114 At this she was pleased with Kṛṣṇa, her cousin, considering that that would be quite unnatural on the part of Śisūpāla to do so many offences to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Then Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma also returned to Dvārakā.

Though Śisūpāla lost his two arms and his third eye, yet his strength and power were on the increase. He subdued all the kings and Gods by his valour. Śisūpāla, who was Jaya originally, became more oppressive. The famous poet Māgha figuratively states the exploiting nature of Śisūpāla that followed from his previous birth (i.e. Hiranya-Kāśipu and Rāvana) as like as some Sātī (i.e. chaste wife) follows her husband after death also.115

It is already mentioned earlier that according to the advice of Lord Viṣṇu Jaya and Vijaya who were Śisūpāla and Dantavaktra in that birth must treat the Lord as their enemy. It appears that the Svayamvara of Rukmini provided scope for the first and major cause of enmity between Lord Kṛṣṇa (the full incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu) and Śisūpāla.

Because, they became rival to each other. Another notable point, in this regard is that Kṛṣṇa did not kill Śiśupāla in the battle that took place with Him immediately after kidnapping Rukmiṇī. By this Lord Kṛṣṇa intentionally allowed Śiśupāla to live with animosity towards Him to grow more and more. As stated in the earlier chapter of the present work, the Brahma-Vaivarta-Purāṇa describes the battle between the Yādava heroes and king Śiśupāla and others with some deviations. According to this purāṇa, it was Balarāma and not Kṛṣṇa Himself, who fought against Śiśupāla and other kings. Balarāma defeated Śiśupāla by a fierce attack with his mighty Lāṅgala (plough) and he stood prepared to kill him. At that critical moment, Lord Śaṅkara Himself obstructed Balarāma saying that Balarāma should leave Śiśupāla alive. Because, Śiśupāla, the former chief Pārīṣada of Lord Hari, should be killed only by that Bhagavān Hari (i.e. Kṛṣṇa).\[116\]

The animosity between Śiśupāla and Kṛṣṇa increased as Śiśupāla considered Kṛṣṇa as his rival in the Svayamvara of Rukmiṇī and he was badly defeated in the hands of Kṛṣṇa.

Proud and oppressive Śiśupāla was slayed by Lord Viṣṇu (i.e. Kṛṣṇa) in the Rājasūya sacrifice of the Pāṇḍavas, which has been described in the Sabha Parva of the great

\[116\] Br.VP. (Ss.ed). 100. 14. p. 393.
Mahābhārata as well as in the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa. Pāṇḍavas offered Kṛṣṇa, first, the sacrificial Naivedyas (offerings). Due to his pented personal grudge and animosity against Kṛṣṇa Sīśupāla was not in a position to tolarate the honour and worship awarded to Kṛṣṇa. He then continued to rebuke Lord Kṛṣṇa with bitter and harsh words on that place of sacrificial ceremony, in presence of all. At that time, kings of Matsya, Kaikeya, Śrīnjaya etc., who supported Kṛṣṇa prepared to fight with Sīśupāla and to kill him. Bhīṣma, then obstructed them all. Then Lord Kṛṣṇa stood and with His divine weapon Cakra (disc) cut down the head of Sīśupāla in presence of all. Then a luminus light came out from the blood of Sīśupāla as the sun rises in the sky. The light, then saluted Kṛṣṇa, the adorable Lord of the universe and entered into the body of the Lord.¹¹⁷ Thus Sīśupāla attained 'Sāyujya Mukti' by the grace of the Lord.

This story of Jaya and Vijaya as attaining Sāyujya-Mukti by way of remembering the Lord Parameśvara as their enemy with the grace of the Lord was one of His major Līlās. This Viśṇu-līlā is related with much importance in many religious scriptures of Hindu religion. Because, the four major incarnations of Lord Viśṇu viz. the Varāha, Nṛsiṁha, Śrī Rāma, and Kṛṣṇa, which were correlated with the three

¹¹⁷ Mbh. (Vv.ed) Sabha Parva. 44.22-23. p. 373.
Vide. VSP. 4.15. 1-2. p. 86.
birth of Jaya and Vijaya were equally related with the Ruk- 
mini-haraṇa legend. Therefore, as stated earlier, the in-
truction of the character of Siśūmāla, the king of Cedi 
and his conflict with Lord Kṛṣṇa in the Rukmini-haraṇa 
legend are of much religious significance.

PHILOSOPHICAL INTERPRETATION OF SOME CHARACTERS CONNECTED 
WITH THE LEGEND:

A philosophical interpretation of some characters 
connected with the Rukmini-haraṇa legend is found in Assamese 
which is very interesting and deserves to be viewed with much 
importance. In the Pūrvarāṅga (Prelude) of Phāonā (the 
dramatic performance of Ankiyā Nāṭ) Caṅkaradeva introduces 
Gāyana-ĪŚayana (musical presentations with the instruments of 
Khol, Tāl, Dābā, etc.). There in the Gāyana and Phāonā 
Carcaṇa (religious implementation) it is noticed that the 
Rukmini-haraṇa story and the major characters presented 
there in are allegorically described. This description comes 
to be of high philosophical value. Thus, it is found, 
Pukini is Jīva (i.e. Jīvatma or human soul), her friends 
are five-fold Mukti (salvation), Upakārī (the quality to do 
good for others) is Vedanidhi (the Brahmin messenger) 
Dhīṣmaka is Jñāna (knowledge), Rukmavīra is Ahāmkrāra(egoism), 
Śasibrahmā is Citta (the element of the heart), the wicked 
kings headed by Siśūmāla are Mahānātaka (grave sin), Gurughat 
an auspicious sound produced by the Khol dedicated to the 
preceptor) is Paramatman, Agnigāda (a part of lights of fire
placed before Gāyana), is Dharma (religion), the seven Ānriyās (seven-fold lights or torches holding before Gāyana) are Santa Paramārthas, the two persons holding Agnigāda are Jaya and Vijaya, the Ānriyā holder is the Dāmbaru of Nārada, and the Ānriyā (a torch, or a flambeau) is the 'Mahādharma' (i.e. the great virtue or religion). Thus the Rukmīni-haṇaṇa story is interpreted from a philosophical and spiritual perspective.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL ELEMENTS IN DIFFERENT SPEECHES:

In the speeches of different characters like Bhīṣmaka, the Brāhmaṇa and Balarāma much philosophical wisdom can be found out.

THF SPEECH OF BHĪṢMAKA:

Pious king Bhīṣmaka realised the potency and divinity of Lord Kṛṣṇa and so he intended to give his daughter Rukmīni in marriage to Śri Kṛṣṇa. In the Rukmīni-haṇaṇa Kavya of Śri Śaṅkaradeva king Bhīṣmaka advised his son Rukmī not to stand against Kṛṣṇa, the Lord of the universe. His words were full of religious thoughts.

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118 jīvai rukmīni, pañcavidh muktiye sakhisakal, upakāriye vedanidhi, jñāne bhīṣmak, abāṅkāre rukmāvir, citte saśiprabhā, mahāpātake śīṣupāl ādi duṣṭa rājāgān, paramātmāi guṇughāt...............................
....... mahādharme ānriyā //

ML. p. 13.
THE SPEECH OF THE BRAHMANA:

The Brahma-Vaivarta-Purana presents elaborately the speech of the Brahmana Satananda, the name of which is not found in the Bhagavata-Purana. Bhishmaka asked all in his court to select and suggest the name of a suitable bride-groom for Rukmini. Then Satananda, a pious Brahmana suggested the name of Lord Krishna explaining His manifold opulences. He said, 'Oh king, I consider, Krishna should be the suitable bride-groom for Rukmini. Because, He (Krishna) is the full incarnation of Narayana Himself, who appears to take away the burden of this Earth. He is the Vidhata of that Vidhata (creator of the creators), He is luminous, and very favourite to His devotees. He is the Paramatman of all the creatures. He is superior to Prakriti. Being not attached i.e. Nirlipta, He is the witness of the activities performed by the Jiva (i.e. creature).'* Thus Satananda explained 'Krishna-tattva' (the true character of Krishna).

THE CONSOLATING SPEECH OF JARASANDHA:

Sisupala came to be badly defeated in the battle with Krishna and being badly insulted he got depressed. Then Jarasandha, his well-wisher and the leader of the kings opposing Krishna gave consolation to Sisupala. This speech of Jarasandha also possesses some philosophical implications.

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together with the political teachings. He said, 'In this universe, oh king, everything occurs according to the will of Isvāra (God) as like as in the puppet-play the lifeless toys (made of wood) dance according to the will of the manager.' 120 To substantiate his point, Jarāsandha referred to the example of his own defeats in the hands of Kṛṣṇa and the victory enjoyed by him at the last eighteenth attack. Thus Jarāsandha showed the power of 'Kāla (i.e. time)' which moves in accordance with the will of the God Himself.

'Therefore', he continued, 'I neither indulge in rejoicings nor repent for this.' 121 In the Nāmaqhoṣā Śrī Mādhavadāva brings out the same philosophical implications. He says - 'Kṛṣṇa is the only God who is the master of Kāla and Māyā. He is the Lord of creation, maintainance, and destruction. There is none besides Him. So, it should be known that Viṣṇu (or Kṛṣṇa) is the supreme reality throughout this universe'. 122 Thus in Jarāsandha's speech the reference to the powers of Kāla and Māyā deserve to be noted.

BALARĀMA'S SPEECH OF CONSOLATION TO RUKMINĪ:

Some philosophical elements are noticed in the speech of consolation given by Balarāma to Rukminī.

120 yathā dārūmayi yoṣit nṛtyate kuhakecchayā / ...........
121 Ibid. X. 54.14. p.469.
Tender-hearted Rukmini lamented much out of grief at the time when Kṛṣṇa inflicted punishment upon Rukmi, her elder brother. At the scene, Balarāma appeared, rebuked Kṛṣṇa, his younger brother for His harsh behaviours towards Rukmi, His brother in-law. Then he came to console Rukmini, his new sister-in-law, saying, 'Oh you beautiful lady, you need not worry for the punishment of Rukmi, your elder brother. Because, this 'Kṣatriya dharma (the rull of the Kṣatriyas)' is so much devoid of mercy that a brother kills his own brother. Again, the 'Ātman (soul)' is same to all creatures. We see it different only due to Māyā (ignorance). This body has its beginning and end. It is not immortal, which composed of five Bhūtas, five Prāṇas, five Tammātras etc. It is 'Triguṇātma (full of three qualities).’ But this body is called Ātman due to indiscrimination, due to ignorance.'

He further said, 'In the 'Śuklapakṣa' (the bright or light night), when the moon is waxing, we falsely think that the moon is developing. Again, in the 'Kṛṣṇapakṣa (i.e. dark fortnight, or dark half of the month)' when the moon is waning, we similarly think that the moon is decreasing. But factually, the moon remains always as it is. It has nothing to do with such visible waxing and waning activities. Similarly, birth and death, acceptance of different forms are the mere nature of the body. The Ātman

is absolute, the same, and it has nothing to do with the form or activities of the body'. The conclusion, here is that the appearance or disappearance of the body has nothing to do with the living entity. Therefore, Rukmini should not lament thinking of the disappearance of Rukmini, her elder brother.

Here, in such verses, the doctrine of the transmigration as well as the immortality of the soul, which is the essence of Vedanta philosophy is taught. In the Srimad-Bhaqavadgita also similar verses, expressive of the same ideas are met with. Thus the Gita says, - 'As a person avoiding worn out clothes accepts new garments, likewise, the absolute Atman accepts or enters in another body avoiding the former one.' There are many such explanatory verse in the Srimad-Bhaqavadgita.

INFLUENCE OF THE RUKMINI-HARANA LEGEND ON LATER INDIAN LITERATURE :

The Rukmini-harana legend narrated in the Puranas, as mentioned in the earlier chapter (specially in chapter II) of the present work have sufficient influence on some literary works of later Indian literature. In this regard a brief discussion is given below.

124 Ibid. X. 54. 47. p.473.
125 vāsānsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya .................
Geeta. II. 22. p. 51.
INFLUENCE ON LATER HARANA-LEGENDS:

The Puranic versions of the Rukmini-harana legend have exercised much influence on some versions of the harana legends, specially, on the Strī-harana legends which are of later origin in comparison to the Rukmini-harana legend. In this regard, the Subhadra-harana legend occurred in the great Mahābhārata as well as the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa may be referred to as for an example to substantiate the influence.

Like Kṛṣṇa and Rukmini, as stated earlier in chapter III of the present work, in course of the Subhadra harana legend, Subhadra was also engaged in previous love affair with Arjuna, the hero. 126 Again, Arjuna also abducted Subhadra from the Svayamvara ceremony while she went out of the fort to visit the temple for prayer to the deity, quite similar as Rukmini. 127 Moreover, another important point of similarity is that like Rukmini's Svayamvara a fierce fight was fought by Arjuna where he won the victory over his rivals. 128 Furthermore, after abduction, the marriage ceremony of Arjuna and Subhadra was celebrated in formal and prevalent manner 129 as like as the marriage ceremony of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmini was celebrated in

126 Bhāg.P. X. 86. 6-7. p.655.
127 Ibid. X. 86. 9. p.655.
128 Ibid. X. 86. 10. p.655.
Dvārakā. The last but not the least important point is that, in some places, even the narrative language of both Rukmini-haraṇa legend and that of Subhadrā-haraṇa seem to be similar. It is stated in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa narration of the Rukmini-haraṇa legend, as mentioned in the chapter II of the present work that Kṛṣṇa took away Rukmini in presence of the kings as like as a lion takes away his share (i.e. a deer) in presence of the jackals. Similar expression is presented in the narration of the Subhadrā-haraṇa legend also. From such evidences it appears apparent the influence of the Rukmini-haraṇa legend on that of Subhadrā-haraṇa.

INFLUENCE ON LATER CREATIVE WORKS:

The influence of the Rukmini-haraṇa on some creative Sanskrit works of later period is also noticed. Thus the drama like, Rukmini-Parinaya of Rāmvarman, the poetical works like Rukmini-Kalyāṇa Mahā-Kāvya of Rājacūḍāmāni Dīkṣita, the Bhaismi-Parinaya-Campū of Ratnakhetā Sṛṅivāsa Dīkṣita, the Pārvati-Rukminiya of Vidyāmādhava, which are already discussed in Chapter II of the present work are composed with the influence, apparently, of the original Purānic versions of the legend. Further, the reference to the Rukmini-haraṇa legend in some other works of Sanskrit

130 vidrāvyē kroṣṭāṁ śvānāṁ svabhāgan mṛgarādīva //
Ibid. X. 86.10. p. 655.
literature is also met with Thus, as mentioned earlier, the reference to the legend is found in the drama Mālatī-Mādhava of Bhavabhūti and in the poem 'Śisūpālavadhāman of Māgha. All these obviously prove the influence of the original Rukmini-haraṇa legend on later Sanskrit works.

INFLUENCE ON MEDIAEVAL INDIAN LITERATURE:

The influence of the Rukmini-haraṇa legend is noticed on the sphere of the mediaeval Indian literature also. It is noticed that many works are composed under the influence of the Rukmini-haraṇa story. In this regard it is already discussed in the previous chapter of the present work. Some authors of these works admit the influence of the story on them. Here, the case of Śrī Śrī Sāṅkaradeva of Assam may be cited as an example in support of the view. As stated in the earlier chapter, two works, e.g. the Rukmini-haran-Kāvyā and the Rukmini-haran-Nāṭ are composed by Śrī Sāṅkaradeva. In the Rukmini-haran-Kāvyā, the author himself says, 'The Rukmini-haraṇa story of Harivamsā is naturally as sweet as the nectar. I mix the story of the Bhāgavata also here with equally, with the intention to make it sweeter, as the milk mixed with honey tests very sweet. Obviously, Sāṅkaradeva's works on the legend are very much popular in Assam.'
INFLUENCE OF THE LEGEND ON ŚAṆKARADEVA'S OWN WORKS:

It is noticed that some incidents of the Rukmini-haraṇa legend depicted by Śrī Śaṅkaradeva come to be represented even in his own works of later date. Thus, much similarity is observed between his two dramas the Rukmini-haraṇa-Nāṭ and the Rām Vijay or Sītā-Svayamvar-Nāṭ. For instance, in the Rukmini-haraṇa-Nāṭ the valour of Kṛṣṇa is shown; similarly, in the latter, the power of Rāma is delineated. The descriptions of the beauty of both Rukmini and Sītā are similar. Again, Rukmini had her friends Madanaṁjārī, Līlāvatī etc. who served for Rukmini. Likewise, Sītā also appeared accompanied by her friends like Kanakāvatī in the Rāmviṇej-Nāṭ. Further, the description of the fight between Kṛṣṇa and the kings like Śiśuṇāla in the Rukmini-haraṇ-Nāṭ is quite similar to the fight between Rāma and the opposite kings in the letter. Kṛṣṇa got the help of His elder brother Balarāma and other Yādava heroes in the battle. In the Rāmviṇej-Nāṭ Rāma was accompanied by Lakṣmaṇa, His beloved younger brother. Kṛṣṇa won the victory in the Rukmini-haraṇ-Nāṭ. Similarly, Rāma came out victorious in the latter.

On the other hand, in the Rukmini-haraṇ-Nāṭ, the priest Brahmā was badly disturbed by the erotic feelings in the marriage ceremony at the time of 'Mukhacandrika' (the first glance of the bride and the bride-groom to each other
before the sacred fire) when the extra-ordinary beauty of Rukmiṇī came to be visible through the veil. Similar incident is presented in the case of Viśvāmitra in the Rāmvijay-Nāt. Thus the influence of the Rukmiṇī-haran-Nāt upon the Rāmvijay Nāt, a later composition of the author is clearly noticed.

ON DĀMODARA VIPRĀKYĀN OF KĪRTTAN:

Śrī Śaṅkaradeva composes the famous religious poetical work 'Kīrttan'. In a place of this work the author narrates very attractively, the story of a poor Brāhmaṇa 'Dāmodara Vipra' by name. That Vipra visited Kṛṣṇa's abode at Dvārakā. He met Kṛṣṇa while in company with Rukmiṇidevi, the incarnation of Lakṣmī herself. Kṛṣṇa entertained Dāmodara Vipra with hearty devotion. He offered him seat on a golden bed, washed his feet Himself, He worshipped the Brāhmaṇa with sendal paste or Candana, Dhūpa, Karpūra and Tāmbula (bettle-nut) etc. A description of similar reception, as being given to Vedanidhi, the Brāhmaṇa messenger, is met with in the Rukmiṇī-haran-Kāvya as well as in the Nāṭ of the same name of Śaṅkaradeva. Thus the influence of the legend is evident.

131 RVNS. p. 51.
132 RVNS. p. 34.
134 Ibid. dāmodara viprākyān. 7-8. p.405.
ON OTHER WORKS:

The influence of the Rukmiṇī-harana legend is noticed on some other works of early or mediaeval Assamese literature. In this respect the works of Pitāmbara Dvija, Bhaṭṭadeva, Anantakandali, and also the Gurucaritās, the Bargaṭs may be referred to.

ON FOLK-LITERATURE:

Apart from these works, the influence of the legend on folk-literature of Assam is clearly noticed. For instance, some 'Loka-gīts' (folk-songs), and some other folk-songs, like the marriage songs of Assam, to which the reference is made in the earlier chapter of the present work, relate the Rukmiṇī-harana story, being influenced apparently by the same.

ON MODERN ASSAMESE LITERATURE:

Besides the mediaeval literary works and the folk-songs of Assam, as stated above, the influence of the Rukmiṇī-harana legend is noticed on some modern literary works also. Thus the dramatic work of Atul Chandra Hazarika, the same of Sri Jivan Chandra Goswami, and the poems of Mukthinath Bordoloi, A.C. Hazarika, Jatindra Nath Duara, Ambikagiri Ray Chaudhuri, Padmadhar Chaliha etc. as stated in the previous chapter of the present work, may here also be referred to as for examples of the modern works composed
on the influence of the Rukmini-harana legend. Again the reference to the abduction of Rukmini and to Sisupala in a modern Novel *Sahodara* by Gunasagar Dihingia undoubtedly show the influence of the Rukmini-harana legend.

INFLUENCE ON OTHER INDIAN LITERATURE:

As on the Assamese literature, the influence of the Rukmini-harana legend is noticed on other Indian literature also. A discussion is already given in the previous chapter of the present work about the different works of Hindi literature based on this story. Similarly, the works of Bengali literature and Maithili literature as well clearly bear testimony to the popularity of the Rukmini-harana legend. It is very interesting to note that from the west to the east of the country, this legend exercises its great influence on the literatures and cultures and gains considerable popularity.

SPREAD OF THE LEGEND ABROAD: ENGLISH RENDERINGS:

The Rukmini-harana legend seems to be popularised through presentations in foreign literatures like English. As for example, in the famous work *Krishnavatara* in English K.M. Munshi, a prominent Indologist, describes the pastimes

135 hāladhibārīr hāladharak kaigol ye, rukmini-haraṇ karā hol / nanda hnatar śīṣupālar daltōve .................

*Sahodar*. p. 51.
of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Here the author presents the activities of Kṛṣṇa including His episode with Rukmini in a very interesting manner in the light of new thoughts. The story supplies ample scope to the author of the 'Krishnavatara'. The original story occurring in the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa etc. is very interesting with the love affairs of Rukmini and Kṛṣṇa the controversy between Rukmi and King Bhīṣmaka, the clash between Kṛṣṇa and vigorous rival Śisupāla, the love message of Rukmini, sent through the Brāhmaṇa, the abduction of Rukmini from the Svayamvara and the fight between Kṛṣṇa and the rivals etc. With these Dr. Munshi decorates the original story with new colours in his Krishnavatara. A few examples are given below in brief.

According to this account, Rukmini loved Kṛṣṇa not hearing His opulences from others, but she loved Him from the time when she saw Kṛṣṇa killing Kamsa and Canura.136 Again, prince Rukmi, arranged the marriage ceremony of his Sister Rukmini with Śisupāla not because Śisupāla was his friend, but because he intended to marry, in return the grand daughter of Jarāsandha, Āpnāvi.137 Here by the plan of Jarāsandha to stand strong against his life-long enemy Kṛṣṇa is shown.

136 'I saw him when he killed Kamsa and Canura .........
Kr. A. Vol.II. p. 249.

Another interesting point is that Rukmini herself protested regarding her false Svayamvara jeering at Rukmini in the royal court. 133

Moreover, the presentation of the message of Rukmini is also very interesting in the Krishnavatara. It is learnt that the message was first conveyed to Krsna by Trivakra. Here also the reference to the letter of Rukmini sent to Krsna through Jahnau, a disciple of Acarya Shvetaketu is met with. 139 Again, the scene of the abduction of Rukmini is also very attractively depicted with the presence of skillful Uddhava, Shvetaketu, Anlava, and Jahnau. 140

Thus the Rukmini-haraṇa legend is narrated by the author of the Krishnavatara in a very attractive manner.

THE LEGEND IN THE 'BACK TO GOD-HEAD', A MAGAZINE:

The Rukmini-haraṇa legend is sought to be published in English magazine also. As for instance, a recently published article entitled 'The kidnapping of princess Rukmini' comes to our notice in the 'Back to God-head,' a popular magazine published from Bombay. 141

133 'go to antahpura ..... I will give you to Sisupala' etc. Ibtd. Vol.II. p. 255.
141 Vide nCh. Article 'The kidnapping of princess Rukmini' po.26-30.
It is noteworthy that the cover page of the magazine of that particular issue is presented with a picture exhibiting the scene of Rukmini-harana by Kṛṣṇa and His terrible fight with the rivals. Other pictures, denoting the scenes like, Kṛṣṇa and Rukmini, Kṛṣṇa and the Brāhmaṇa messenger, the journey by chariot of Kṛṣṇa, Udhava, and the Brāhmaṇa messenger to Kuṇḍina, and joyful Rukmini with the Brāhmaṇa messenger are also found in course of the narration of the legend.

The story seems to be beautifully presented after the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa version of the Rukmini-harana legend. In the article, the author presents the legend very attractively. Thus, for instance, the swan like gait of bride Rukmini with the tinkling sound of her anklets is beautifully delineated. Further, in another place, princess Rukmini with matchless beauty is compared to an attractive picture of some artist presented by way of following the description of perfect beauty by a great poet. Thus the

142 Vide Ibid. Cover page. A copy of the photo is incorporated in the present work. Vide Annexure E.
144 Ibid. p. 27.
145 Ibid. p. 28.
146 Ibid. p. 29.
147 The motion of her legs was just like that of a full-grown Swan's body and her ankle bells tinkled very mildly ......... Ibid. p. 30.
148 All in all, the bodily luster and beauty of Rukmini, ......... the description of great poets. Ibid. p. 30.
Rukmini-harana legend is presented very attractively in the magazine *Back to Godhead*.

These modern literary works also composed in respect of the story of Rukmini in new light indirectly suggest the profound influence, made by the original legend on the writers of subsequent periods.

**INFLUENCE OF THE LEGEND ON LATER INDIAN CULTURE:**

It appears that the Rukmini-harana legend comes to influence the later Indian culture to a great extent. In addition to the literary works many folk-songs were composed on this Rukmini-harana legend. This phenomenon is already discussed in the previous chapter of the present work.

**INFLUENCE OF THE LEGEND ON RAJASTHANI CULTURE:**

The Rukmini-harana legend exercised sufficient influence on the cultural life of the people of Rajasthāna. It is already mentioned in the previous chapter of the present work that Padam Phagat a devoted Vaiṣṇavite poet of Rajasthan composed a lyrical poem 'Hari-ji-ri Vyāvalo', popularly otherwise known as the Rukmini-Maṅgal, in which the Rukmini-harana legend is narrated.

This melodious poem was very much popular, specially among the folk-people of Rajasthāna. Still, the folk-people
there sing the poem at auspicious nights after finishing their household affairs. Singers, both male and female assemble together and sing the songs, relating the Rukmini-haraṇa episode with various musical instruments in joy. Thus the legend has occupied a note worthy place in the cultural life of the people of Rajasthana.

POPULARITY OF THE LEGEND IN THE MUGHALS’ ROYAL COURT:

It is interesting to note that the story of Rukmini-haraṇa obtained ample popularity in the royal court of the Mughal empire also. From the Indian historical records, it is learnt that Akbar, the great, was the most tolerant and broadminded emperor, specially, in respect of religious matters. Therefore, the emperor honoured a Hindu scholar or poet equally as he did in respect of a Muslim one.

It is known that the poems of Jhula Sānyā and Prthvīraja, relating the Rukmini-haraṇa episode, were recited in the court of Akbar, the great with all earnestness.

149 aḥhī bhī gāyak maṇḍalīyā rātri ke samay iṣkō gāyā karī hai/...............vividh vādyoke sāth gākar śunāte hai / KRRV. p.20.
150 Almost of all the Muslim rulers, Akbar was the most tolerant. He followed the policy of reconciliation towards Hindus. ME. p. 96.
151 Akbar had himself listened to the teachings of Hindu saints and philosophers and he was much impressed by them. Ibid. p.97. Hindu learning was encouraged, with Akbar began a great religions and literary tradition of India. HI. p.389.
The emperor enjoyed the recitation of poems with other courtiers and subjects. Such recitations of poems, narrating the Rukmini-haraṇa legend, evidently show the popularity of the legend in the Mughal period also.

INFLUENCE ON ASSAMESE CULTURE:

The Rukmini-haraṇa legend made a noticeable influence upon the cultural life of the Assamese people. It is of course, due to the tremendous popularity of the two works of Sāṅkaradeva, which he composed on the basis of the story. The presentation on the stage of the Aṅkīyā Nat (like the Rukmini-haraṇ-Nāṭ, Pārijāt-haraṇ-Nāṭ) is called Aṅkīyā Bhāonā. In the Pūrva-raṅga of an Aṅkīyā Bhāonā there is Gāyan and Bāyan which is a very auspicious cultural performance of Assam. As stated earlier, some characters of the Rukmini-haraṇ-Nāṭ are described in the philosophical interpretation of Gāyan and Bāyan. The whole Bhāonā performance (together with the Gāyan-Bāyan) is, however, regarded as very sacred and important cultural institution still in Assam. It gains extra-ordinary popularity among the folk-people of the region.

POPULARITY OF THE RUKMINI-HARAN BHĀONĀ IN THE ĀHOM PERIOD:

The Aṅkīyā Bhāonā gained much popularity and royal favour at the time of the Āhom Svargadews (kings) of Assam.

\[^{152}\text{prthvīrāj kī velī aur jhulā sānyā kā rukmaṇī-haraṇ dono vādsāh ākharke pās pahunce/} \]

\[^{152}\text{Vide KRRV, p.20.}\]
Thus the Rāvan-Vadh-Nāṭ was staged during the time of Rājāśvara Śiṅha Svargadew (1780-1795 A.D.). Again, during the time of Kamalāśvara Śiṅha Svargadew the Rukminī-haraṇ Bhāonā (i.e. Nāṭ) was staged. It is clearly stated in the 'Tuṅkhungia Buranjī' thus - 'The Rukminī-haraṇ Bhāonā was performed on the 18th of Phālguna (i.e. in the month of February and March) of 1727 A.D. It was performed under the direction of Bāregharīyā Gosāin with the permission of Svargadew. The festival was celebrated for four days. One Kāli Mukhā (the image of Kāli), one Bhālukā (i.e. bear), and a pair of elephant were shown. Svargadew (the king), Burha Gohain (a minister), Bār Bāruah (one higher administrative official), and others offered Rs. 40/-, Rs. 30/- and Rs. 8/- respectively. In return, Mahanta offered them all Āśīrvāda (i.e. words of blessings). All these evidences indicate the popularity and influence of the Bhāonā culture (specially of the Rukminī-haraṇ Bhāonā) during the Ahom period.

HUMAN FAITH IN THE PURITY OF THE RUKMINI-HARAṆ BHĀONĀ:

The presentation of an Ankiya Nāṭ (i.e. Bhāonā) is generally regarded as a sacred institution. Therefore, it is performed with devotion. The Rukminī-haraṇ Bhāonā, in

153 TB. Ched. 94. p.51.
154 rukminī-haraṇ bhāonā — āta pāche... cāri-dinīyākai rukminī-haraṇ bhāonā karile, ankar mate/............
Ibid. Ched.329. p.177.
particular, is regarded as very sacred up til now in Assamese society, and it is presented with full devotion on some auspicious occasions in the Sātras, or in the Nāmghars, or in the Sābhā's. Further, at the request of some individual person who seeks blessing on certain occasion the Rukmī-haran-Nāt is performed by the rural folk.

INFLUENCE ON RĀGA:

It is already mentioned in the previous chapter of this work that there is a Rāga, called 'Rukmī Rāga' or 'Suhāi-Rāga', which is sung in the Mālitās of the Ojāpāli dance by the Ojā (i.e. expeer, or the director). According to the traditional belief this Rāga was originally sung by Rukmī out of joy when she got the boon from Goddess Dūrgā in the temple to get Śrī Kṛṣṇa as her husband. Here the influence of the legend on the Rāga, in the name of Rukmī is obvious.

INFLUENCE ON DANCE-DRAMAS:

The influence of the Rukmī-haranā story on the art of dance and music is worth remarkable. Its influence on music is already mentioned. Now, an attempt is made here to discuss in brief about the influence of the legend on dance. In Assam, some creative dance dramas were performed in the middle part of the twentieth century. In 1954 A.D., a

155 Vide FN. 206, Chapter IV above in the present work.
"dance-drama on the Rukmini-haraṇa legend styled as 'Rukmini-haraṇa Nrtya Nāṭikā' was staged in Shillong and Gauhati very successfully. It was presented by a particular cultural organisation styled as 'Shillong Kalāpariṣad' of Shillong. Because of its tremendous popularity the performance of the drama came to be repeated. Prof. A. C. Hazarika mentions in his work 'Maṇḍalekha' that due to the hearty effort of the artists (of that time), like Gonesh Phukan, Lila Kakati (M.P.) and Dr. Caitanya Hazarika the presentation of this Rukmini-haraṇa dance-drama was very attractive and successful. 156

RECORDS AND RADIO BROADCASTINGS:

The Rukmini-haraṇa story makes such an impact in Assam that the Rukmini-haraṇa Nāṭ of Śrī Saṅkaradeva comes to be recorded by some institutions including All India Radio. First of all Late Mitradev Mahanta, a famous Assamese writer and a former president of Assam Sahitya Sabha recorded this Rukmini-haraṇa-Nāṭ through courtesy of famous HMV (His Master's Voice).

Next, the Rukmini-haraṇa-Nāṭ was broadcast from Gauhati and Dibrugarh Centres of 'All India Radio' under the direction of Śrī Cakradhar Mahanta.

156 ML. pp. 572-573.
Further, a Radio record of this Nat was made by the Dibrugarh centre of All India Radio under the direction of Prof. J.N Mahanta of Jhanji, H.N.B. College in September, 1976. This drama was successfully performed by the artists of Sri Sri Jarabari natra of Jhanji in Sibsagar District of Assam. With a sense of pride, I like to put on record that the character, Bhismaka in the said performance was played by the author of this present work. A recent performance of the Rukmini-haran-Nat was made by the Dibrugarh centre of All India Radio under the direction of Sri Narayan Chandra Goswami and it was broadcast by the same centre on the evening, 30th June, 1983. Thus the Radio records on the Rukmini-haran-Nat seems to gain much popularity.

Establishment of Temples:

Indian people live a colourful cultural life influenced by the stories of varied character as they occur in the epics and the Puranas. Thus, temples, to worship Gods and Goddesses like, Viṣṇu, Siva, Kāli, Kāmākhya were established at different periods and in different parts of the country. Several cults came to be in existence due to the influence of the past times and the activities of the individual Gods or Goddesses. In present Berar, there is a famous temple of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmini. A big Mela (exhibition) is also held there every year. Similarly, another temple is there at Bhatkuli in the district of present Amaravati in Maharashtra, which is in the name of
Rukmi. Detail discussion is made in this regard in the last chapter of the present work.

INFLUENCE ON INDIAN ART AND ARCHITECTURE:

The influence of the Rukmiṇī-harāṇa, legend, on some works of Indian Art and Architecture is also noticed. We have already made mention earlier, regarding the beautiful and the great image or statue of Rukmiṇī found at Naukhas in the Etah district of Uttar Pradesh. Again, some historians refer to some art of Gupta age, through which the episode of Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī was related. 157

Furthermore, various pictures are found relating the Rukmiṇī-harāṇa episode in some modern works like, the Indian Mythology, 158 and the Rukmiṇī-harāṇa-Nāt 159 of Prof. V.C. Hazarika, Back to Godhead, 160 a magazine etc. These works of Indian artists evidently show the influence of the Rukmiṇī harāṇa legend on Indian art and architecture.

157 The Gupta artists handled successfully the stories of the various incarnations of Viṣnu and Siva in a masterly manner ............................................................
We also find a scene in which Kṛṣṇa, Rukmini and Sudama are shown together.
EHI. p. 319.

158 IM. p. 69.

159 Vide. RHAH. Cover page.

EXISTENCE OF VRATA AND TĪRTHA:

Like wise, the existence of the Rukmiṇī Tīrthā, and the prevalence of the Rukmiṇī-Vrata in the Indian cultural life, of which mention is made earlier in the present work, are the gifts of the impact of the Rukmiṇī-haraṇa legend incorporating the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa with Rukmiṇī.

INFLUENCE ON TRADITIONAL CUSTOMS FOLLOWED DURING LATER PERIOD:

Besides these, there are some other interesting customs observed by certain people under the influence of the Rukmiṇī-haraṇa legend. People of some races of India feel proud by way of proclaiming themselves as the descendants of Bhīṣmaka and Rukmaṇīrā.

Some of the inhabitants of Sādiyā of Upper Assam (some areas are in present Arunachal) regard Bhīṣmaka as their founder king. Some chronological records also state that king Bhīṣmaka was the founder king of the Cutīyā kingdom. According to the tradition, this Bhīṣmaka was the father of Rukmiṇī, the heroine of the legend under discussion. Regarding this an elaborate discussion is made in the concluding chapter of this present work.

In the Rukmiṇī-haraṇa legend, as stated earlier, Rukmiṇī used to visit Ambikālāya (i.e. the temple of Goddess Ambikā or Dūrgā) for auspicious prayer on the previous day.
of the Svayāmvara according to the traditional custom of the royal family she belonged to. The descendants of the Deuri-Cutiyā race, celebrate this custom in their marriage ceremony at present time also. The bride as well as the bride-groom being sanctified by way of taking bath visit the 'Dewsāl' (a sacrificial place) of Goddess 'Kecchāikhātī' and bow with prayers asking for bliss and welfare during their conjugal life. It is so mentioned by Dr. P. Saikla in his work the Deuri Cutiya. There is sufficient scope to describe these customs as the result of the traditional influence of the Rukmini-haraṇa legend. Further, on the traditional 'Sāktipūjā (Goddess worship)' at Sadiya similar impact of the story is also felt.

This custom, however, on the part of a would be bride to worship or to pray Gods is generally practised in later Indian society. A.C. Prabhupada also observes the same view. It is noticed, however, at present that not only a bride but also a bride-groom uses to offer homage to God, or practises such sacraments according to the native custom for bliss prior to the marriage ceremony.

THE CUSTOM OF CUTTING HAIR LIKE RUKMĪ:

It is interesting to note that there is a custom in India, to cut the hair like Rukmī, observed traditionally

161 DC. p. 29.
162 Kr. Vol.II. p.126.
by some of the races of the North-East India as well as by some people dwelling in the North-West India also.

THE CUSTOM OBSERVED IN NORTH-EAST INDIA:

There are some tribes in the North-East India in the region of old Sadiya and present Arunachal Pradesh who are known by the names Īdu and Pādām or the Micimi tribe. These Micimis feel proud by way of identifying themselves as the descendants of king Bhīṣmaka and Rukmavīra. Some of the Micimi people cut their hair showing honour to Rukmī, the prominent hero of their race, whose hairs and beards were snipped at by Lord Kṛṣṇa. Those Micimi people are called 'Culikaṭi Micimi (people of Micimi tribe with their hair cut)' as they cut their hair. They come to follow this custom of cutting hair traditionally. It is observed by some scholars like Dr. Lila Gogoi, Dr. P. Saikia, B.N. Burhagohain also. Further discussion, in this regard is made in the concluding chapter of the present work.

THE CUSTOM IN NORTH-WEST INDIA:

It is also very interesting to note that the same custom of cutting hair on the middle of the head is practiced by some inhabitants of Rajasthan, specially, in the Sikar district, traditionally. They too identify themselves as

163 AG. p. 33.
164 CB. p. 4.
165 SB. p. 10.
166 Informations collected from Prof. H.N. Marwalia, Head of the dept. of Economics, Jhanji H.N.S. College, Mibrugach University.
the descendants of Bhoja race, the followers of Rukmi. Of course, youths of the new generation almost come to avoid this practice.

Such customs, however, undoubtedly provide proof, in respect of the influence, made by the Rukmini-harana legend on the cultural life of our people.

IMPACT OF THE LEGEND ON LATER INDIAN SOCIETY:

Besides the profound influence, made by the Rukmini harana legend on Indian literature and culture, its impact on later Indian society is also worth noticeable.

ESTABLISHMENT OF KRŠNA’S SUPREMACY:

The impact of the Rukmini-harana legend on later Indian society is very much noteworthy. At the first place, the victory of Lord Kršna over the powerful kings like Jarāsandha, established the divinity and heroism of Kršna. As Kršna was not a king of a royal family, He was scornfully hated by Rukmī, Jarāsandha, Śiśupāla and their supporters among kings. Rukmī rebuked Kršna as the most abominable descendant of Yadu race. But all of them were badly defeated by Kršna in the battle during Rukmini’s Svayaṁvara. This victory of Kršna over the kings established supremacy of Kršna for the later society.

KRŠNA’S IDYL ACTIVITIES: IMPRESSION THEREOF:

Kršna, notwithstanding, being the supreme personality of God-head acted as a human being. Therefore, His behaviour
set ideal examples which continued to inspire the later Indian society. His behaviour towards the Brāhmaṇa messenger, His affection or love towards His beloved were indirectly valuable teachings of the Lord.

RACIAL COLOURS : TRADITIONAL MARKS :

It is found obvious owing to its popularity that the story could evoke some racial emotions also. Many races or nationalities of different parts of India consider the story as of their own region and they further consider it as a part of their own cultural life. For instance, Sadiya a part of old Upper Assam in North-East India is traditionally identified as the Vidarbha kingdom, stated in the Rukmiṇī-haraṇa legend. Even in modern times we find a river there Kūndīla by name, and some places, like, Bhīṣmāk Nagar (the city of Bhīṣmaka), famous for certain relics, and Śūpāḷ Dūrga, etc. 167 Again, there are several places in modern Assam called Rukmiṇī Nagara (the city of Rukmiṇī), Rukmiṇī gaon (the Rukmiṇī’s village) etc. Similarly, Pāṭvāusī, Tembuānījān, Dhanukhandāvil are also places of Assam quite significant indicating connection with the legend. 168

Again, some places of Southern India, like Bērār, Bhatkuli, Kaṇḍināpura are also identified as the places of

167 AS. p. 268; D7. pp. 9, 11, etc.; ADB. p. 32. ASSP. 20th Year, 1333 Sāk. No. 1, ed. by J. Goswami, p. 27.
168 KGC. p. 127. BD. p. 3.
old Vidarbha kingdom connected with the legend. A detail discussion is made in respect of the identification and location of these places in the concluding chapter of the present work.

All these show much popularity and impact made by the legend on the Indian society at various places.

FAMILIARITY OF NAMES:

The later Indian society come to be conversant with and impressed by the story through various literary works composed on the legend. Like some mythological names, as Rādhā, and Sītā, the name Rukmiṇī also becomes so popular throughout India that we come across a large number of Hindu ladies bearing this name. Even the name of the beloved daughter of the Vaiṣṇavite saint Śrī Śaṅkaradeva was Rukmiṇī. In the Ahom period also there were ladies named Rādhā and Rukmiṇī who were the two wives of Nāhar Khorā.

Like wise, it is known that the name of the mother of saint Eknāth of Maharastra, was Rukminibai. Again, in the Mrgāvāti-Kāvyya of Kutvan (Saṃvat 1550) some beautiful
girl is referred to whose name was Rukmini. Such evidences obviously indicate the growing popularity of the name Rukmini in Indian society.

PROFOUND IMPACT ON THE FOLK-PEOPLE:

The legend came to have a hold upon the folk-people of the society, specially in Assam. In Assam it is so because Śrī Śaṅkaradeva uses such popular proverbs as are very interesting even for an illiterate listener. For instance, it is stated that Balarama pulled the enemies with his Lāṅgala (the plough), the mighty weapon, just as mango trees, pulled with a Hākuţi (a long hooked-stick). As the pulling of mango tree is very common, specially to the folk-people so they find much interest in such expressions. Furthermore, among the characters, depicted in Śaṅkaradeva’s works, Sasiprabhā was an Assamese mother with all the responsibilities towards her daughter, Sumālinidhāi was an Assamese nurse, and Rukmī, in the language of Late Laksmi-nath Bezboruah was a youthful ‘Barbopā’ (a kind name to call the eldest son) of Assamese society with his pride and anger. Thus the legend came to be very much favourite even with the common people also.

THE LEGEND IN THE COMMON SAYINGS:

It is noticed that some interesting mythological or historical events find place in the phrases and idioms:

172 HSI. p. 87
173 RHKS. p. 73.
and the proverbs as well which are both in colloquial and literary form. The influence of some characters in epics and Purāṇas or history is noticed in respect of the Indian society also. For instance, generally, the peaceful and smooth administrative condition of the country is compared to the 'Rām-Rājya (i.e. the rule of Rāma)', traditionally famous as an ideal rule. In this case the impact of the story of Rāma from the great epic Rāmāyaṇa is obvious. Like wise, a righteous or a virtuous person is called 'Dharma-Yudhiṣṭhira (i.e. a person, who is as pious as Yudhiṣṭhira).' It implies that the person described is like Yudhiṣṭhira, the eldest of the Pāṇḍavas. Here the impact of the epic Mahābhārata is obvious. Some historical characters also exercised similar impact on the society of later period. Thus an administration, devoid of proper judgement or deliberation is commonly called 'Tughluqīrājātva' (i.e. the rule of Mahmādīn Tughluq). It is called so because, Mahmādīn Tughluq came to be famous as a scholar, or wise and also a foolish ruler for his wrong decisions.174

Similar impact, made by the Rukmīnī-haraṇa legend is noticed on the later society, specially on Assamese society. Thus an angry man is compared with Rukmavīra and his anger

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174 Hence, with the best intentions, excellent ideas, but no balance or patience, or sense of production, Mahāmād Tughluq was a transcendent failure.... MRI. p. 170.
Jauna Khan, who succeeded Ḩiyyas-ud-dīn Tughluq under the title Mahāmād Tughluq, was a strange man.......... HI. p. 280.
to that of Rukmavīra (or, sometimes of Bhīma also). Therefore, somebody says, 'He plays the part of Rukmavīra (or Bhīma) out of anger.'\(^{175}\) It should be noted that prince Rukmī is commonly called Rukmavīra in Assamese society.

Śiśupāla was badly defeated in the battle with Kṛṣṇa as described in the narrations of the legend. Kṛṣṇa got prepared to kill him. But, at that time Kṛṣṇa remembered the promise, He made before His aunt, the mother of Śiśupāla according to which He was to forgive Śiśupāla's one hundred lapses. Then with a sharp weapon Kṛṣṇa cut Śiśupāla's crown and hairs. As the arrow continued to pursue Śiśupāla, he started running without any turn to his back. The scene, as mentioned earlier, is beautifully described in the Rukmiṇī-haran-Kāvyā. Until now, such hot pursuit is known as the 'Śiśupāl Kheda' (the chasing of Śiśupāla), in Assamese society. By this a very fast chasing is meant. This popular phrase is mentioned in some works of Assamese literature.\(^{176}\)

Thus, it is understandable that the Rukmiṇī-haranā legend not only gained much popularity, but also it came to exercise great influence upon the literature and culture of the later Indian society.

\(^{175}\)'si khaṅgat, rukmavīrap bāo diche'/
Colloquial use.

\(^{176}\) Vide. AKK. p. 27.
AVB. p. 464.