

background Vālmiki completed writing the Rāmāyaṇa Story in 24,000 verses. The epic is divided into seven kāṇḍas (sections) of five hundred chapters. The seven sections are the Bālakāṇḍa, the Ayodhyākāṇḍa, the Araṇya kāṇḍa, the Kiṣkindhā Kāṇḍa, the Sundara Kāṇḍa, the Yuddha Kāṇḍa and the Uttarakāṇḍa.

Vālmiki taught the poem to Lava and Kuśa and when they went with Vālmiki to Ayodhyā during the aśvamedhayajña of Śrī Rāma, they sang the poem in the open assembly there.

3) *Different views about the author.* Tradition ascribes the authorship of the Rāmāyaṇa to Vālmiki. But, western scholars hold the view that a part of Bālakāṇḍa and the whole of Uttarakāṇḍa are interpolations of a future date. The following are the reasons for this view.

(i) Two different texts are found for cantos one and three of Bālakāṇḍa. In one of them many of the stories mentioned in the other are missing. It may, therefore, be surmised that the two texts were composed during different periods.

(ii) In the early texts of Rāmāyaṇa stories like Gaṅgāvataṇam are not to be found. So they must be interpolations of a later period.

(iii) Only in Kāṇḍas one and seven is Śrī Rāma treated as an incarnation. In the other Kāṇḍas he is considered in the capacity of a hero only.

(iv) Uttarakāṇḍa is not to be found among the early translations of Rāmāyaṇa into other languages.

(v) In the Bālakāṇḍa it is stated that Vālmiki composed the Rāmāyaṇa, taught it to Kuśa and Lava, and that they recited the whole poem before Śrī Rāma at Ayodhyā. Many of the things mentioned in this Kāṇḍa are repeated in Uttarakāṇḍa, which, therefore, must have been written by someone else.

4) *The period of Rāmāyaṇa.* According to Indian belief Śrī Rāma lived at the end of Tretāyuga, which came to its close in 8,67,100 B.C. As per Rāmāyaṇa Śrī Rāma ruled the country for 11,000 years. He was forty years old when he ascended the throne. Vālmiki began writing the Rāmāyaṇa after Lavakuśas were born. In the light of the above facts, certain scholars opine that the Rāmāyaṇa was written near about 878000 B.C. But, western critics and some eastern critics do not accept this view. Professor Jacobi holds the view that the original of Mahābhārata is anterior to Rāmāyaṇa. Most scholars do not agree with this view. A great majority of critics are of opinion that Rāmāyaṇa is anterior to Mahābhārata. They argue as follows :—

(i) The traditional belief in India is that Rāmāyaṇa was written much earlier than Mahābhārata.

(ii) Rāmāyaṇa makes no reference to any of the characters of Mahābhārata.

(iii) The Śrī Rāma story is referred to in many a Jātaka story of the Buddhists.

(iv) Vālmiki has made no mention about the city of Pāṭalīputra established near about 380 B.C. It is an irrefutable fact that Śrī Rāma had passed by the city.

(v) During the reign of emperor Aśoka the Prākṛta language was spoken in the areas where the incidents mentioned in Rāmāyaṇa took place. But, Rāmāyaṇa was written much anterior to the emergence of Prākṛta language.

According to Professor Keith Rāmāyaṇa was written in 300 B.C.

5). *Different readings of Rāmāyaṇa.* In various parts of India three original texts or readings are found of the original Rāmāyaṇa. In each of the three texts nearly 1/3 of the portions differ from one another. The Bombay text is popular in northern and southern India. The second is the Bengal text. The third, the Kashmir text, is popular in the north-western parts of India. The inference to be made from the existence of these three different texts is that the original epic was composed in a Prākṛta language, which was most popular at the time and that it was later translated into Sanskrit by different persons at different times. This theory will explain the existence of the different texts. For many years it continued to be handed down from mouth to mouth till it assumed written form in Sanskrit.

6). *Other Rāmāyaṇas.* The Rāmāyaṇa story in other forms and garbs, is also prevalent in India. One of them is Vāsiṣṭharāmāyaṇa or Jñānavāsiṣṭha. The authorship of it also is ascribed to Vālmiki. Most of the Rāmāyaṇas like Vāsiṣṭhottararāmāyaṇa, Sītāvījaya, Adbhutarāmāyaṇa, Adbhutottararāmāyaṇa etc. found in different parts of India are believed to have been written by Vālmiki. Adbhutarāmāyaṇa is composed of twentyseven cantos. According to this Rāmāyaṇa, it was Sītā, who killed Rāvaṇa of ten heads. There is another Rāmāyaṇa in Sanskrit called Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa. It is a poem separated from Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa. It is written in the form of a conversation between Umā (Pārvatī) and Śiva. Ānanda-Rāmāyaṇa and Mūla-Rāmāyaṇa extol the greatness of Hanūmān.

RAMBHĀ. An asura. (For details see under Karambha).
RAMBHĀ I.

1) *General.* One of the most beautiful of the apsarā women. Urvaśī, Tilottamā and Rambhā are really reputed for their beauty.

2) *Birth.* All the famous Celestial women were daughters of Kaśyapaprajāpati by his wife Pradhā. Devarṣi (Kaśyapa) begot the following daughters of his wife Pradhā i.e. Alambuṣā, Miśrakeśī, Vidyutparṇā, Tilottamā, Aruṇā, Raksitā, Rambhā, Manoramā, Subāhū, Keśinī, Suratā and Surajā. (Ādi Parva, Chapter 65).

3) *Rāvaṇa cursed.* Rāvaṇa raped Rambhā and Nalākūbara cursed him. (See under Nalākūbara).

4) *Purūravas and Rambhā.* Indra once killed an asura chief named Māyādhara and held a festival in honour of the victory. At the festival Rambhā danced before her preceptor Tumburu. Purūravas too was present on the occasion and he ridiculed Rambhā for her mistakes in dancing. Moreover he claimed that he was a greater master of dance than Tumburu preceptor of Rambhā. Enraged by this claim Tumburu cursed that Purūravas would be separated from his wife Urvaśī. (Kathāsarit-sāgara, Lāvāṇakalambaka, Taraṅga 3).

5) *Rambhā and Suṣeṇa.* There was a King called Suṣeṇa on mount Citrakūṭa. This handsome bachelor prince used to sit alone in the lotus pond near his palace. When once Rambhā passed through the sky above the pond her eyes met those of Suṣeṇa and she alighted on the spot and the long talk between the two ended in their marriage. Suṣeṇa enjoyed life there for a long time with Rambhā without knowing that she was an apsarā woman. He had attempted many a time to know the real facts about her, to no purpose. Rambhā did not even think about her native Svarga. Her companion, a Yakṣī, showered gold all over Suṣeṇa's