Legends have occupied a significant and noteworthy place in the sphere of world literature as they have supplied adequate materials to different forms of poetic art. In India since the days of the Vedas, various kinds of legendary accounts have made their appearance in our literature. These legendary narrations are very much interesting and have come to be of great use to the later Indian society. The Vedic legends were mainly narrated to explain the utility, justification and significance of the sacrificial rites. They, however, provide us information in respect of social, political, philosophical and religious conditions of the ancient India. ¹

¹ Although the Brāhmaṇas fortunately contain much that has only a distant reference to the sacrificial cult, for instance, cosmogonic myths, ancient legends and narratives, yet the sacrifice is the one and only theme from which all the discussions start on which everything hinges.

Here a notable point for us is that particularly in India, these legends have exercised a great influence on literary works of subsequent periods. We also observe a great impact of the legends on the subsequent socio-cultural life of the Indian people.

THE LEGEND : ITS MEANING:

The term "Legend" comes through French from the mediaeval latin expression "legenda" meaning, "to be said". It is derived from the verb 'legere' meaning, 'to read'.

Originally, legend meant the history or a saint's life and such portions of scriptures which were read at divine services. Beginning from its original application to stories of a saint's life containing different types of miracles, the word came to be applied to a story coming down traditionally without any historical foundation, but popularly believed to be a fact. In general, a legend,

2 F. legende, L. legenda What is read, F. legere.

3 The term legend means literally 'some thing to be read' and originally corresponded largely to the term story. In mediaeval times ........ denoted collections of extracts from the lives of saints martyrs to be read as lessons in divine service.

4 A legend or tradition is always told as a fact and is presumably believed by the letter. But though it may be connected with a definite time and place, it may well change such details and still remains an object of belief.

SDF, II. p. 403.
narrates such a story which contains some historical elements. It relates such an old event or story in which human beings become its characters. Here, some definitive meanings of the expression, 'legend' may be noted as available in the dictionaries.

5 A legend is a story of some wonderful event, handed down for generations among a people and popularly believed to have a historical basis...... WNTD, p. 1035.

A legend is an unauthenticated story from early times preserved by tradition and popularly thought to be historical.

BWL.I, p. 728.

6 A legend is a story of saints' life, a traditional and untrue, unhistorical or marvellous tale, a tale, a writing, a motto, an inscription, words, accompanying an illustration or picture.

CTCD, p. 609

A legend is an ancient story or tradition, an inscription or motto on a coat of arms.

KCFAD, p. 423.

Legend originally something to be read at religious service or at meals, usually saints' martyr's life. Legend has since come to use for a narrative supposedly based on fact, with an intermixture of traditional materials, told about a person, place, or incident.

SOF, p. 612

A collection of saints' lives or similar stories ...... A legend is an unauthentic story handed down by tradition and popularly regarded as historical.

SOF,D.I, p.1126.

Originally, an account of saints' life which was read aloud as duty; extended to include stories of other kinds generally of a marvellous character, a traditional popular tale; a tale of doubtful authenticity and varacity.

UFL, p. 615.
Legend is a kind of popular traditional story relating the life and deeds of a noteworthy human figure viz., a sage, a king, or some other semi-divine person. It is noticed that in a legend the chief character is required to be a moral and ideal being. The legend may belong to a historical figure, a locality, or an event. The term 'legend' came to be used to mean a narrative supposedly based on fact that shows an inter-mixture of traditional materials pertaining to a person, place, or incident. The legend is a tale always told as a fact, which is presumably believed by the latter. Even though a legend may be connected with a definite time and place, yet it may undergo certain change in respect of details and still it remains an object of belief. A legend may be introduced as a popular history with an actual event behind, this kind of narration succeeds in captivating the general imagination.

Although generally, legends are found to be full of fancy and exaggerations, yet they are supposed to be based upon facts. Reliably enough, history can be brought out of the materials supplied by the legends. The legends sometimes supply genealogical information regarding the kings, sages and the families of the priests. We may be certain that a legend at any rate is a popular and ancient story relating the life and activities of a mortal person.
DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LEGEND AND MYTH:

The very term 'myth' originates from the Greek word 'mythos' or 'muthos' meaning, word, speech, tale etc. The Greek word though originally meant a 'word' yet subsequently came to signify a story devoid of a factual basis and pertaining to a supernatural or super human being. Moreover, it is purely a fictitious narrative where the involvement of supernatural persons, actions or events and some popular idea concerning natural and historical phenomena have been noticed. Myth is man's attempt to explain

7 GK. muthos, word, speech, tale, legend etymol. UDFL. p. 759

The term 'myth' is equivalent to Greek word mythos meaning story. According to Greek writers the term myth is used as general name for certain kind of folk-lore, historic tale setting forth the process of nature or belief about religion, custom, tradition etc.

EPA. XIX. p. 690

8 UDFL. p. 759.

A myth is a purely fictitious narrative usually involving supernatural persons, actions or events, and embodying some popular idea concerning natural or historical phenomena.

SCFD. I.p. 1306

A myth is a fictitious, traditional story or legend embodying ancient or primitive beliefs in and an interpretation of, religious or supernatural phenomena such as the gods and lesser deities, the forces of nature.

UDFL. n. 759.
the world and objects he sees in it, and to make intelligible to himself the natural phenomena which direct his way of life in the world. Thus myth is a none-historical old story which relates the cosmological and supernatural tradition, religious beliefs in respect of the Gods and heroes of the ancient people. It is a purely fictitious narrative that usually evolves supernatural persons, their actions or some events connected with them.

Although the two terms i.e. myth and legend are generally used rather ambiguously, yet some distinctive features are also noticed between them. At the first place, a myth appears to be a particular kind of narrative with a cosmological and fictitious character. A legend, on the other hand, contains within its fold some elements of history and it is further believed to be based on truth or facts. Again, unlike a myth, a legend does not explain directly any natural phenomena or unknown object of human origin. The ancient people could explain the relation of man with the universe, the peculiarities of environment etc. only through the myth. A legend, generally relates the

10 A myth then is firstly, man's attempt to explain the world and the things he sees in it, and to intelligible to himself the natural phenomena which condition his way of life in that world.

G M. p. 4.
life and deeds of a sage, king, or some semi-divine persons, where as a myth specially narrates the life, activities or pastimes of a God, a Goddess, or some being of supernatural power. A myth, therefore, is an ancient non-historical story where the Gods and Goddesses or some other supernatural being appear as the main characters.

Further, a myth differs from the legend from another point of view. It deals, specially, with the religious customs and also some natural phenomena of varied nature. Therefore, a myth with some sort of religious background becomes a part and parcel of the primitive religion. In Greek, as has been mentioned earlier, the term myth primarily means a word or speech, and at the same time it means a word of fancy. Therefore, it is used for such

11 A myth is an imaginary fictitious person, event, or thing. UDPL, p. 759.
Myth is a story rooted in the most ancient religious beliefs and institutions of a people, dealing with Gods, Goddess or natural phenomena. An imaginary thing. WHEU, p. 642.

12 A myth is a story which has no foundation in history but is used to communicate what the myth-letter believes to be the truth about man in his relationship with God. 3A M, p. 55.
A myth is an account of the deeds of a God or supernatural being, usually expressed in tones of primitive thought. It is an attempt to explain the relations of man to the universe, it has for those who recounts it a predominantly religious value; or it may have arisen to explain the existence of some social organization, a custom or the peculiarities of an environment. I M., I, p. 11.
narrations or tales which are specially connected with Gods and Goddesses, and also with heroes, natural phenomena as well as the supernatural power. A legend, on the other hand, is however, a popular traditional story with some historical elements or some real events which catch the general imagination. Therefore, a legend is based on fact, and it appears that to it, much fanciful embroidery may have been added. A myth is purely an imaginary narrative connected with Gods, Goddesses, natural phenomena and some supernatural powers.  

LEGEND AND FABLE:

The term 'fable' comes through the Latin word 'fabula' or 'fabuilare', meaning 'to talk' to talk idly, or to talk falsehood, lie. It is fictitious narrative or a

A myth is a story, person or thing existing only in imagination or whose actuality is not verifiable as a belief given uncritical ............

Myth is sometimes distinguished from legends as being entirely fictitious and imaginary, whereas the legend woven around a historical figure or nucleus.

L. fabuilare, 'to talk' to converse, to talk idly, to talk lie.

13 WTMD. II, p. 1497
14 EME. IX, p. 29.
story not based on fact, but on falsehood. It is a sort of ancient tale in which birds, beasts or such creatures appear as characters speaking like human beings, and yet usually keeping their traits in fact. A fable contains a moral teaching. In other words, a fable is generally narrated with a view to teach a certain moral lesson. As for example, Panchatantra, a collection of a number of fables was composed by Visnusarma, a learned brahmin to teach moral lessons to the sons of king Amarsakti. This is the famous Indian book of fables.

Generally a fable consists of two parts, one of them is the narrative portion which illustrates the moral and the other is the statement of the moral which is normally presented in the form of a proverb.

Fable is a narrative or statement not founded on fact; a myth or legend (now rare); a foolish story; a fabrication, falsehood.

Ibid. p. 665.

A fable is a narrative in which things irrational and sometimes inanimate are for the purpose of moral instruction, feigned to act and speak with human interest and passions, any tale in literary form ....

CTCD. p. 330

A fable is a short story devised to convey some useful lesson.

SCPD. I. p. 665

Indeed, fairy-tale research that most attractive study of fairy tales and fairy-tale motives and of their wanderings from people to people has only become an independent branch of knowledge, the famous Indian book of fables, the Panchatantra.


A fable indeed is essentially connected with the two branches of science known by Indians as the Nitisastra and Arthasastra ............ every day life.

HSLK. p. 244.
presence of a consciously derived moral serves to distinguish the fable from many related forms such as myth, legend, folk-tale etc. Unlike a legend, it has however, no historical basis and is purely fictitious and imaginary narrative. In a fable, generally, animals and other inanimate things become the characters, while in a legend human beings or other semi-divine persons appear as characters. So, it can be safely maintained that a fable is an animal tale relating the behaviour and conduct of human beings and containing a moral teaching together.

LEGENDS AND PARABLES:

The term 'parable' comes through the Greek word 'parabole' meaning, a placing beside, or a comparison. The Latin term is also 'parabola', meaning, comparison. A parable is a brief narrative conveying a spiritual teaching. It is an allegory generally used to illustrate a moral lesson. A parable is told with a purpose to

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20 A fable is a fictitious narrative having a moral instruction, a fiction or myth feign to invent. KCTAD, p. 213.

A fable is a short tale intended to convey a moral, usually with animals, or inanimate objects as actors. UDEL, p. 397.

21 The term parable originated from the Greek word parable, 'a placing beside' or a comparison.

22 Latin 'parabola', comparison. UDEL, p. 397.

23 A parable is a brief narrative or story conveying a spiritual or moral lesson or illustrating some spiritual condition or relation; an allegory. Ibid. p. 827.
illustrate a particular doctrine.\(^\text{24}\) Thus a parable is a brief ancient narrative conveying a spiritual or moral lesson and generally told to illustrate some doctrine. It is a fictitious and imaginary narrative where some creatures and other inanimate things appear as character. Further, the story is generally presented allegorically to illustrate a particular doctrine.

Like a fable, a parable differs from a legend. Unlike a legend, a parable is a purely imaginary and fictitious narrative without any historical foundation. Again like a fable, in a parable also some animals and inanimate things usually become the characters, whereas in a legend human beings or other semi-divine figures appear as characters. Further more, unlike a legend, a parable is allegorically illustrated to teach a spiritual or moral lesson.\(^\text{25}\) Therefore, we can state that a parable is a brief ancient fictitious and imaginary narrative generally illustrated allegorically to teach some spiritual, or moral lesson, or doctrine.

\(^\text{24}\) A parable is a comparison; a fable or story of something which might have happened, told to illustrate some doctrine, or to make some duty clear. CTCD. p. 653.

A parable is a fable or a story told to illustrate some doctrine. KCFAD. p. 459.

\(^\text{25}\) The parables were not always understood .... the master spoke in parables for the very purpose of discussing some of his message from the people. AER. p. 277.
LEGEND AND FOLK-TALE:

A folk-tale is also a sort of popular traditional ancient story. It comes to us by way of oral transmission from one person to another and passes through generations. The tale, heard earlier is remembered and then comes to be represented by a new-teller as it is or with addition or changes. We can cite for instance, the Arabian Nights, the Adventures of uncle Remus, the story of Tejimala, the story of Teja and Tulā, the Cilani jīyekār sādhu (the tale of the daughter of Cilani) etc. Sometimes the tradition comes to be literary as when a tale continues being told by one person after another. Nevertheless, a folk-tale is a traditional popular unwritten story embodying the thoughts and ideas, manners, and customs of the people of a particular region. A folk-tale represents the realities of human life of a particular region and also reveals what the people would like things to be. There are much similarities in some cases among myth, legend and folk-tale. But it should be noted that as traditional stories though some

26 A folk-tale is a popular story handed down by oral tradition from a more or less remote antiquity.

STCD. p. 411

Folk-tale is a popular unwritten story.


27 Myth, folk-tale and legend may be generally defined as traditional forms of narrative. That is all are embraced within the term tradition.

AIM. p. 11.
similarities are seen yet there are some points of difference also among them. To reiterate the point, a legend is a kind of popular history. It can be said so because it presents such events as are popularly believed to be true. On the other hand, a folk-tale does not possess such foundation. Further, a folk-tale may not be told with a serious purpose like a legend, but is told sometimes simply for entertainment. Unlike in a legend, there is seen a mixture of characters like animate and inanimate beings in a folk-tale, but does not contain moral beings or semi-divine persons as characters. A folk-tale tells of individual human beings and their personal adventures and often of anthropomorphic animals and their doings. As noted earlier, apart from the exaggerations a legend is based on facts. However, unlike a legend, a folk-tale does not provide us information in respect of geneology of the ancient kings or other noted persons.

VARIEITIES OF INDIAN LEGENDS:

The Vedas constitute the original source of most of the Indian myths, legends and narratives. The origin

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28 Myths tell stories of the beginning of things and concern mainly with the Gods and those semi-divine culture heroes who often stand for abstract qualities - courage, kingship, warrior's strength, and so on while folk-tales tell of individual human beings and their personal adventures and often of anthropomorphic animals and their doings.

G M. Introduction, p. 5.
may be regarded as the oldest Vedic source of myths and legends. For instance, the legends like those of Pururavas and Urvasī, Yama Yamī, Sunah-śepa, Saramā and Pani can be mentioned.29

The Vedic literature presents a good number of different kinds of myths, legends and other narratives in all its branches namely, the Samhitās, Mantras, Brāhmaṇas, Āranyakas and Upaniṣads. Here, we can make mention the legends of Uṣasti, Naciketā, the trial of the power of Gods, king Janaśruti and Raikava etc.30

Some of these Vedic legends take new forms in the works of later Indian literature like epics, purāṇas, Kathāsarit-sāgara etc. For instance, the Vedic Pururavas

29 Pururavas and Urvasī R V. 10. 95
Yama Yamī Ibid. 10. 10
Sunah-śepa Ibid. 1.24.27
Saramā and Pani Ibid. 10. 108

30 The legend of Uṣasti, Chā U. 1.10.11. pp. 112-132.
and Urvaśī legend is found in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Kathā-sarit-
sāgara, and lastly we find the same as transformed into a
dramatic form in Kālidāsa's Vikramorāśīyam. 31

Next to the Vedic works, the Purāṇas stand as another important source of the Indian myths and legends. Here, we can cite as for illustrations, the legends of Dhruva, Yayāti, King Sagara, Nimi, Ambariṣa, Naraka, Lāgīṣara etc. 32 On the other hand, some Vedic legends are also transformed into different forms in the Purāṇas. For example, the Vedic Śunah-sēpa legend has been differently narrated in

31 VS P. 4-6. 23-85. pp. 35-41. KSS S. 1.3.

The legend of Ambariṣa. Ibid. 9.4. pp. 14-22
almost all the Purāṇas. In addition to the Vedas and the Purāṇas, the two epics, the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, Kathā-sarit-sāgara, Buddhist Jātakas, and Jaina literature also narrate different kinds of myths and legends. Therefore, from the view of the basis of origin, the Indian legends can be divided in the following way, viz. Vedic Purānic, and those originating from other sources like Epics, Kathā-sarit-sāgara, Buddhist Jātakas and Jaina literature.

Vedic Legends:

We have already stated that the Vedas are the fountain source of the Indian myths and legends. The Vedas are of two main divisions viz. Mantra or Saṁhitā and the Brāhmaṇa. In the Brāhmaṇa literature, generally, the utility, justification and meaning of the Mantras as well as various kinds of sacrificial rites have been elaborated. For this specific purpose, different kinds of narratives, myths and legends have been introduced and narrated there. As for example, the legend of Pururavas and Urvaśī, Yama and Yami, Sunah-śepa etc. can be cited. The legend of Sunah-śepa, and that of Pururavas and Urvaśī are met with in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa and in the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa respectively. 33 It is noticed that the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa

33 A Br. 33-1-6, pp. 335-360.
S Br. 11.5.1.
mainly deals with the Soma-sacrifice. The *Altareya Brāhmaṇa*, obviously therefore, narrates the legend of Sunah-sepa to explain the meaning and justification of the great Soma-sacrifice. It is narrated in the legend that being released from his Bandhana (binding) Sunah-sepa saw the great Soma-sacrifice.

Vedic Gods and Goddesses were pleased by means of different kinds of sacrificial rites. Therefore, most of the Vedic legends were narrated with a view to explain the utility and meaning of the sacrifice as well as to show the greatness of Gods. Thus in the legend of Pururavas and Urvasī, it is stated that once Pururavas was to face pangs of separation from his beloved wife Urvasī. Then Pururavas was wondering hither and thither in search of her. At that time, he was advised to perform a sacrifice to please God Agni in order to get back his beloved wife, Urvasī. It is seen that the greatness of the Agniṣṭoma-sacrifice is explained by this legend. Similarly, the legend of Saramā and Pani explains the greatness of God Indra. It is told that Paris, some demons stole away the cows of Brhaspati, the honourable priest of the Gods. Indra, then ordered Saramā to fetch the cows back from the Paris. But the Paris did not want to return the cows without fight. Saramā, then explained the greatness of Indra before them. Ultimately, Indra himself appeared the Paris and defeated them by means
of a terrible battle.

It is already stated that the Vedic legends are concerned with different kinds of sacrifices in the name of different Vedic deities. In the Rigveda there are about thirty important legends. To make mention some of them, the legends of Sunah-sepa, Agaśṭya and Lopamudra, descending of Soma, the birth of Agni, Syāyātrava, the birth of Brhaspati, King Sudāsa, Nahuṣa, Apālā, Vṛṣā Kapi, Pururavas and Urvasī, Naciketa, Saramā and Pani, Yama

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34 R V. 1.24.27
35 Ibid. 1.17.9
36 Ibid. 3.43
37 Ibid. 3.11
33 Ibid. 5.32
39 Ibid. 6.71
40 Ibid. 7.1d
41 Ibid. 7.65
42 Ibid. 8.11
43 Ibid. 10.86
44 Ibid. 10.95
45 Ibid. 10.33
46 Ibid. 10.103
and Yami, the story of Saranyā, Dīrghatamā, the advice of Madhuvidyā, etc. may be referred to.

PURĀNIC LEGENDS:

The Purānic works constitute another important source of the Indian legends. It is found that some of the legends that have made their first appearance in the Vedas have reappeared in the Purānic works undergoing marked transformations. As for example we observe that the legend of Pururavas and Urvasī is found in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa and the Sunah-śepa legend is narrated in almost all the Purāṇas like Bhāgavata, Devī Bhāgavata, Mārkandeya, etc.

Certain the Vedic legends have come to be distinctly and elaborately presented in different Purāṇas. The Purānic legends provide us sufficient knowledge of ancient India.

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47 Ibid. 10.10
48 Ibid. 10.27.12
49 Ibid. 1.40.164
50 Ibid. 1.116.12
51 The purāṇas undoubtedly reached back to great antiquity and are rooted in the Vedic literature; many a legend already familiar from Rgveda hymns and from the Brāhmaṇas reappear in the purāṇas.

HIL. Vol. 1, p. 511.
There are many such important legends. For instance, we can refer to the legends of Māndhātā, of Bhagiratha, of Venā and Pṛthu, of Pṛahlāda, of Devahuti and Kardama, of Kapila, of Jaḍa Bharata and king Bahuguṇa, of Jamadagni and Viśvāmitra, of Brahmīṇ Ajāmila, of Vṛttāsura, of Samudra Manthana (the churning of the ocean), of Rukmīṇī-haraṇa, of Pārijātā-haraṇa, and that of Īṣā and Aniruddha etc.

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52 V S P. 4.3. 1-8. p. 9


56 Bhāg P. 3.22-25 pp. 304-324.

57 Ibid. 3.25. pp. 319-324

58 Ibid. 5.10-11. pp. 531-539.


61 Ibid. 6.9-12,14. pp. 709-730; pp. 733-740.

62 Ibid. 3.6-9. pp. 896-916


64 V S P. 5.30. 29-30, pp. 233-295; H VP. 64-81

pp. 513-530; Br.V.P.(Ss.ed.) 103-105.
p. 41d-462,
Legends from other sources:

In addition to the Vedas and the Purāṇas there are other sources also of Indian legends. These are the epics, Kathā-sarit-sāgara, Buddhist Jātakas, and Jaina literature which have come to be the source of a good number of legends. Many of the myths and legends that have appeared in the two great epics, the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata are found common to the Purāṇas. Some of the vedic myths and legends have undergone marked transformations in the two epics. The Kathā-sarit-sāgara also contains certain legends which have been narrated in the epics. For instance, we can mention the legends of Pururavas and Urvasī, Nala and Damayantī, king Śibi etc.

Similarly, Buddhist Jātakas also narrate some legends explaining the previous incarnations of Lord Buddha. Some of the legends found in the Buddhist Jātakas are also narrated in the epic Mahābhārata.

Some important legends of the Rāmāyana:

The great epic Rāmāyana narrates a good number of legends. As for examples, we may make mention of the legends of king Trisāṇku, king Amboriṣa, Rṣyasrīṇa, Rṣyasrīṇa,

66 V. K., I. 57-60.
67 Ibid. I. 61-62.
68 Ibid. I. 9-14.
king Sagara, Vedavati, Ahalyā etc.

**SOME IMPORTANT LEGENDS OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA:**

Mahābhārata, the great epic also narrates a good number of legends. Thus some heroic legends found in the Mahābhārata are the legends of Nṛṣyanta and Ākuntalā, Nala and Damayanti, Yayāti, and those of Māndhātā, Ruru, Śyavana, Śryaśṛṅga, Rāma, the snake sacrifice of Janmejaya etc.

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69 Ibid. I. 39-41.
70 Ibid. VII. 17
71 Ibid. VII. 30.
73 Ibid (W ed) Vanapravsa, 52-79, pp. 476-675
77 Ibid. Adiparva. 5-6, Vanaparava, 123.
SOME IMPORTANT LEGENDS OF KATHĀSARIT-SĀGARA:

A good number of legends are met with in the Kathā-sarit-sāgara also. For example, we may mention the legends of Jīmutabāhana, Viravara, Deva Datta, Vikramotunga, Brahma Datta, Urvasī, Ahalyā, Indra, Śibi etc.

LEGENDS IN NIRUKTA AND NIGHANTU:

Some important legends are narrated in the Nirukta and Nighantu also. As for example, we may refer to the legends of the birth of Atri, Indra and Agaśṭya, Vṛttāsura, Yama and Yami, the birth of Bhṛgu, Ārunaḥ-śena etc.

81 K S S. Naravāhana Janana Lambaka, 21-259
82 Ibid, Alākāravatī Lambaka, 3.
84 Ibid, Ratanprabhā Lambaka, I, 50-104.
85 Ibid, Kathāṭīṭha Lambaka, 3.
89 Ibid, Kathāṭīṭha Lambaka, 7.
90 Mīr. 3.3. p. 143.
91 Ibid. 1. 5-6, pp. 48, 52, pp. 96-97.
92 Ibid. 2.5
93 Ibid. 11-24, p. 527.
94 Ibid. 3.3 p. 148.
95 Ibid. 3.1. p. 120; 3.4. p. 155.
VARIOUS KINDS OF LEGENDS:

The legends are of varied nature, and their aims and objects are also different. Therefore, we can classify the Indian legends into thirteen divisions, viz — Moral legends, Brāhmaṇical legends, Heroic legends, Ascetic legends, Erotic legends, Flood legends, Maraṇa (abduction) legends, Sage legends, King legends, Birth legends, Avatāra (incarnation) legends, Slaying or Vadha legends and miscellaneous ones.

MORAL LEGENDS:

The legends of Dadhīci, Śāvitrī and Satyavāna, Īiti, king Yayāti, Saubharī, Naciketā, Nala and Damayanti and that of Hariścandra etc are the examples of moral legends.

BRĀHMAṄICAL LEGENDS:

The legends of Viśvāmitra and Vaśiṣṭha relating the quarrel between them, and those of Rṣyasvīṅga, king Parīkṣita, Āruṇi, Upamanyu etc. are the example of Brāhmaṇical legends.

HEROIC LEGENDS:

The legends of the slaying of Vṛttāsura by Indra, those of Abhimanyu, Parāśurāma, Karna and the fierce fight of Arjuna with Kīrata, the legend of Bhīṣma, and again
those of Kṛṣṇa's fight with Bānāsura and Śūpāla etc. are the examples of heroic legends.

ASCETIC LEGENDS:

The legends of Vālmiki, Kapilamuni, Dhruva, Prahlāda, Cīvavāna etc. are examples of Ascetic legends.

EROTIC LEGENDS:

The legends of Pururavas and Urvaśī, Rukmiṇī and Kṛṣṇa, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, Uṣā and Aniruddha, Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā, Yama and Yami, Devahuti and Kardana, Udayana and Vāsavadatta etc. are erotic legends.

FLOOD LEGENDS:

The legends of Manu matsyakathā, the drowning of Dvārakā after the Vaikuṇṭha prayāṇa (departure to the abode Vaikuṇṭha) of Kṛṣṇa etc. are instances of flood legends.

HARAṆĀ (Abduction) LEGENDS:

The legends of Rukmiṇī-haraṇa, Subhadrā-haraṇa, Pradyumna-haraṇa, Gō-vaīśa-haraṇa by Brahmā, Vastra-haraṇa of Draupadi, Pārijāta-haraṇa, Symantaka-haraṇa etc. are the Haraṇa (abduction) legends.

SAGE LEGENDS:

The legends of Viśvāmitra, Vaśiṣṭha, Kaṇva,
Agastya, Kapilamuni, Jamadagni, Durvasa, Vyasa, Nara etc. are the sage legends.

KING LEGENDS:

The legends of king Māndhātā, Bharata, Bhāgiratha, Ambarīṣa, Sagara, Veṇa, Pṛthu, Bhagaḍatta, Jarāsandha, Indradyumna, Purāṇjana, Ugrasena etc. are king legends.

BIRTH LEGENDS:

The legends of the birth of Kṛṣṇa, the birth of Pradyumna, the birth of Atri, the birth of Bhṛgu etc. may be cited as birth legends.

AVATĀRA (Incarnation) LEGENDS:

The legends of fish incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu, again Viṣṇu’s Boar incarnation, Vāmana incarnation etc., Kirāṭa incarnation of Lord Śiva, Sītā incarnation of Lakṣmī, Śiśupāla and other incarnations of Jaya and Vijaya, the legends of the incarnations of Lord Buddha etc. are Avatāra (incarnation) legends.

VADHA (Slaying) LEGENDS:

The legends of Vṛttāsuravadha, Putanāvadha, Ṭāvarta Asuravadha, Bakāsuravadha, Dhenukāsuravadha, Meghaḥsuravadha, Śiśupālavadha etc. are instances of Vātha legends.
MISCELLANEOUS LEGENDS:

The legends of the origin of Soma, the churning of the ocean etc. do not belong to any of the groups of legends mentioned above. Thus there may be a group of miscellaneous legends.

INFLUENCE AND IMPORTANCE OF LEGENDS IN GENERAL:

From very ancient time among all classes of people there is seen the craze for the story-telling and the spirit of the tale-loving. The interest and liking for various kinds of stories prevailed in ancient Indian society. The legends are also traditionally obtained popular stories. A legend, generally tends to explain the life and deeds of a noted person of ancient society, who may be a king, sage, or a semi-divine being. As that noted person is a social being, a legend can easily influence men of all walks of life in the society. From the legends, however, we come to know the social, political, cultural, religious and philosophical conditions of ancient India.  

96 The craze for story-telling spread through every class, and the clerics, wise in their generation, found it advantageous to make use of the tale-loving spirit, and supply the people with stories that should point a moral and adorn adogma. HFL. p. 21.

97 The chief sources of our knowledge of the mode of thought of the older Hinduism are passages with religious and philosophic content ....... great Indian epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana and the Puranas.... contain might and religious stories along with reflections upon them IT. pp. 180-181.
It is noticed that most of the myths and legends came to be the subject matter of poetic, dramatic and other literary compositions of later Indian writers. As for example, we may refer to Kālidāsa's 'Vikramorvāsīyam', Bāravi's 'Kirātārjunīyā', Māgha's 'Śīvālavadham', Śrī Harṣa's Naiṣadha-caritām, Śrī Harṣar-dovā's Nāgārjuna-dām etc.

Although most of the Vedic legends explain the utility and justification of the Vedic sacrifices yet they supply to us some philosophical doctrines and also the religious and socio-cultural life of the ancient people. Such kinds of legends are found in both Brāhmaṇic and Upaniṣadic literature.

The legends in the Purāṇas generally narrate the life and activities of some noteworthy persons of ancient time like the sages, ascetics, kings and other religious human beings, who are always of ideal conduct and worth imitating by the individuals of later society. These legends are found capable of exercising an influence upon the Indian people from the very ancient time onwards. For instance, Tulasīdāsa was profoundly impressed by the Rāma story of Vālmīki's Rāmāyaṇa for which he was able to compose successfully his celebrated work 'Rāmacaritmānas'. Thus Mahatma Gandhi was also highly influenced by the legends of Hariścandra and Savana from his very childhood.
The truthfulness, sacrifices, and charity of King Hariscandra, the devotion of Savana to his parents could so much influence Gandhiji that all these helped him in building his extraordinary character. Being impressed, Gandhiji followed truth as a Vrata (vow) throughout his life. It is to be noted that the legends are not merely the living biographies of the ancient people but they also reflect the prominent features of culture and civilization.

Besides the socio-cultural importance, the legends have much religious value also.⁹⁸

PHILOSOPHICAL IMPORTANCE:

Various stages in the development of human thought are represented by the legends. Some of the philosophical doctrines and notions come through legends. Philosophy, generally expounds the basic principles of religion to attain the means and goals of the same, and mythology helps

⁹⁸ In ancient days religious fanaticism was not so blind as in mediaeval times and all nations borrowed ideas and Gods more freely than in later times. Hence the fluidity of myths and legends.

EMLI. Introduction. p. VIII.

India produces an enormous number of literary works—hymns, sacrificial songs, incantations, myths and legends, sermons.......... and religious discipline.
in it through the legends that have gathered round the religious beliefs of the people. These philosophical conceptions are found highly developed and full of logic even at present time. Thus the legends and myths are inevitably important for the study of philosophy.

HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE:

The legends have historical importance also. Many legends supply us informations of historical elements. Some of the noted persons and kings narrated in the legends as main characters are identified as the historical persons. As it is mentioned earlier, though a historian cannot entirely rely upon the legends, yet at the same time, he cannot afford altogether to neglect the same as some of the legends supply him some valuable facts.

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99 Philosophy expounds the basic principles of religion and its goal and the means to reach it. Mythology consists of the legends that have gathered round the religious beliefs of the people.  

VRM. p. 41.

100 Even the greatest critics do not deny the fact that the stories told in the epics may be manifested echoes of some historical events.  

EHL. p. 15.

The stories of puranas profess to give us the ancient history of India ....... occasionally, the feats and achievements of kings and Rasis are related, battles mentioned and described noticeable incidents and happenings recorded and very valuable synchronisms noted down.  

of history. Therefore with such materials the legends are regarded as one of the valuable sources of history. \(^{101}\)

Furthermore, the genealogical informations about the kings and their families are found in many legends some of which become the valuable materials of the history. \(^{102}\) Thus in the legends from the Vedic period onwards to those originated from other sources, even to the tribal legends some important historical materials are found. \(^{103}\) Despite ancient legends being not free from interpolations, they are found to be valuable and very helpful to us. Because, we

\(^{101}\) History is mixed up with fables and folk-lore. The legends in the puranas are religious and not historical. Some of the things given in the puranas are based on heresay .......

Ibid. p.13

Though legend is not history, the historian can never afford altogether to neglect the memory of races which often takes these fascinating if enigmatic shapes.

AHSI. p.22

\(^{102}\) The puranas are valuable to the historian and to the antiquarian as a source of political history on account of their genealogies, even though they can only be used with great caution and careful discrimination.

Ibid. p.16.

The purânas, or collections of 'old-world' legends, contain the traditional genealogies of the principal ruling houses of the middle country.

CHI. p.264

\(^{103}\) Some information about ancient India can be derived from tribal legends as well .... Tribal legends are of great value in constructing the history.

EHI.p. 30.
can learn lessons from our ancient legends and erect a new structure of society on support of the old tradition.

GEOGRAPHY IN LEGENDS:

Legends have ample value of ancient geography as well. Names of many kingdoms, cities, rivers and mountains etc. are mentioned in legends and these names come to be popular in later period after proper identification. Legends sometimes help us by way of supplying valuable materials of ancient geography from which it becomes easier to determine the proper location of some places. Thus legends contain geographical value.

POPULARITY OF LEGENDS:

Legends in general have gained much popularity from the ancient time onward in the society. Indian legends are also much popular from the Vedic time onward. Specially the puranic legends are more popular than the Vedic ones. Vedic legends are not large in number as the puranic narratives. The purāṇas are full of ancient legends. They present the legends distinctly, attractively and in a very lucid manner. Therefore, all sorts of people, the young

104 The purāṇas can be used for the purpose of building up the history of ancient Indian geography.

Ibid. p. 17.
and the old as well are fond of them. Even nowadays, many pious men have the habit of reciting some of the legends as a part of their religious duty. They generally regard and respect the legends as they do the holy scriptures.\textsuperscript{105} Notwithstanding, the legends being very much fanciful and also full of exaggeration, yet people generally regard them as fact and try to follow the same in their personal life. The legends can very easily arrest the mind of people. Being impressed by the ideal and religious characters of the legends, many writers of modern Indian literature have come to compose their literary works on the themes taken from the legends. For instance, the legends of Nala and Damayantī, Udayana and Vāsavadattā, Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā, Rukmiṇī-harana etc. may be mentioned. Kālidāsa mentions about the immense popularity of the legend of Udayana among the people of his time (C. 400 A.D.) in his lyric poetic work Meghadūta.\textsuperscript{106} Similarly, Bāṇabhaṭṭa (about 625 A.D.) mentions about the

\textsuperscript{105} Just as the Mahābhārata, originally the story of a war, has been made into a Dharma-ćastra............. the purāṇas are no longer mere collections of ancient legends. \textsuperscript{\textit{CHI.} p. 266.}

\textsuperscript{106} \textit{prānyāvantiṇudayana kathā kovid grāmavrdhan pūrvodīṣṭamūdāsara purīṃ śrivisālaṃ vasiṣṭhaṃ/ svalpibhute susaritabhae svargīṇāṃ gāṇḍ gatānāṃ/ sesaiḥ puvāh hṛtamiva divaḥ kāntimathkhanḍamokam //}

\textsuperscript{MJ. 31. p. 56.}
popularity of the legends of the \textit{Mahābhārata}, \textit{puraṇa}, \textit{Brhat-kathā} etc. in his \textit{Kadambrī}. Moreover, there are references of many legends like those of \textit{Seṣaṅga}, Gaurī, \textit{Aditi}, \textit{Kadrū}, the churning of the ocean, \textit{Varāha} and \textit{Hiranākṣya} etc. Thus legends gained popularity among Indian masses and the elite from a very early period.

A \textsc{Comparison of Indian Legends with Those of Non-Indian Cultures}:

An observation of the Indian legends in comparison to those available in non-Indian literature brings to our notice some common and distinctive features.

As for common attributes between the two, first of all we may observe that like the Indian legends, the legends in western literature also (i.e. like the English literature) are connected with religion, philosophy and

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\textit{vakrokti pūtanākhyāyikāhyānāparicayā caturṣona ... mahābhārata puraṇā rāmāyaṇānurāgāna vrhatkathākusālena ... etc.}

\textsc{BK. p.37.}

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\textit{sesaṅuriva sadāsannavasudhādhārā, jaladhīmathana-velva mahāghoṣa.....gaurīva mahāśīrṣāhasanocita¬murtiḥ, aditirīva devakulasahasrasavyā, mahābhārata-līlāva saraitahiranjayāsanātā, kadrūryanganā bhujāngalokā, harivāṃśakathēvānekaśakrīdāramanīyā, etc.}

\textsc{Ibid. p.89.}
morality. Moral lessons have been taught through the saints legends therein. These legends also contain historical and geographical importance like the Indian ones. On the basis of the Christian legends many fresh literary works sprang up in different literature which gained much popularity among the people. Likewise, the creation legends, the birth legends also have much in

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109 The legends move us more by their simple loyal adherence to the truths of their religion, rather than by any great poetic gifts.

HFL. p. 24

The legendary poems deal primarily with concrete examples, and illustrate with abstract moralizings.

Ibid. p. 22.

110 In the saints' legends the ascetic ideals were being preached and practiced the exaltation of divine love, in contrast to earthy love, the cult of virgin Mary caused the ideal of virgin purity to be held in high esteem.

Ibid. p. 22.

111 Historical and geographical elements are not lacking in these legends. The life of St. Kenelm (chaucer refers to this story in his Nun's Priest's Tale) affords opportunity for the introduction of a description of England at the time of the five kingdoms....

HFL. p. 23.

112 There is, however, a new note in the lyrical tone, and a new enthusiasm is found manifesting itself in these early legendarys.

Ibid. p. 23.

Some other legends about the early history of Latins were also old. These legends are probably not really history, but they were so interesting that the Latins handed the stories down from generation to generation.

SOAV. p. 123.
common with the Indian ones. 113

Thus some of the European legends supply adequate materials for knowledge on various topics for which they can be regarded as the encyclopaedia of the middle ages. 114

Nevertheless, some distinctive features have come to our notice between the legends in Indian and non-Indian literature. Indian legends are vast in number. Numerous legends have been found from the Vedic literature onward. As it is mentioned earlier, the two great epics, the Purāṇas and other sources like Kathāsūrīrāgara contain a good number of Indian legends. Indian civilization and Indian mythology become very wide and

113 It is very difficult to maintain that the birth stories of the Buddha are credible historically. Yet this is the same problem as many Christians face with the Bible; many believe that the birth stories about Jesus are a mixture of legend and fact. G&M. p. 149.

114 The legend of St. Michael give a curious account of the origin and nature of bad spirits... This legend is indeed a wonderful compendium of knowledge on most diverse topics. It is a kind of encyclopaedia of the middle ages. HFL. p. 23.
ancient. Indian myths and legends are keenly attached to the living culture of the nation. One of the important points is that the philosophy of some of the Indian legends differs from that of other literature, specially of the west, in accordance with the Indian thought. The affirmation of the world and life is the essence of the western thought, where as the negation of world and life is the predominant way of thinking of the Indians. Furthermore, the spiritualism attains a special position in Indian culture, whereas European culture reveals intellectual attributes. Thus the legends

As regards its (literature) contents, Indian literature embraces everything which the word "literature" comprises in its widest sense; religious and secular, epic, lyric, dramatic and didactic poetry, as well as narratives and scientific prose.

India's recorded civilization is one of the longest in course of world history and its mythology spans the whole of that time and more.

Indian mythology is distinguished from that of most of other lands, and certainly from those of the west by the fact that it is still a part of the living culture and not merely of the uneducated masses but of every level of society.

Thus both in Indian and European thought world and life affirmation and world and life negation are found side by side, but in Indian thought the latter is predominant principle and in European the former.

The Asiatic and the European streams have achieved marvellous results each in its own way, the former by its absolute spiritual sincerity and the latter by its severe intellectual integrity.
of Indian literature and those of non-Indian ones reveal the common and dissimilar features.

SCOPE AND UTILITY OF THE PRESENT WORK:

Among other legends the Harana legends, specially the Strī-haraṇa legends have been found from a very ancient time, available in almost all the literature of the world. For instance, in Roman Mythology such legends of the abduction of the ladies by force are available. The Trojan war narrated in the famous Iliad and Odyssey of Homer reminds us the fierce fight between Rama and Rāvana for Cītā in the great epic Rāmāyana of Vālmīki. On the other hand, the description of the war may be compared to the Kurukṣetra war ofVyāsa's Mahābhārata of India.

Any way, in Indian literature these Strī-haraṇa legends are found from the Vedic period onward. For instance, the legend of Vimada and Purumitra's daughter is a famous harana legend narrated in the Rgveda.

119 This search for wives is the subject of one of Rome's earliest and best known myths, the 'Rape of the Sabines', where the ladies were obtained by fraud and force, peaceful relation being later restored.

120 The legend of the war of the Mahābhārata in India finds its exact parallel in the legend of the Trojan war of Europe.

121 RV I. 112.19; 116.1; 117.2; X. 397.
The Rukminī-haraṇa legend is one of the important and interesting Indian legends. This legend mainly relates to the love episode between Lord Kṛṣṇa, the son of Vasudeva (of Dvārakā) and Rukminī, the daughter of king Bhīṣmaka (of Vidarbhā). This further relates how Rukmi, the elder brother of Rukminī had arranged the marriage of his sister Rukminī with Śiśupāla, the king of Cedi; how Śrī Kṛṣṇa abducted Rukminī, His beloved; and how Lord Kṛṣṇa defeated His rival king Śiśupāla in the battle together with other opponent kings like Jarāsandha, Paundraka and others. It also narrates how brave Rukmi fought against Kṛṣṇa and after a fierce battle he got defeated and humiliated by Śrī Kṛṣṇa then returned to Dvārakā in joy along with His beloved Rukminī and other Yādava heroes headed by Balarāma. In Dvārakā, Kṛṣṇa accepted Rukminī as His spouse in accordance with rules of the society.

The Rukminī-haraṇa legend is of purānic origin. This legend finds place in most of the purāṇas where the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa have been described. Thus the legend is found in the Harivamsa purāṇa, the Viṣṇu purāṇa, the Padma purāṇa, the Skanda purāṇa, in the Bhāgavata purāṇa, the Brähmavaivarta purāṇa etc. The reference to the legend is met with in the Devi-Bhāgavatapurāṇa, Agni purāṇa etc. But it is very interesting to find that the
purāṇic versions of the legend show marked variations allowing much scope for comparative and critical study.

Apart from the puranic versions, the legend appears in the great epic Mahābhārata. Further, some works in later Sanskrit literature like Rukmini-haraṇa-Mahākāvya have come to us as poetic versions of the legend. Even Campū kāvyas named Bhaismī-parīṇaya campū have been composed on the Rukmini-haraṇa legend. The legend gets mentioned in some of the Sanskrit kāvyas like Śisūpālavadhān of Māgha. Even some of the Sanskrit rhetoricians have referred to this legend in their works.

Moreover, it is found that most of the regional languages of India, starting with the mediaeval times have heavily drawn on this legend for materials. A good many literary work in later Indian literature, like Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, etc. composed on the theme of Rukmini-haraṇa speaks for the popularity that the Rukmini-haraṇa legend has so far enjoyed.

Furthermore, this legend has come to be presented in the Nṛtya-Mātikā (dance drama), in the Lokagīta (folk songs), in the Vivāha-gīta (marriage songs) etc. Thus the Rukmini-haraṇa story covers a wide area almost in all Indian regional literature along with other sports of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The Rukmini-haraṇa legend has been narrated in
English very attractively by some modern Indian scholars like K.M. Munchi, A.C. Prabhupada etc. in the works like *Krishnavatara, Kṛṣṇa* etc. These works have attracted a large number of readers in and outside India. Moreover, it is very interesting to learn that this Rukmini-haraṇa legend has been beautifully narrated in old Jabhanese language in Indonesia.\(^{122}\) Thus this continued literary tradition of the legend prompts us to take up a study of the legend in critical and comparative lines.

Further, the study on this Rukmini-haraṇa legend has encouraged us to bring a distinctive classifications among the various haraṇa episodes related in the vast purāṇic literature. It may be added that this legend stands for marked religious and philosophical values. On the other hand, this legend has made sufficient impact on social and cultural life of the Indian people. The last but not the least important point to note is that the Rukmini-haraṇa legend carries with it sufficient historical materials. Under the circumstances, it is felt that the Rukmini-haraṇa legend deserves a comparative and critical study.

\(^{122}\) As gathered from Professor Dr. Mukunda Madhava Saṁ̄khyā (Head of the Department of Sanskrit, Gauhati University) who was a Visiting Professor for Sanskrit for two years (1933-35) in the UDAYANA UNIVERSITY, DENPASAR, BALI in INDONESIA.