

## 2.18 Historical Importance of the legend of Rāmāyaṇa. रामायण (The journey of Rama)

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### ABSTRACT

*Rāmāyaṇa* was the first classical Sanskrit epic of India. It is the work of Valmiki. According to scholars this legend was turned into a poem in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. This consists of 24,000 Sanskrit stanzas. It is far shorter than the *Mahābhāratha*. *Rāmāyaṇa* relates the adventures of Rāmā who went to Daṇḍakaranya together with his brother Lakṣamana and wife Seetā. There are diverse regional versions of the *Rāmāyaṇa* written by various authors in India. Indian tradition regards the *Rāmāyaṇa* as part of their history. Valmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa* has been traditionally divided into seven cantos (kandas) dealing with the life of Rāmā from his birth to his death.

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|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Bala kanda      | 2. Ayodhya kanda | 3. Aranya Kanda |
| 4. Kiskindya Kanda | 5. Sundara Kanda | 6. Lanka Kanda  |
| 7. Uttara Kanda    |                  |                 |

Chroniclers in Sri Lanka had not included the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* into Sri Lankan history. For this we can identify two reasons.

1. Defeat of Rāwanā by Rāmā
2. Hindu concept of god included in the *Rāmāyaṇa* was alien and unacceptable to Buddhism.

Some Sinhala scholars have rejected the usage of *Rāmāyaṇa*, for example, Totagamuve Rāhula thero who wrote *Kāvyashekhara*, Veedagama thero who wrote *Budugunāṅkāraya*, Buddhagoshā thero who wrote *Pāpanchāsudani* had not considered them as worthy of study.

However, one cannot ignore the fact that, *Rāmāyaṇa* is important as a historical source building up Sri Lankan History. There are many places which are related to the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* in Sri Lanka, i.e. Seethāwaka, Seethā Eḷiya, Rāwanā Ella, Roomassala (Unawaturna), Although our chroniclers took no notice of *Rāmāyaṇa* in constructing Sri Lankan history we should not ignore the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* when studying history.

**Key word:** epic, legend