SUMMARY

Art and mythology are associated with each other. Both have spread in every corner of the world as the rays of sunlight to enlighten the human being. Art and mythology together has established a harmony between the tradition and modernity. So the world can associate with one thread of divinity and creativity.

Mythology can be understood as a magic mirror in which the reflection not just of our own hopes and fears, but also those of people from the earliest times can be viewed. Some of the stories are unimaginably old and were almost recounted long before the birth of writing and the dawn of recorded history. Collectively, the tales from the basis of much of the world’s literature, philosophy and religion are act as a powerful document of the human imagination. Among all the mythology, *Hindu Mythology* (Religious Literature) is the large body of traditional narratives related to *Hinduism*. It is based on the thousands of books and scriptures not by single teacher or prophet. But it is collective efforts of individual or a school of thought or philosophy. These scriptures were traveled by oral practice and were developed through diverse tradition, different sects, people, and philosophical schools in diverse regions through the ages. Mythology serves many purpose of the people who originally told the narratives i.e. they do not answers the great philosophical questions but they talk about the more intimate issues. They have the guidance of personal behavior and social rules.

These books have the account of historical events with the deep philosophy in the symbolic meaning and complex range of interpretation. All the Hindu scriptures can be divided by six parts i.e. Srutis, Smritis, Epics, Puranas, Agmas, Darshanas.

Among all these scriptures the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, the great Indian epics are the important sources of inspiration not even for the illiterate but also for the learned persons. Among the both popular epics *Ramayana*, is known as the Aadi Kavya
and the first poetic composition of the India. The *Ramayana* consists 24,000 verses, divided into seven books (*Baalkaand, Ayodhyakaand, Aranyakaaand, Kishkindhakaand, Sundarkaand, Yudhkaand and Uttarkaand*) and composed by Maharishi Valmiki. “The epic has illustrated a far more advance state of the *Aryan* civilization in India. It refers to the time when the empire of the *Aryans* has firmly established in *Bharata* (Delhi), *Kosala* (Oudh), *Magadha* (Bihar), *Mithila* (Tirhut), throughout Hindustan, *Dakhan* and in *Lanka* (Ceylon)”. Ramayana as it sounds by the name is the story of Rama-Rajya through the seventh incarnation of Vishnu and the great hero of the *Aryan* solar race which sprang from Ikshwaku, who born on the earth to show the path of righteousness.


Second great epic of Hinduism, the *Mahabharata* was compiled by sage Krishna Dwaiapayan Vyasa known as Vedavyasa. The *Mahabharata* consists 1,00,000 verses and divided into eighteen parts called parva i.e. *Aadi Parva, Sabha Parva, Vana Parva, Virat Parv, Udyog Parva, Bhishma Parva, Dron Parva, Karna Parva, Shalya Parv, Souptik Parva, Stri Parva, Shanty Parva, Anushasan Parva, Aashvamaidhik Parva, Aashramvasik Parva, Mousal Parva,*
Mahaprasthanik Parva, Swargarohan Parva. The whole epic revolves around the family dispute between two princely families of five Pandavas and their cousin the hundred Kauravas who were descended through Bharata from Puru, the ancestor of one branch of the lunar race. The central character of the epic is the lord Krishna, an incarnation of lord Vishnu on earth was descended from Yadu and became extinct in Krishna and his elder brother Balrama.

Apart from the main action of the Mahabharata there are some separate episodes are also there in the epic i.e. story of Janmejaya, story of the loyal pupils Aaruni- Upmanu- Veda- Uttank, Pulomadevil, Pramadara-Ruru, autobiography of Dudumbha, Jaratkaru, Churning of the Sea, king Parikshita, Janmejaya, king Dushyanta, Menaka-Sage Vishwamitra-Shakuntala, Daksha, Manu, Nahush-Yayati, Khaka-Shukrachaya, Eklaya, Drona-Drupada, Birth of Drishtadumana-Draupadi, Tapti- king Samvaran, Vashishtha-Kaamdhenu-Vishwamitra, Sundar-upsundar, birth of Tillotama, king Harish Chandra, Birth of Jasarandha, stories from the life of Krishna, Surbhi-Indra, Nala-Damyanti, stories about Pilgrimages like Ganga-Ayodhya-Chitrakuta-Praga, sage Dadhichi, sage Agastya –mount Vindhyachal, king Sagar, meditation of Bhagirath, story of Parshurama, Ashvin Kumar, Birth of king Mandhata, king Ushinar, birth of Ashtavakra, stories of Ramayana, Manu,Matasya Avatar, Incatnation of Vishnu as Kalki, Suhotra- Shibi, Madhu-Kaitabha, birth of Kubera, Savitri-Satyavan, Yayati. These exquisite pictures of the Hindu life have illustrated respectively faithfulness in love, marital infidelity and the fickleness of fortune. Thus the epic developed from Jaya to Bharat and then finally into Mahabharat.

These Scriptures are much important to understand the Hindu Mythology. The stories of these scriptures are much popular among the mass whether they does not know the source of the stories. But among all these scriptures the Ramayana and Mahabharata are more popular than the rests. These are the stories that has painted or carved on the walls of temples and forts through the ages.
Some Examples of *Mahabharata* i.e. “The scene of the Marriage Ceremony of Rama Sita in *Virupaksha Temple*, Rama and hanuman in *Lepakshi Temple*, Rama – Sita in *Vishnu Temple*, the scene of Rama – Lakshmana – Sugriv and Coronation of Rama in *Pundrika temple* at Vijaynagar. Incarnation of Vishnu as Rama and Swayambara of Sita at *Prasann Venkatraman temple*, tenth incarnation of Vishnu, fight (battle) of Rama-Ravana, returning Sita-Rama to Ayodhya at *Narsimha temple* in Mysore, Depiction of whole Ramayana at *Rama Temple*, scenes of Ramayana in *Padmanabhaswani temple*. Scene of yajna by Dashrata for child, Exile of Ram- Sita and Lakshmana, Coronation of Rama etc. at *Matancheri Mahal* at Kerala”². Except the given example, there are numberless places in India where *Ramayana* has depicted in different forms and genres of arts.

Some Examples of *Mahabharata* i.e. “Ellora:- scene of the self motivation of Arjuna, Arjunaanugrih, Abhimanu in Chakrayuha, Kaurav- Pandav and Krishna in the battle field of Kurukshetra.

*Mahabalipuram* :- Chakravyuh, Battle Scene Kurukshetra,

*Lingaraj Temple*:- scene of the Pandavas departure to Heaven.

*Pattdakal*:- In *Mallikarjun Temple* Ravananugrih Swrup, Panchpandav, Subhadraharn, scene of the game of Chausar, Duryodhan in Vaishampayan Sarovar, Abhimanu in Chakrayuha, Kiratarjun, , Bhim, Duryodhan etc.

*Vijay Nagar*:- In *Virupaksha Temple* the scene of Arjun is participating in Draupadi Swayamwara, Wedding of Arjun, Bhishma on Arrows bed and in *Leepakshi Temple* the scene of Arjun is receiving the blessing of Shiva, Arjun Meditating, Krishna driving the Arjun’s chariot, Draupadi’s marriage to Arjun in Krishna’s presence has been depicted.

*Mysore*:- the scene of Great War of Kurukshetra, preaching of Krishna to Arjun, Krishna driving Arjuna’s chariot is in *Narsimha Temple*. 
Kerala: In Vishnu Temple the scene from the Mahabharat has been painted on wall.

Somnathpur: In Keshav Temple the scene of the assassination of the Rakshas Hidimb by Bhim.

Hoyesaleshwar Temple: The scene of the fight between Arjun and Karn, story of Arjun And Krishn, Draupadi Swayamvar, fight of Arjun and Bhishma, Cakrayuh, Bhishma on the bed of Arrows, Bhim Killing the Elephant (Fig no.-6), the detailed depiction of the Bhishm Parv, Dron Parv and Karn Parv.

Rajasthan: A scene from the Mahabharat on the Nala-Damyanti legend is also illustrated on the walls of Badar Mahal in Bundi.


Both the epics had become renowned themes for miniature schools in India and well depicted from Pat-chitra to Pahari School of miniature painting. Different incidents of epics were painted in various sub-schools of miniature. The story was indifferent according to Valmiki’s Ramayana, Tulsi’s Ramcharit Manas, Vedavyasa’s Mahabharata and other regional versions of the epics. In the miniature painting, artist has focused on the katha and as well as on its illustrative aspect, as how a particular event reveals differently in each artistic style.

These epics had narrated on the palm leaves and paper so that illustrated manuscripts can carried during the travelling from place to place. Even kings used to gift illustrated manuscripts on different occasions to spread their belief all around.

Under Rajasthani School of miniature painting "Rana Jagat Singh of Mewar (1928-52) commissioned his lavishly illustrated Ramayana manuscript and Rana Jai Singh (1680-98)
has commissioned the illustrated manuscript of epic *Mahabharata*, over with three thousand paintings."\(^4\)

Artist *Sahib Din* has depicted the essence of the epic *Ramayana*. Rajput clan has considered themselves to the warrior class, filled with heroism on battle field, their women are courageous and devotional for god so both the epic has depicted under their reign.

A great lover of books and a patron of art, the Mughal emperor *Jalaluddin Muhammad Akbar* (1542-1605) wanted to expand his kingdom peacefully in Hindustan and ruled over the centuries. To know secrete of belief, religion, sciences and art of war, he selected the great epic *Mahabharata* to translate into Persian and illustrate after that.

*Akbar* chose the saga of the *Mahabharata*, *Badauni* says, because “this is the most famous of the Hindu books, and contains all sorts of stories and moral reflections, and advice, and matters relating to conduct and manners and religion and science, and account of their sects and mode of worship, under the form of a history of wars of Kurus and Pandus.....and the Hindus believers consider it a great religious merit to read and copy it and they keep it hide from Muslims”\(^5\). Under the Pahari school of Miniature painting, artworks on *Ramayana* has illustrated under *Guler, Kangra, Chamba Kalam* of painting. From the epic *Mahabharata* exile of *Pandavas*, unveil of *Draupadi* has depicted by the artists under Hindu patrons of *Pahari* paintings.

Both epics the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have played the significant role in the development of art from history to the present era. Even in the colonial time, artist has emphasized to select their subject of paintings from the mythology and importantly from *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*.

Indian artists have painted the stories from the epics in their paintings as they found the characters close to their own heart. Every
human being possesses both positive and negative characteristics in itself that one faced or saw in the characters of the both epics. These characters have changed their self so frequently with the conditions i.e. one become dog before Bhairava and cow before Gopal. Somehow these changing shades of personality have influenced the human mind. Thus artist has made not even single painting but the series of the paintings on the epics.

Many modern and contemporary Indian artists have re-narrated the both epics Ramayana and Mahabharat in their own style by using the beautiful imagination. Raja Ravi Verma, Nandlal Bose, Abnindra Nath Tagore, Asit Kumar Haldar, Jamini Roy, K.Venkatappa,, Ramgopal Vijayvargiy, M.F.Husain, Sukhbir Singh Sinhal, Aroop Das, K.Srinivasulu, M.Reddapa Naidu, Amarnath Sehgal, Laxman Pai, Achutan Ramachandran Nair, Ganesh Pyne, Sunil Kumar Vishwakarma, Poosapati Parameshwar Raju, Vijender Sharma, Vasudeo Kamath, Anant Kumar Mishra etc. are some of the Indian artists who has transformed their imaginations into paintings.

Raja Ravi Verma had depicted historical moment from the epic which is intended to be noble, momentous and emotional. Ravi Varma has received the national acclaims for his mythological and historical art works. Artist has selected his themes from the epic texts like Ramayana and Mahabharata, which are lyrical and romantic in context. He has visualized the stories and executed them in the present with modern prototypes of the nation. By the influence of stage, artist had created a heightened effect, which enhanced the dramatic impact of his works. He did commission work on the both epics and created a large series of paintings.

Nandlal Bose was an artist and art thinker among the all students of Abnindra Nath Tagore. He has depicted most of his painting on the mythological topics. He has used water colour, wash and tempera colour techniques to paint his feelings on the surface. He has also created the light and shade through colour in his paintings. From the epic Mahabharat he has painted too many painting such as
Parthasarathi in wash colour and Kurukshetra in tempera colours and from Ramayana Shabari, Ahilya Uddhar etc.

Ramgopal Vijayvargey is not only an artist but also a poet and storyteller too. He said that he found two genres (poems and stories) in his paintings. A painting can be a poem, a story and a source of livelihood too. Vijayvargi found his source of inspiration from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Geet Govind etc. With his extraordinary imaginations he meditated his thoughts and creates paintings with full of beauty and emotions.

About M.F. Husain It is true that one can hate Husain or love Husain but can never ignore Husain. M.F. Husain, the Picasso of India was always surrounded by colours, thoughts, technique and controversies. From the social world of common man Husain has moved to the world of mythology by the advice of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. Husain has studied the Mahabharata and Ramayana then he created the series of paintings.

Sukhbir Singh Sinhal is an eminent artist from Lucknow. He used to do wash technique for his artwork. He depicted Mahabharat in painting in his unique style. In Lakshybadha Arjuna, artist depicted a story where Arjuna has to target the eye of a bird. Artist used the body movement of Dronacharya and Arjuna to make his composition more creative.

Aroop Das has also composed Mahabharat in his own style. He composed the essence of the different sections of epic together in his paintings. In a single painting he depicted so many figures that narrated different stories together like Gandhari, Draupadi Chirharan, Bhishma on the Bed of Arrows, and The Battle of Kurukshetra etc. Usually his painting seemed as the graphic prints.

Amarnath Sehgal has painted the series on the epic Mahabharat. Very differently he created his painting as he used mixed media for the paintings like water colour, charcoal, pastel etc. and created figurative, semi figurative and abstract forms for compositions from the epic Mahabharata. Bhishm’s Advice, Draupadi Seeks a Boon,
Krishna giving Sermon to Arjuna, The Five Pandavas, To War or not to War, An abstract Portrait of Arjuna, The Gratest Warrior Bhishma, Tigress with the five Pandavas, Vidura are some of the paintings that Artist has made on the epic Mahabharata.

Whimsical, fun-loving yet serious Indian painter, Laxman Pai has revisited India around three times during his stay at Paris. "At the second visit to Mumbai’, India Artist has completed first series of painting on the epic Ramayana in 1958 with water colour. And after a long gap artist has worked again on the epic Ramayana from 1971 to 1974 in oil colours." Artist philosophy has embodied his whole work and life. On his canvases he has depicted nature with all her moods and human character in relation with their environment.

Padam Bhushan artist Achutan Ramachandran Nair, the variation of his vision can be notify through his artistic journey. “Artist has successfully experimented to blend his aesthetic with technical objectives to integrate the stylistic elements and characteristic of his paintings. Among so many different themes, in his art work, Yayati is one of the renowned series from his mythological works. Artist has started working on Yayati series in 1983-84 and finished in 1986. This is a short story narrated in the epic Mahabharata.

To Ganesh Pyne, the Mahabharata is a spectacle of unhappiness. There is vast royal wealth; there is invisible bravery. “Alongside these, there is baseness, merciless cruelty, omnipresent violence, revenge and laments over losing everything....... No other epic in this country is as haunted by death as Mahabharat”. For the artist myths and epics are always a favorite theme. In the series of 44 paintings and jottings he has recreated various episodes and character of the great epic “Mahabharat”.

Artist Sunil Kumar Vishwakarma, as a religious human being he has fascinated with Ramalila the local theatre shows the epic Ramayana. He has enjoyed the Indian culture and
traditions from the very early age that the narratives of Hindu Mythology have deeply rooted in his soul. After returning back from China, artist has worked on the Ramlila series of paintings. In this series artist has made several paintings on the Ramlila of Ramnagar. He worked on this series from 2011 till 2013.

Indian calligraphy artist Poosapati Parameshwar Raju, has developed a distinguished form of expression which span from traditional to contemporary vision through calligraphy. His images seem to be offspring of epistemological discernment and aesthetics that ensuring from his personalized research of iconography, signs and symbols. Artist has practiced calligraphy from more than thirty years. In this series Ramayana in Calligraphy, artist has depicted 37 artworks. In which he presents pictorial presentation of epic narratives.

Vijender Sharma has also painted the Mahabharat. He has also painted for television serial like Mahabharat of B.R. Chopra and Ramayana of Ramananad Sagar. He did paintings for book covers and serials in the beginning of his career. He depicted all the paintings in his photo-realistic style. Artist has also added some elements from the world of imagination and animations.

Vasudeo Kamath (1956), an Artist of childlike curiosity and saintly wisdom has tried to bring out the mythological and historical subjects with detailed study and realistic depiction of the era. Along with other subjects artist has also depicted Ramayana as it is a rich epic with concepts of love and affection, friendship, pursuance of promise and strength of mind. In the script of epic Ramayana, writer has indicated Rama as the Maryada Purushottam but artist has found many characters are Maryada Purushottam because of their deeds and duties. In this series artist has made 28 artworks in oil and water colours in different size and entitled them according to his sentiments.
Emerging artists has also showed their interest in mythology. One of the young artists Anant Kumar Mishra has assumed mythology as the history of human being. This history has passed from person to person first from oral tradition then through scriptures. This is a kind of document for the persons who practice, belief or doubt regarding the scriptures. Mythology whether, it would be of any religion or country, it have some characters and stories too, on which people used to belief. To create artworks on mythology artist has studied various scriptures. Thus he found some difference in expression in Ramayana of Valmiki and Ramcharitmanas of Tulsi Das. Both the writers has their own way of expression that has driven through their feelings and elaborated the culture, overall life, society, Rules- regulation of a particular time period i.e. Treta Yuga. But artist has projected his vision regarding Indian culture and Mythology with advance sciences in his artwork. People have seen some certain iconography for Indian gods and goddess but in his artworks, people can see and understand some more or less a new heroic iconography.

Thus artist has played a significant role in the revival of mythological figures to abolish evils from mankind. With all these artistic individual approach, there are so many government and non-government bodies who have celebrated the tradition of the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata. Some of them are organizing events regularly on large scale but some are on occasionally at small scale.

In that celebration they have organized many events based on the epics i.e. cultural performances, ritual demonstrations, exhibitions, artist-workshops, seminars, symposium, literary evenings, film-festivals, quiz competitions, hymns recitation, book-exhibition. Geeta Jayanti Samaroh, Kurukshetra; Akhil Bartiya Vyas Mahatsav, Varanasi; Jaya Utsav- Celebrating-the living traditions of Mahabharata, New Delhi; Ramayana Mela,
Chitrakoot; *National Workshop on Mahabharata*, Shimla etc. are some of the events which had organized at various place in our country.

But here the focal point is on the painting through which artist has recreated the epics *Ramayana and Mahabharata*.

**Gita Jayanti Samaroh, Kurukshetra:** *Gita Jayanti* is a birth anniversary of *Bhagvat-Gita*. It is celebrated on the *Ekadashi* of *Shukla Paksha* in the *Margashirsha* month (November – December). *Gita Jayanti* is an annual celebration to commemorate the first day of Kurukshetra battle.

Over the years *Gita Jayanti Samaroh* in organized by Kurukshetra Development Board, Haryana Tourism, District Administration, North Zone Cultural Centre, Patiala and Information and Public Relations Department, Haryana. On this celebration devotees and pilgrims from all over the India gathered in Kurukshtra to participate in the ritual bath in the hollowed water of the sacred ponds at *Sannihit Sorovar* and *Brahma Sarovar*. A fair is also organized in which people participate in prayer recitals, bhajan sandhya, Gita reading, drama, dance, artist workshop, rangoli workshop, crafts etc.

Every year many artist and art students had participated in the workshop on this occasion.

**National Workshop on Mahabharata, Shimla:** National artist workshop on the epic *Mahabharata* had organized and exhibited at Indian Institute of Advance Study at Shimla from 29th September till 4th October 2012. In this workshop four artists has participated from different parts of India. *Him Chaterjee*, Shimla; *Ram Viranjan*, Kurukshetra; *Baldev Gambhir*, Amritsar; *Tirthankar Biswas*, New Delhi had participated in the workshop. All artists had created five artworks on paper with charcoal only.

**Akhil Bhartiya Vyas Mahotsav, Varanasi:** From 2009 this festival has organized every year on the *Eaikadashi* of
Margashish (November – December) month of Hindu calendar. Uttar Pradesh Sanskrit Sanstham, Lucknow has organized this huge event with the collaboration of Language Department, Cultural Department of Uttar Pradesh and the Ministry of Human Resource Development Government of India. Kashi Hindu University, Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, and Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidhyapith, Varanasi has also noted their active participation in the celebration of Vyas Mahotsav.

Various activities has taken place during this celebration like contents on Geeta recital, poetry recital, seminar and painting workshops on the theme Mahabharata and Geeta, painting contest for students on the same theme. Cultural events have also organized on the occasion. Every year many artists, art students and art lovers has participated in this event and contributed in representation of the epic through their creative visualization.

**Ramayana Mela at Chitrakoot:**- Government bodies organized this Mela every year on the bank of the river Mandakini around for four days in the month of February. During this fair art exhibition and artist workshop has became the main attraction. Religious Chants, Ramlila, and other cultural programs were also been organized during the Ramayana Mela. Many religious heads, saints and creative human being had participated in the fair and overwhelmed with the representation of the epic and other mythical themes in the artworks of artists.

Such events has played significant role in arousal of young generation, art lovers, art students and artists towards the epic tradition. Knowingly or unknowingly they have visited the epic era through the visual presentation. So the epics have traveled not even from oral tradition and scriptures but also through visual representation.

Both epics has contributed there significant role in the development of Indian painting but also in the other genres
of arts i.e. literature, music, dances, drama, folk performances, rituals, festivals, ballet singing, opera, children comic books, television serials, films, animated films, shadow puppet and contemporary modern stage etc. Each retelling of Ramayana and Mahabharata has given the audience something new to think, new insight to understand the tale in fact that became a new insight for their own life.

Artist used to get inspired from the world's greatest poetic composition. From thousands of year epics has traveled through oral tradition the gradually the medium of their traveling has changed time to time and occupy the mind of creative human being and deeply rooted in our heart and society.

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