"Mythology (Myth) can be understood as a magic mirror in which the reflection not just of our own hopes and fears, but also of those people from the earliest times can be viewed. Some of the stories are unimaginably old and were almost certainly 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."¹

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 travelled by oral practice and were developed through diverse tradition, different sects, people and philosophical schools in diverse regions in different times (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 also they talk about the more intimate issues. They have the guidance of personal behavior and social rules.

In fact individual can built their life through the mental foundation of understanding and belief which the narratives can identify and remember easily and make one laugh, cry and feel awestruck. Philosophers has given so many concepts to understand the Hindu Mythology i.e. Pantheism-Polytheism, incarnation of Vishnu- Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narsimha, Vamana,
Parshurama, Ramchandra (Ram), Krishna, Kalki; Vedic Deities-
Varun, Prithivi, Indra, Maruts, Vayu, Tvashtri, Chandra, Aditi-
Adityas, Vivasvat, Savitri, Surya, Usha, Ratri, Ashwins, Rudra,
Vishnu; Vedic gods- Yama, Indra, Varuna, Agni, Surya, Vayu, Soma;
other gods- Kubera, Kartikeya, Vishwakarma, Dharma, Kama;
Goddess- Sarasvati, Lakshmi, Mahadevi (Sati, Parvati, Durga, Kali),
Hindu Triad Gods- Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva; animal deties- Ganesha,
Garuda, Hanumana, Jambvant, Sugriv, Bali, Nagas; deties from
Nature mountains, rivers, holy pools, earth, sky, trees etc. But all
these have created so much confusion to understand the pillars of
the Hindu Mythology in the form of scriptures.

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.:-

HINDU SCRUPURES
2.1 The Srutis

The Srutis are known for oral tradition which has been heard through generation to generation. These Srutis are known as the Vedas. The Vedas are the divine origin, unchangeable and eternal. Vedas has thought the highest truth ever known to human and are valid for all time and all ages. Sage Vedavyasa had codified the four Vedas. His disciples Paila, Vaisampayana, Jaimini, and Sumanata taught that to their disciples and latter, in turn to their pupils. This is how the Vedas came to us through thousands of years by oral tradition.

"The Rig-Veda consisted mostly of hymns in praise of the divine. The Yajur-Veda mainly of hymns used in religious rituals and rite. In the Sama-Veda there are verses from the Rig-Veda to set the music and the Atharva-Veda guides human in his material and daily living." Each Veda is also divided into four parts i.e. Samhita (comparison of hymns and prayers), Brahmanas (descriptions of Vedic ceremony for Brahmans), Upanishadas (philosophical part), Aranyakas (forest books for the mystical interpretations of the mantras and rituals).

2.2 The Smritis

The Smritis are that which is remembered unlike Srutis. "The Smritis are the human composition which regulate and guide individuals in their daily conduct. These are the codes and rules governing the actions of the individual, the community, the society and the nation. They are known as the Dharmastras (the law of governing righteous conduct). There are eighteen Smritis" among them four are much prominent i.e. Manusmriti, Yajnavalkyasmriti, Sankha-Likhistasmriti, Parasharasmriti. The Manusmriti is earliest of them all and its laws have greatly influenced the life of the people
of the country. After it *Yajnavalkyasmruti* is significant that *Hindu Dharma Shastra* is based on. These laws are enunciated for the guidance of human.

Both the *Srutis* and *Smritis* are read, memorized by scholars. These were utilized by the king, priests, rulers and their ministers to implements divine and human laws. The *Srutis* or the *Vedas* are the very soul of the divine origin. They are eternal and without beginning or end. The *Smritis* or *Dharma Shastras* are like the body that can be changed from time to time from age to age.

### 2.3 The Epics

However the ordinary human cannot understand these *Srutis* and *Smritis*, so the epics (Itihas) have written to serve the purpose. In these books laws and teachings has giving in the form of parables and stories for the guidance of the common people. These are also called the friendly compositions as they teach the greatest truths in an easy and friendly way without taxing the mind. The language of the *Epics* is simple and content is easily understood. The *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are known to the most illiterate person also. These epics have thought the ideals in a most understandable form. Some details about both the epics are giving below:-

#### 2.3 The Ramayana

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 (*Balkaand*, *Ayodhyakaand*, *Aranyakanda*, *Kishkindhakaand*, *Sundarkaand*, *Yudhkaand* and *Uttarkaand*) and composed by sage
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).”

There are three Ramas in the Hindu Mythology all of them are represented as incarnations of lord Vishnu, namely:- (1) Parshu Rama, Literally Rama with the axe and sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu, (2) Bala-Rama, Rama with the plough and the eight incarnation of Lord Vishnu (3) Rama Chandra, Rama with the bow and the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu. 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.

In the story of Ramayana, Dasharatha the king of Ayodhya had four sons. Rama was born to his first queen Kausalya, Bharata born to his favorite queen Kaikeyi, Lakshmana and Shatrughana born of his second queen Sumitra.

Rama was banished to the forest for fourteen years at the behest of his step mother Kaikeyi and left with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana. In the forest Sita was abducted by the demon
king Ravana of Lanka. Rama helped by an army of monkeys and Hanumana, the most loyal of them all, who fought and destroyed Ravana's kingdom and helped to brought back Sita. After that Rama became the crowned king and ruled over Ayodhya.

Rama- Rajya, the reign of Rama, was one of idealism and perfection, when no tear was shed nor sorrow experienced. It was a time of peace and joy, an idyllic era for all good people. Ayodhya became a land where tolerance and understanding governed the actions of everyone. Even the actions of the king were subject to will of the people. Ideal behavior of the rulers and rule, of men and women were shown by the actions of the characters in this epic, thereby teaching the people, subtly yet effectively, what ideal behavior should be.
To show the qualities of ideal queens i.e. Kausalya and Sumitra are soft spoken but strong, who placed the prestige of the king and the kingdom above their love for the sons. Dasharatha had earlier given two boons to Kaikeyi and she asked that Rama to be send to the forest for fourteen years and her own son Bharata to be crowned as king. Rama, the ideal son readily agreed to go and Lakshmana accompanied him. Their mothers, Kausalya and Sumitra send away their beloved sons so that king Dasharatha could keep his words. A second lesson learned from this was the importance of the spoken words, especially the promises made by a ruler.

To delineate the qualities of a high principled man, there is Bharat. On return from a visit to his uncle, Bharat found his brother banished to the forest by his mother and he has to rule the kingdom as mean while his father had died of grief. However he would not take over as king. When Rama has refused to come back till fourteen years of exile promised to his late father and step mother, Bharat took his brother's paduka, placed them on the throne and ruled over as regents till his brother's return.
The qualities of the ideal man, prince and king can be seen by the ordinary people in this epic from the character of Rama, the qualities of the ideal woman and wife from the strong but gentle character embodied in Sita. The qualities of ideal brothers can be seen in the behavior of Bharata, Lakshmana and Shatrughana. The ideal qualities of loyalty, unstinted devotion and love are depicted in the character of Hanumana, the monkey who helped Rama cross over the lanka and helped to defeat Ravana. When the whole army was fainted with Rama and Lakshmana due to attack of Brahmastra by Indrajit and need medicinal herbs from the mountains of the Himalayas. It is Hanumana who flew to the Himalaya but could not identify the herb so he return with the whole mountain with on his hands.

The potential for good and evil in all beings is brought out again and again. The destruction of evil by good, either by oneself or by divine interventions is a constant theme of Hinduism. Even
the demons were not all bad and wicked are shown as having the
good qualities also. Ravana, the demon king of Lanka was a great
scholar. Even he abducted Sita to make his queen though he never
molested her but awaited her consent to marry with him. Even
when Hanumana visited Lanka to locate Sita he greatly stuck by
Ravana yet praised his courage, strength and wisdom. The demon
Kumbhakarana, brother of Ravana disapproved strongly the
abduction of Sita. Yet he had eaten his salt and prosperous under
his patronage so he refused to desert his brother in his hour of
peril. The great virtue of loyalty, even for a lost cause was brought
by such instances. With the main story of the epic some short
stories travelled in some episodes i.e. "story of Somdatta, history of
the former birth of king Sumati and Satyavati, story of Kalik and
Uttank Muni, story of the marriage ceremony of sage Yrishyashrang
and Shanta, birth of Gadhi and appraisal of Kaushaki, origin of
Ganga, birth of Kartikeya from Ganga, birth of the children of king
Sagar, tapasya of Bhagiratha, churning of the sea, story of Ditika,
story of Ahilya, story of Kaamdhenu-Vashishtha-Vishvamitra, story
of Sunahshepa-Vishvamitra, story of Menaka-Vishvamitra, story of
Rambha-Vishvamitra, story of Sravanakumar, story of pilgrimage
Pancchaser-Martandeya Muni, story of Shabari, Story of Sugriva-
Bali, story of Sampati’, story of Pulastya and sage Vrishrva, story of
the origin of Kubera, story of Yayati, story of the birth of Pururava
from Budh and Ila.”

From the story of the Ramayana people learnt the difference
between the right, wrong and develop a high sense of values and
understand the ideal behavior. The tremendous culture heritage of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishadas* reached and permeated to the most illiterate of the people through the priceless epic *Ramayana* of sage *Valmiki*.

### 2.3 The Mahabharata

Second great epic of *Hinduism*, the *Mahabharata* was compiled by sage *Krishna Dwaipayana 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, Shanti Parva, Anushasan Parva, Aashvamaidhik Parva, Aashramvasik Parva, Mousal Parva, Mahaprasghanik Parva, Swargarohan Parva*.

The whole epic revolves around the Great War (family dispute) between two princely families of five *Pandavas* and their cousin the hundred *Kauravas*. The central character of the epic is the lord *Krishna* an incarnation of lord *Vishnu* on earth. The *Mahabharata* is the story of the long feud and final destructive battle between *Kaurvas* and the *Pandavas*, who were descended through *Bharata* from *Puru*, the ancestor of one branch of the lunar race. The other branch was descended from *Yadu* and became extinct in *Krishna* and his elder brother *Balrama*.

“Both *Yadavas* and *Pandavas* traced back their common lineage through *Yayati* the fifth king of the lunar race and *Nahusha, Ayus* and *Pururvas*.” Dushyanta the son of *Puru* married with *Shakuntala* and had a son named *Bharata*. His (*Bharata*) son *Hastin* build *Hastinapur*. His (*Hastin*) son *Kuru* was the father of *Shantanu*, whose son *Bhishma* was by the holy river goddess *Ganga*. *Shantanu* wished in his old age to marry again with fisher girl *Satyavati*, the mother of *Vyasa* by the *Rishi Parashara* for the sake of the children of *Satyavati*, *Bhishma* vowed never to marry or
to accept the throne. She bore two sons to Shantanu, the elder son was killed in a battle by Gandharva king and the second child also died childless but both lefted two widows named Ambika and Ambalika behind them.

At that time Satyavati call her son sage Vyasa to rise up seed to his half brother. But the widows were so shocked at his frightful appearance that the elder one closed her eyes and gave birth to a blind child Dhritarashtra, the father of Kauravas and the younger turned so pale that her son called Pandu, the reputed father of the Pandavas. But Satyavati still desired greatly to have a grandchild without blemish so a slave girl bore her a child Vidura by Vyas. Dritarashtra married Gandhari and by her had one hundred sons called Kauravas among whom Duryodhana is the elder one and a daughter. Pandu married with two wives Kunti (Pritha), the aunt of Krishna and Madhri. Kunti got three sons (Yudhishthira, Bhima, and Arjuna) and Madhri received two sons (Nakula and Sahdeva) as boon through different gods (Dharma, Vayu, Indra, Ashwin Kumaras). Before marriage Kunti had already a son Karna as a boon from the Sun god.
The Pandavas on the death of their father were taken to the court of their uncle, the blind Dhritrashtra, who treated them as their own children. He has send Kauravas and Pandavas to learn the military art by the Guru Dronacharya. After learned the art the Guru has asked them (Kauravas and Pandavas) to capture the king Daupada as the slave in guru-dakshina and thus Guru Dronachaya has completed his revenge to him.

Dhritrashtra declared Yudhishthira as the yuvaraja of the kingdom but in the opposition to this act Duryodhana was so determined that at last the Maharaja was persuaded to exile the Pandavas from Hastinapura. Meanwhile the exile Arjuna married with Draupadi at the Swayamvara in the kingdom of Drupada and Draupadi called Panchali. On this Dhritrashtra recalled them and divide his kingdom between Kauravas (Hastinapur) and Pandavas (Indraprastha). After sometime Pandavas visited Dwaraka there
with the connivance of Krishna, Arjuna eloped with Subhadra the sister of Krishna. By all this Balrama, her elder brother annoyed as he wished her to marry Duryodhana.

Kauravas invited Yudhishtithira to gambling match in which he lost all his brother, himself and Draupadi as slaves to Kauravas. At this time Dushasana dragged Draupadi forward by her hair, Bhima vowed to drank his blood for the insult; and when Duryodhana further insulted her by showing her his uncovered thigh, Bhima vowed again to break the bone of his left thigh. Then Dhritrashtra gave two boons to Draupadi. In one boon she asked for the freedom of her husbands and in second boon she asked their weapons and charioteers.
At the end Dhrirashtra had returned all the things they lost in the game. But Duryodhana had provoked Dhrirashtra to call Yudhishthra again for a gambling match with a bet that looser will have to go for an exile of thirteen years and the whole empire will possessed by the winners.

This is the second exile of the Pandavas. After the exile king Virata married his daughter Uttara with Abhimanyu the son of Arjuna and promised to assist them in the attempt to recover their lost kingdom. In the marriage feast Pandavas has decided to send Purohit to Kauravas to counsel them to restore the kingdom of Pandavas. But Dhrirashtra denied the proposal and in returned, he send Sanjay to persuade the Pandavas to return back to Hastinapur with the offer of amity and protection to his family.

Then Yudhishthira applied for advice to Krishna, who offers to go as an ambassador to Hastinapur. Krishna counseled peace and appealed strongly to the king to be just to the Pandavas but Duryodhana strongly refused Krishna’s appeal and walked away. After that Krishna also leave the court. Then there was nothing to
be done but prepare for the great battle. Kauravas had elected Bhishma and Pandavas elected Drishtadyumna as the commander of their armies. At the first day of the battle a great dialog was held between the Arjuna and Krishna that is known as the Bhagvad-Gita or the song of the divine one at Kurukshetra during the great Mahabharata war. It is the protest against war but the conclusion reached is that when fighting became a duty we must enter on it valiantly, without heed to the sin of slaughtering others. In the priceless scripture Bhagvat-Geeta, Lord Krishna emphasized on the Nishkama Karma, action without desire and without any worry about fruits or the result of the action. The battle lasted eighteen days.

On the second day Shukrdev, Bhanumaan, Satydev, Saty, Ketumaan were slain by Bhima. The third day was distinguished by a tremendous charge of the Pandavas in half-moon formation. On the tenth day Bhishma was wounded in single combat with Arjuna, then the command developed by Drona. On the thirteenth day Drona had drawn up the Kauravas in the form of a Chakra Vyuh, into which the youthful Abhimanyu derived his chariot then overpowered and slain by Kauravas. On the fourteenth day Arjuna
had slain the *Jayadratha* and the battle ranged all through the following night by the torchlight. On the same day *Dhrishtadyumna* had slain the *Drona*, who had succeeded in the command of the *Kauravas* by *Karna*. On the seventeenth day *Bhima* had slain *Dushasana* by saying him, he has fulfilled his vow against the man who had insulted the *Drupadi*. On the same day *Arjuna* had slain *Karna*, who had succeeded as the commander of the *Kauravas* by *Shalya*. On the last day (eighteenth) of the battle *Shalya* was slain by *Yudhishthira*. After the battle *Duryodhana* concealed himself in the lake but was soon discovered and forced to come out then engaged in single combat with *Bhima*. After a desperate encounter, *Bhima* shed *Duryodhana’s* both thigh bones as he vowed to do for the insult of *Draupadi*.

गदवेगेन महता व्यायामेन च मोहितः।।
विचेता न्यपत्तः भूषण सौभद्रः परवीरः।
एवं विनिहतो राज-नेको वहुधिराह्वे।।

(महाभारत, चौदौंक खण्ड 176)

स तु गाण्डीविनियुक्तः शरः रथेन इवाशुगः।
छिल्ला शिरः सिन्धुपतेतुपमात विहायसम्।।

(महाभारत, चौदौंक खण्ड 495)

तस्य मूर्ध्वाकलामयः गतसत्स्वय देहिनः।।
किंचिदबुजः कायाद् विचकर्तासिना शिरः।।

(महाभारत, चौदौंक खण्ड 680)

सत्यं विकृष्ट्यनित्यत्मानु प्रतिजः, भीमोऽपिवच्छोणितमस्य कोण्यम्।
आस्वादः चास्वादः च वीषमाणः, क्रृद्दः हि चैनं निजगाय वाक्यम्।।

(महाभारत, चौदौंक खण्ड 1063)

शरोत्तमेना-हलिकेन राजः, स्तरा महास्त्रप्रतिमित्तेन।
पार्थोऽपराः शिर उल्लक्तः, वैकर्त्वस्याय महेन्द्रसूरः।।

(महाभारत, चौदौंक खण्ड 1151)

धर्मे धर्मात्मनं युद्दः निहतो धर्मसूतनः।।
सम्यक्षुतं इव सिवः प्रशान्तोऽपिनिरवाध्वरे।।

(महाभारत, चौदौंक खण्ड 1198)
All the Pandavas and their friends went to Hastinapur where the most affecting conversation took place with the king Dhrtrashtra and queen Gandhari after that Yudhishtara became the king and firmly established the kingdom. He celebrated the great sacrifice known as the Ashwamedha\(^9\) (sacrifice of a horse). The Ashwamedha of Yudhishthira was followed in rapid succession by the retributive tragedies which close the story of the Mahabharata. At last the blind king Dhrtrashtra with his queen Gandhari and Kunti, his brother's widow and saintly Vidura retired into the forest on the bank of the Ganges.

The capital of Krishna's kingdom Dwaraka had destructed by the curse of Gandhari. Balarama had died of exhaustion in the forest, where Krishna who followed him was accidentally slain by a hunter Jara while resting in the forest. In Hastinapur Yudhishthira divided the kingdom between the grandson of Arjuna and the only surviving son of Dhrtrashtra. He asked them to live in peace and amity with each other. Then Yudhishthira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula, Sahadeva, Draupadi and their dog walked for Mahaprasthana. But their sins and moral defects prevent them from going forward and one by one they fall down for different reasons i.e. Draupadi for too great her love for Arjuna, then Sahdev for as he esteemed none equal to himself for intelligence, then Nakula for as he thought none equal to himself in beauty, then Arjuna for he boasted that in
a single day he can destroyed all his enemies and then Bhima because his habit of access eating and self praise for power.

Thus Yudhishthira went on alone with his dog where Indra invited him to enter in the heaven. But Yudhishthira refused to enter unless assured that Draupadi and his brother would be received also. He was assured by Indra that all the Pandavas were already there but because of Maya or illusion Yudhishthira could not first find them so refused to stay in heaven. Therefore Yudhishthira insisted Indra to let him join his brothers in the hell where they are made to appear undergoing horrible tortures. This was the last test of his (Yudhishthira) true humanity, here the whole scene of cruel depiction vanished and he lived with Pandavas and Draupadi in heaven with unspeakable joy.

### 2.4 The Puranas

After the *Srutis*, *Smritis*, *Itihas*, there is *Puranas*. Puranas were intended to promote several particular Brahmanical beliefs, which had been steadily developing since the Vedic times. Puranas are recognized the main Hindu doctrine of Trimurti i.e. creative, preservative and destructive aspect of the Universe. These
Scriptures are eighteen i.e. *Vishnu purana, Nardiya purana, Shri Madbhagavat purana, Garuda purana, Padma purana, Varah purana, Brahma purana, Brahamanda purana, Brahmavaivarta purana, Markandeya purana, Bhavishya purana, Yamana purana, Matasya purana, Kurma purana, Linga purana, Shiva purana, Skanda purana, Agani purana*. In Puranas the teachings has giving by the short stories. The stories of Puranas have conveyed to successive generations by words of mouth, by grandmother to their grand children, by the village priests and by the wandering ministers.

The truths of the *Srutis* and *Smritis* are conveyed to the ordinary people through the great epics, which apples to their heart and through the Puranas, which appeals to their imagination.

### 2.5 The Agamas

The *Agamas* are the separate theological discipline and doctrines for the worship of particular deities. From these *Agamas* the three main sects sprouted amongst the Hindus i.e. *Shaiva, Vaishnavas* and *Shakta*. The *Shaiva Agamas* has lead to the school of philosophy called *Shaiva Siddhanta*. In the *Agamas* the Supreme God is worshipped and adored under the different names and forms of Shiva. Shiva was regarded as Pati (the Lord), of Pasu (the flock) jointed with *Pasa* (the bond), *Linga, Natraja* (God of Dance) which last is constituted by *anava* (ignorance), *Karma* (deeds) and *maya* (illusion).\(^{11}\) The *Vaishnav Agamas* has worshiped the God *Vishnu* and also his incarnations. Various reformers like (such as) Madhava, Ramananda, Kabir, Tulsi Das, Vallabha, Chaitanya, Vithoba, Nam Dev, Tuka Ram etc., each in his own way stressed on the main formula of Vaishnava belief, which may be summed up in the words of a Hindu age, "the worship of the Impersonal laid no hold on my heart."\(^ {12}\) The *Vaishnavas* considered the icons
worshipped in the temples as material incarnations of the Supreme Vishnu, along with his ten usually recognized avatars (manifestations). 13 The Shakta Agamas glorifies Devi, and consort of Shiva, as the mother goddess who is the source of energy behind all creation and destruction. In Shaktain, Devi is also known through various names i.e. Devi Lali (Black or female, time as destroyer), Kapali (Wearer of Skills), Mahakali (the great destroyer), Chandgi (angry), Karalla (frightful, victory). 14

2.6 The Darshanas

There six Darshanas which are also called the schools of philosophy i.e. Nyaya founded by Gautam Rishi, Vaisesika by Kanada, Sankhya by Kapila Muni, Yoga by Patanjali, Mimamsa by Jaimini and Vedanta by Badarayana (Vyasa). These philosophies are for the intellectuals and scholars to guide them. The philosophy of Nyaya is guided by pure logic and reason. The Vaisesika school is talking about the universe as it consisting of countless atoms each with its own particular quality. The Nyaya and Vaisesika doctrine merge into one another and are studied together. The Sankhya system emphasizes logic and inference but its main belief is that the universe consisted of two elements i.e. Purush and Prakriti (sprit & matter). The Yoga school accepts Sankhya philosophy but uses the system of mind control as the means of the attaining God. Mimamsa places the great emphasis on Vedic rituals and sacrifice. The Vedanta means the end of the Veda, bases on the doctrine on the Upnishdas.

Thus 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.
References:

1. Littleton, C Scott(Edi.), Mythology-The illustrated anthology of world Myth and Storytelling, p. 6
2. Jagannathan, Shakunthala, “Hinduism", p. 05
3. Ibid, p. 10
5. Sage Valmiki the composer of the epic has also taken a part in the story as the narrator and represented some scenes by himself.
7. Valmiki Ramayana, Part II, Geeta Press Gorakhpur
9. AshwmedhaYajana was an assertion of a king’s pretension to supremacy over the whole world. A horse of particular colour was procured, and let loose to wander a year at its will. Its entrance into any foreign kingdom was virtually a challenge to its king, either to submit to the supremacy of the king to whom the horse belonged or to offer him battle. Moreover the king, who thus began the Ashwmedha and failed to secure the restoration of his horse, became disgraced in the eyes of his subjects and neighbors. If on the contrary, he succeeded in forcing the submission of the king into whose territories his horse successively strayed. Thus at the end of the year brought it back triumphantly again to his own city. The animal would be sacrificed to the gods in the presence of all the kings who had became tributary, and Ashwmedha would be closed by a grand feast at which the roasted flesh of the horse would be eaten as an imperial dish.
10. Anand, Mulk Raj, The Hindu View of Art, p. 35
12. Ibid., p. 47.