

Parva and three in Anuśāsana Parva. All the pieces are statements by realised souls. The style of the poetry is simple and the method of presentation lively. At times the imagination of the poet extends up to the horizon. Though there is a flow of spiritualism throughout the matter is purely mundane.

4) *Authorship.* Bhagavān Vyāsa is believed to be the author of Mahābhārata. He was a contemporary of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas. Many of the events of the Mahābhārata were personally witnessed by Vyāsa. He took three years to write this book. The following śloka will support the above:

Kururāja kulasthānām
Dr̥ṣṭam vṛttam ca yatsthitam /
Tatsarvam bhagavān Vyāso
Varṇayāmāsa Bhārate. //
(Padma purāṇa)

Tribhirvarṣaiḥ sadotthāyī
Kṛṣṇadvaiṇyaṇo munīḥ /
Mahābhāratamākhyaṇam
Kṛtavānidamuttamam. //
(Śloka 55, Chapter 62, Ādi Parva).

The Varāha Purāṇa states that Vyāsa composed the Mahābhārata at a period when the end of Dvāpara yuga merged with the dawn of the Kaliyuga. The Bhāgavata states that Śrī Kṛṣṇa passed away on the first day of Kaliyuga. The Bhāgavata is devoted to admire and praise the life of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This book also is written by Vyāsa. This śloka found in the first Chapter of Ādi Parva clears the doubt:

Vāsudevasya mātmyam
Pāṇḍavānām ca satyatām /
Durvṛttam Dhārtarāṣṭrānām
Uktavān Bhagavānṛṣiḥ. //

The original name of the Bhārata which Vyāsa composed was 'Jaya'. In the first Chapter of Ādi Parva is this śloka to support this statement:

Nārāyaṇam namaskṛtya
Naram caiva narottamam /
Devīm Sarasvatīm caiva
Tato Jayamudīrayet//

After the death of the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas the disciples of Vyāsa, Sumantu, Jaimini, Paila, Śuka and Vaiśampāyana gave this book great publicity. They wrote books based on this story of Bhārata of which only the 'Bhārata' of Vaiśampāyana and the Aśva-medha Parva of Jaimini are now available.

Vyāsa's Bhārata was first expounded by Vaiśampāyana at the Sarpa-satra of Janamejaya. At the request of Janamejaya, Vaiśampāyana added some more facts to the original work known then as 'Jaya'. Jaya with the

accretions came to be known as Bhāratasaṁhitā. Sūta who narrated this story to Śaunaka and others at the forest of Nāuniśa added some more matter to the Bhāratasaṁhitā and made it larger. The present Mahābhārata is this expanded edition.

The following facts prove that the Mahābhārata has thus passed through three stages of evolution:

1) This book is known by three names: Jaya, Bhāratasaṁhitā and Mahābhārata.¹

2) There is a reference to the three parts of the book in Śloka 66, Chapter 1 of Ādi Parva.²

3) There are three different opinions regarding the total number of ślokas in the Mahābhārata. According to Ugraśravas there are 8800 verses, according to Vyāsa 24000 verses and according to another statement a lakh of verses.³

4) The narration appears to be of three different kinds, descriptive, philosophical and oratorical, indicative of three different authorships.

5) Sūta and Vaiśampāyana have made accretions to the original work 'Jaya' of Vyāsa.

Viewed with these facts we are led to believe that Vyāsa has composed only the very essence of Mahābhārata comprising 8800 ślokas and that work was known as 'Jaya' as referred to in the first invocatory verse of the epic. Vaiśampāyana added a few verses of his own and brought the number to 24,000 and gave the book the name of 'Bhāratasaṁhitā'. It was Sūta who made many more additions and made the book so big as to fetch it the name of 'Mahābhārata'. The epic which is now current among us contains a lakh of verses and it took perhaps centuries to get this transformation of the book from 'Jaya' to 'Mahābhārata'.

6) *Period of publication.* The Kali Varṣa starts from 3102 B.C. The great Mahābhārata war was fought at a period when the end of Dvāpara yuga merged into the dawn of Kali yuga as could be gathered from the following verse from the epic:

Antare caiva samprāpte
Kalidvāparayorabhūt /
Samantapañcake yuddham
Kurupāṇḍavasenayoḥ. //

(Śloka 13, Chapter 2, Ādi Parva).

So it can be deduced that the great war was fought round about 3102 B.C. Dhṛtarāṣṭra lived for eighteen years after the great battle and the Pāṇḍavas ruled the country for 36 years. (Strī Parva, M.B.). It was when Śrī Kṛṣṇa died that the Pāṇḍavas ended their rule and commenced the Mahāprasthāna. So it can be surmised that Śrī Kṛṣṇa lived for 36 years after the war.

1 (a) Jayo nāmetihāso'yaṁ
Śrotavyo vijigīṣuṇā (Śloka 22, Chapter 62, Ādi Parva).
(b) Caturviṁśati sāhasrīm
Cakre bhāratasaṁhitām
Upākhyaṇairvinā tāvad
Bhāratam procyate budhaiḥ
(Śloka 78, Chapter 1, Ādi Parva).
(3) Refer to the śloka given in para 1.

2 Manvādi Bhāratam kecid
Āstikādi tathāpare
Tathopari carādanye
Viprāḥ samyagadhīyire.
3 Idam śatasahasram tu lokānām puṇyakarmaṇām
Upākhyaṇaiḥ saha jñeyamādyam bhāratamuttamam
Caturviṁśati sāhasrīm cakre bhāratasaṁhitām
Upākhyaṇairvinā tāvad bhāratam procyate budhaiḥ
Aṣṭau ślokaśahasrāni Aṣṭau ślokaśatāni ca
Aham vedmi śuko vetti Sañjayo vetti vā na vā.
(Ādi Parva, Chapter 1).