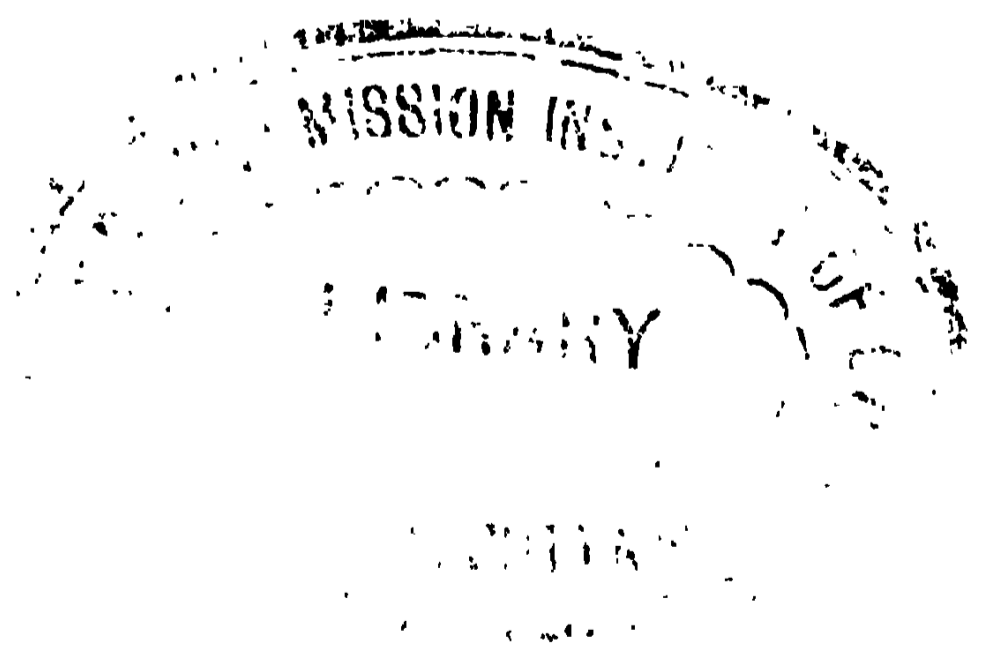


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adultery, murder, complicity and so forth, the person alone of the delinquent is to be seized by the kings' officers. It would thus appear that the terms *daśāparūdha* and *pañcāparūdha* in the ancient grants involved a remission of penalties for the commission of traditional lists of offences by the villagers.

U. N. GHOSHAL

Rāvāna and His Tribes

In my two articles on the Aboriginal Names and the Aboriginal Tribes in the Rāmāyaṇa, an attempt has been made to elucidate the language and the customs of the Vānaras and the Rākṣasas and the former have been identified with the Savaras and other Mūndāri tribes of the modern times. It was not possible then to say much about the Rākṣasas of Laṅkā, of whom the epic gives a fuller account. In this paper I propose to study the ways of life of these men and show how some of the tribes now living in the hills and jungles of the Central Provinces still maintain the ways of life of the Rākṣasas.

Before the customs and manners of the people of Laṅkā are taken up for study, it is but necessary to give a little attention to the physical features of their lord whom tradition pictures as an unnatural being with ten heads and twenty arms. The clan of Laṅkā derived their importance in the story mostly from their leader. All the great performances he is said to have achieved are attributed to his ten heads and arms of double that number. It is therefore essential to observe if the epic really supports this popular belief; it is only an unfounded notion that has somehow caught the minds of the people of India.¹

The epic contains the description of Rāvāna in all situations. There are given the pictures of Rāvāna asleep, and Rāvāna dead;

¹ The notion has taken such deep root that it has found its way into art. It has become a convention. Any crooked picture of a human being with ten faces is taken to represent Rāvāna. Even an illiterate person recognises the figure of Rāvāna.

Rāvaṇa on his throne in the council Chamber and Rāvaṇa in his car fighting with his enemies are truly depicted in it. A study of these pictures, especially of his appearance in sleep and in death, enables us to know his real appearance ; for, it is admitted by our śāstras that a person however much he disguises his true nature at other times reveals himself in sleep and in death. First let us observe him when he was taking repose after a day's activity.

While Hanumān was going from room to room in Rāvaṇa's mansion searching for Sītā, he saw, in one apartment, the Rākṣasa king lying at full length, sound asleep (V, 10).¹

- 15 kāñcanāṅgadasannaddhau dadarśa sa mahātmanah/
vikṣiptau rākṣasendrasya bhujāv indradhvajopamau//
16 airāvataviṣāṅgrair āpīḍana-kṛta-vraṇau/
vajrollikhita-pīnāṃsau viṣṇu-cakra-parikṣatau//
17 pīnau samasujātāṃsau saṅgatau balasaṃyutau/
sulakṣaṇa-nakhāṅguṣṭhau svaṅgulīyaka-lakṣitau//
18 saṃhatau parighākārau vṛttau karikaropamau/
vikṣiptau śayaneśubhre pañca-śīrṣāv ivoragau//

22 tābhyāṃ sa paripūrṇābhyāṃ bhujābhyāṃ rākṣaseśvaraḥ//

In this description every word employed to picture the arms is used in dual number, which shows that they were only two in number. In the same passage, his head is said to be only one.

tasya rākṣasa-rājasya niścakrāma mahāmukhāt :

here '*mukhāt*' is singular ; and also

makuṭenāpavṛttena kuṇḍalajvalitānanam ;

here '*ānanam*' also is singular. Because there was only one face, he must have only one head and one neck. While sleeping, Rāvaṇa was seen with one head and two arms alone. How did he appear when he lay dead in the battle-field ? His brother, Vibhīṣaṇa, seeing him said (VI, 112) :

- 3 vikṣipya dīrghau niṣceṣṭau bhujāv aṅgadabhūṣitau/
makuṭenāpavṛttena bhāskarākūravarasā//

Bhujau and its adjective are in the dual number and *makuṭena* in the singular.

1 The Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa edited and published by T. R. Krishnamacharya of the Madhva Vilas Book Depot, Kumbakonam, has been consulted to prepare this paper.

Rāvaṇa's wives rush into the field and falling on his body lament (10). One of them '*aṅke śiraḥ kṛtvā ruroda, mukhamīkṣatī.*' Here *śiraḥ* and *mukham* are in the singular number. Another of his wives laments :

9 'upahr̥tya ca bhujau.....hatasya vadanam̐ dṛṣṭvā'.

Bhujau is dual and *vadanam* is singular.

Mandodarī, his principal wife, laments describing his face

(VI, 114, 36) :

Kirīṭa-kūṭōj-jvalitam̐ tāmrāsyaṃ dīptakuṇḍalam/

..... vaktram̐ na bhr̥jate//

Āsyaṃ and *vaktram* are both in the singular number. In the pictures of 'Rāvaṇa asleep' and 'Rāvaṇa dead,' he is shown with one head and two arms like an ordinary human being. In waking moments, he might appear differently. It is necessary to observe how he is depicted while he was active.

After Rāvaṇa had revealed himself to Sītā in the Pañca-vaṭī cottage, he begins to extol himself by telling her of his glories and prowess. Regarding his strength he says (iii. 49) :

3 udvaheyaṃ bhujābhyāṃ tu medinīm ambare sthitah̐.

Bhujābhyām is dual and therefore he had only two arms.

Having taken Sītā to Laṅkā, he showed his mansion, pleasure-gardens, jewels, etc. When he found her unmoved, he bowed to her feet with his head, saying (III, 56) :

37 na cā 'pi Rāvaṇaḥ kāñcin mūrdhnā strīm praṇameta ha.

'*Mūrdhnā*', being singular, intimates only one head. In these two cases Rāvaṇa informs that he had only one head and two arms.

While struggling with Jaṭāyu, the lord of the Rākṣasas kicked the lord of vultures with his two fists and two legs (III, 51) :

40 muṣṭībhyāṃ caraṇābhyāṃ ca gr̥dhrarājam̐ apothayat.

When Hanumān was about to accost Sītā in the Aśoka grove, he saw some lights approach and concealed himself in the foliage of the tree on which he had perched. Amidst the procession, Rāvaṇa was seen and was at once identified to be the person seen sleeping in the apartment in the mansion (V, 18) :

30 so 'yam eva purā śete puramadhye gṛhottame.

This is a sufficient guarantee that Rāvaṇa was unchanged when he woke up. The number of his limbs remained the same as when he was asleep.

Hearing Sītā curse him for his misbehaviour, Rāvaṇa looked at

her with angry eyes. Here the word for eyes is used in the dual number (V, 22):

23 vivṛtya nayane krūre Jānakīm anvavaikṣata,

and in the succeeding verses, the words for arms and ear-rings (*bhujābhyān* and *kuṇḍalābhyām*) are used in the dual number alone ; as he is said to have only two ear-rings and two eyes it is certain that he had one head only.

When Hanumān was captured by Indrajit and was taken captive to the presence of Rāvaṇa, the vānara saw the king of Rākṣasas shining with '*śirobhir daśabhiḥ*' which cannot be taken to signify ten-heads ; for, immediately afterwards Rāvaṇa is said to shine with '*pūrṇa-candrābha-vaktreṇa* (V, 49, 7). Here *vaktreṇa* being singular signifies only one face. Had he really ten heads, he ought to have been said to shine with ten faces.

Similarly in the description of Rāvaṇa as he appeared to Sūrpanakhā, when she ran to Laṅkā to report about the ignominy done to her and the destruction of the Rākṣasas in the Janasthāna, it is said, (III, 32) that he was with '*viṃśatibhujam, daśagrīvam* ; but it cannot be taken to mean twenty arms and ten heads as in the same passage he is said to have two arms :

nivārayati bāhubhyāṃ yaḥ śailaśikharopamaḥ.

Even at the time of war, he is described with one head only. When Rāvaṇa came into the battle-field for the first time, Rāma asks Vibhīṣaṇa (VI, 59) who he was :

26 asau kirīṭī calakuṇḍalāsyo nagendra-Vijhyopamabhīma-

kāyaḥ.

During the fight that ensued Nīla is said to have performed a dance from Rāvaṇa's head to the top of the standard post and from the latter on to his head (VI, 59) :

81 dhvajāgre dhanuṣaś cāgre kirīṭāgre ca taṃ harim.

Here 'kirīṭāgre' being singular suggests only one crown and consequently one head. Even in the final duel with Rāma, he is said to have only one head ; and when it had been cut off by Rāma's arrow, immediately another of the same size, form and appearance, is said to have grown in that very place. Every time it had been struck off, at once another stood up in that same place. At last quite vexed and tired, Rāma sent an arrow into the heart of Rāvaṇa and killed him (VI, 107) :

54 Rāvaṇasya śīro'cchīndacchrīmajjvalitakuṇḍalam/

tacchiraḥ patitaṃ bhūmau dr̥ṣṭaṃ lokais tribhis tadā//

27 tasyaiva sadṛśaṃ cānyad Rāvaṇasyotthitaṃ śiraḥ/
 tat kṣipraṃ kṣiprahastena Rāmeṇa kṣipra-kāriṇā//
 28 dvitīyaṃ Rāvaṇaśira śchinnaṃ saṃyati śāyakaiḥ/
 chinna-mātraṃ tu tacchīṛṣaṃ punar anyat pradṛśyate//
 29 tadapyaśani-saṃkāśaiś chinnaṃ Rāmeṇa sāyakaiḥ//

(VI, III) 16 chikṣepa paramāyattas taṃ śaraṃ marma-ghātinam//

... ..
 18 bibheda hṛdayaṃ tasya Rāvaṇasya durātmanaḥ//
 19 rudhirāktaḥ sa vegena jīvitāntakaraḥ śaraḥ/
 Rāvaṇasya haran prāṇān viveśa dhānītaḥ//

Then, 22 gatāsūr bhīma-vegas tu nairtendro mahādyutiḥ/
 papāta syandanād bhūmau Vṛtro vajrahato yathā//

It has already been seen that the corpse had only one head and two arms. It is strange to observe that, in this description of the duel, not even once is Rāma said to have chopped off even one arm of Rāvaṇa ; perhaps it was not the object of the poet to say that Rāma's purpose was to disable the Rākṣasa, but to destroy him altogether.

From these evidences it is confirmed that Rāvaṇa had one head and two arms like any human being. The notion that he had ten heads and twenty arms must have been the result of certain interpolators, who, misconceiving the significance of such appellations as *daśagrīva* and *daśūśya* of the Rākṣasa lord, had inserted into the text of the poem passages or expressions to propagate the meaning which they had trusted to be true. These interpolations which had grown into the body of the poem before any scholar thought of writing a commentary led the commentators to proceed on the lines indicated by those interpolations. When Rāma-cult grew, everything concerned with Rāma lost its mundane colour and acquired that superhuman gloss that generally attaches to the life of all great men—men that had done good to the world at large and attained godhead. Thus Rāvaṇa was made into a demon of ten heads on the unauthenticated meaning given to *daśagrīva* and *daśūśya* found used to name Rāvaṇa in the original poem. Now since it is discovered that the poem does not vouchsafe that meaning but confirms that the king of the Rākṣasas had only one head and two arms, the real significance of those names has to be investigated into in future.

As the study of words is very greatly helped by the ways of life followed by the inhabitants of Laukā, it is but meet that the

latter should be taken up here. A careful study of the epic shows how faithfully Vālmīki depicted the habits of a living people when he described Laṅkā and its inhabitants. The chief points that ethnologists consider for a study of a tribe or clan are found painted in word-pictures. The house and the village planning, the social and family life, the marriage customs, the funeral ceremony and the superstitions are all pictured, true to life, in the poem. When these are fully elucidated it becomes possible to identify these Rākṣasas with the tribes that are living in modern India.

In the Rāmāyaṇa, three septs of Rākṣasas are found mentioned. Virādha represents one sept and Kabandha represents the sept called the Dānavas. Kabandha himself says (III, 71, 7) :

śriyā virājitaṃ putraṃ Danos tvam viddhi Lakṣmaṇa.

These Dānavas are said to be one of the classes mentioned as *pūrva-devas* in the Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana. They were hostile to the Laṅkā tribe of Rākṣasas, because Rāvaṇa is designated as '*dānavadeva śatruḥ*' (VI, 59, 143) and '*hantāraṃ dānavendrānām*'. With regard to these two tribes, except funeral customs, nothing else are given in the poem. With the help of that datum, I have identified them with the peoples living now in India (Aboriginal Tribes in India, "Man in India," vol. 5, nos. 1 and 2).

The Rākṣasas of Laṅkā are fully dealt with in the epic. The house-construction and the town-planning together with the village gods are found described in the Sundara-kāṇḍa. A study of this exposes a good deal of the social life of the Rākṣasas and the poet has described it as understood by a foreigner.

When Hanumān went to the gate of the city of Laṅkā, which was walled all round, he was challenged by the guardian angel whose name was Laṅkā (V, 3, 45): (Ahaṃ tu nagarī Laṅkā svayam eva plavaṅgama).

But he beat her down, and while expiring she told him that the Self-existent had told her :

47 yadā tvam vānaraḥ kaścīd vikramād vaśam ānayet/
tadā tvayā hi vijñeyaṃ rakṣasāṃ bhayam āgatam//

Because this guardian angel had been vanquished, the city became vulnerable not only to Hanumān but to the vānara hordes afterwards. Such guardians are not said to have existed either in Ayodhyā, the chief city of Kośala, or in Kiṣkindhyā, the city of the vānaras. This is a peculiar feature of the Rākṣasa capital alone.

Of the tribes living in the hills and jungles of the Central Provinces

it is the Kui—Gond tribes that establish a guardian goddess in every village. At the entrance into the village is installed the god called the Niśān Pennu. It is represented by a round oval shaped stone of about 6 to 9 inches in height and it is placed under a tree at the gate. That it may not be meddled with by idlers, it is covered with a heap of stones arranged in the form of a dome. They believe that, if this Pennu is removed from that place, or in any way damaged, some evil would befall the village. Either an epidemic would break out or the crops would fail. On every festive occasion, the villagers make offerings to this goddess so that she may protect them and their wives and children. Niśān means the emblem ; so she is the emblem of the village, or in the words of Vālmiki, she is the 'grāmaḥ svayam eva'.

Passing beyond this, we go into the village in which the houses are built in parallel rows leaving streets between them. At the head of the main street which is broader than any other in the village, is the residence of the headman. A wall or a fence runs all round it and is provided with a gate opening into the middle of the street. Within this enclosure are houses to serve the needs of the family. The kitchen, the store, the bed-room, the cattle shed, are all provided for. The garden is behind the dwelling houses and a space is set apart within the enclosure for all the villagers to enjoy drinks on festive occasions.

The Kuis are very fond of intoxicating drinks and they use several kinds of liquors. Dried mohua flower yields a drink which is much praised by these tribes. Ragi or other kind of grain is fermented and a liquor is distilled. Fermented porridge of ragi, called 'londū' is an essential item at every festival. It gives a very strong intoxication ; those who drink it become so intoxicated that they even commit murders. A fermented mixture of honey and water also is much liked. The Kuis also drink toddy drawn from the sago palm (caryota urem)

Along with these drinks they like to have some kind of animal food. On ordinary days goats and fowls supply dishes ; but on festive occasions, buffaloes, cows and pigs are slaughtered ; all kinds of birds except the crow, which they consider to be their friend, are eaten by them. Animals from the smallest reptile to the biggest buffalo, with the exception of the dog and the jackal, are eaten.

Women wear a great variety of neck-ornaments made of beads, cowries or trinkets ; bangles and wristlets are worn from the wrist to the elbow ; anklets of the S type adorn their feet while every toe is provided with ornaments made to suit each toe. Similarly the

fingers also are furnished with rings. Bunches of small metallic bells are inserted into the rings of the toes so that when they walk or dance a pleasant chime is made.

This is in outline the life that one sees in a Kui village. On festive days there will be a greater bustle and a more elaborate ornamentation. Such was the aspect presented to Hanumān by Laṅkā. It was on the night when the moon was in the first quadrature, that Rāma's messenger had roamed through the streets of the Rākṣasa city (v, 5, 5, vibhāti candraḥ paripūrṇaśṛiḡaḥ). The whole town is described to be active. It may be inferred that preparations for a great festival that had to take place on the next full moon day might have been going on when Hanumān entered the town.

At first he passed through the main street wherein he saw houses of different shapes and forms. While going along he heard men singing and women dancing, keeping time to the music by drums and flutes. Sorcerers were droning hymns which were heard like Vedic hymns chanted by the Aryan priests. Passing on in this way he came to the end of the street and found the main gate in the boundary wall of the mansion of Rāvaṇa. Entering it he observed (V, 6):

36. śibikā vividhākārāḥ.....

latā-grhāṇi citrāṇi citraśālāgrhāṇi ca//

krīḍā-grhāṇi cānyāṇi dāru-parvatakāni ca/

kāmasya grhakam ramyaṁ divāgrhakam eva ca//

(kāmasya ca grham divyaṁ divāgrhakam eva ca//)

Here 'śibikāḥ' means structures. They are all enumerated in the succeeding lines. 'Dāru-parvataka' being associated with 'krīḍā-grham' has been understood to signify a kind of pleasure house. But the words forming the compound mean 'hillocks of wood'. 'Dāru' means wood. Vessels made of wood are mentioned as dāru-pātrāṇi (VI, 114, 114). 'Dāru' is understood to mean fuel. Pieces of wood intended for fuel are stacked in the form of hillocks or towers; it is a common sight in every village in this Agency. As it rains abundantly in these parts, it becomes a necessity to stack fuel as a provision for the rainy season, during which time it is not possible to secure even one piece of dry wood. As it was after the rains that Hanumān went to Laṅkā, it is but reasonable that he saw such piles of fuel.

Then he examined apartment after apartment with the hope of finding out Rāma's wife. He first entered the main hall and did not find her there. Thence he passed on into the sleeping rooms in which

he found Rāvaṇa stretched in deep slumber ; his principal wife was found in the same state ; Rāvaṇa's other wives were all seen lying in different postures and poses. Not finding Sītā in these rooms he passed on into the drinking ground (pānabhūmi), where he saw,

Fair women sleeping on the ground
Where wearied with the song, perchance,
The merry game, the women dance,
Each girl with wine and sleep oppressed,
Had sunk her drooping head to rest.

There deftly mixed with salt and curd
Was meat of many a beast and bird,
Of kid, porcupine and hare
The dainties of the sea and air (Griffith).

The town-planning and the social life are the same for the Rākṣasas and the Kuis. The description of Rāvaṇa's wives sleeping with their ornaments disturbed and deranged is a true picture of Kui women lying down deep drunk.

In this connection the war dress of the Rākṣasas deserves mention. When Rāvaṇa went to the battle-field for the first time, he is said to have been followed by beings with faces of the tiger, the horse, the camel, the stag and other animals (VI, 59, 24)

yaiś caiṣa nānāvidha-ghorarūpair-vyāghr = oṣṭranāgendra-
mṛgāśvavaktrañḥ.

bhūtair-vṛto bhāti vivṛtta-netrañḥ.....

These were the Rākṣasa soldiers wearing masks resembling the faces of wild beasts. This was one of the several ways in which the inhabitants of Laṅkā terrified their enemies or the peaceful settlers of the Daṇḍaka forest.

The Kui tribesmen also have the custom of wearing masks with faces representing a wild animal or wearing bison or stag horns on their heads. In former times they used to wear this dress during the time of war, but now they wear it during festive occasions and dances.

"The war dress of the Khonds is elaborate and consists of a leather cuirass in front and a flowing red cloak, which with an arrangement of bison horns and peacock's feathers is supposed to strike awe into the beholders' minds" (Thurston's Castes and Tribes, vol. III, p. 364). The peacock feathers worn by the Ganjam maliah Khonds seems to have been borrowed from the Savaras that live in their midst. It

does not form part of the attire of the tribes of Khonds living in the other parts of the Eastern Ghats.

“For dances.....stag and bison horns are also worn on the heads of some” (Central Provinces Gazetteers : Chhatisgarh Feudatory States, p. 51).

The Bonda Porajas who live in the south-western jungles of the Vizagapatam Agency also wear bison horns on their heads during the time of dances. Wearing of horns on the head or masking the face with animal faces is purely a custom of the Dravidians, especially of the classes that belong to the family to which the Kuis and their allied tribes belong. This kind of costume is also represented in ancient sculptures and in the modern pageantry of the civilized communities of India,

The sculpture on Plate XXX of the History of Fine Art in India shows the war dress similar to the one described in the Rāmāyaṇa. But for the figures of the three soldiers, the sculpture can doubtlessly be taken to represent a group of masked dancers. The combination of the unmasked armed men with the armed maskers, affirms that the panel shows a group of soldiers going to battle. The Rāmāyaṇa informs that the Rākṣasa army was composed of both masked and unmasked fighting men. The double-edged short sword in the hand of one masked figure and the knotted mace in the hand of the other are a clear evidence against this identification with the peaceful monks. The unmasked figures show by their low nasal ridges and the high cheek bones that they represent a people that belong to the Kui tribes. This panel clearly intimates that the Dravidian classes had the custom of appearing in such costumes at the time when the Gandhāra art was flourishing.

The Tongsa Lama Dance shown in the picture on page 19 of the Indian Pictorial Education, vol. 1, no. 3, shows some masked dancers. The head gears of these maskers are similar to those worn by the Kui tribes during the time of amusement. This custom might have been adopted from the Dravidians who had originally inhabited the country. The very name of Bhutan (= Bhūtasthāna) is an undeniable evidence of its early occupation by a Dravidian tribe that are called Bhūtas in Sanskrit literature. That costume which was originally intended to strike terror into their enemies' hearts became adopted in time for peaceful amusements.

The Rākṣasas, not only to terrify their enemies but also to deceive others, appeared in different shapes and forms by change of costume.

It is this habit that acquired for them the appellation of 'kāma-rūpiṇaḥ.' Rāmāyaṇa, III, 10. 10 : Rākṣasair daṇḍakāraṇye bahubhiḥ kāma-rūpiḥ.

The Rākṣasas appeared in several forms so that it was impossible to discern the real from the pretentious. They appeared in deceptive disguises.

When Hanumān had destroyed the Aśoka garden, its watchmen went to Sītā and asked her who he was. Then she replied, V, 42, 8 :

rakṣasāṃ kāma-rūpāṇāṃ vijñāne rā gatiḥ mama/

How can I discern who he was as all the Rākṣasas had the faculty of appearing in disguise. Then she added that she did not know any other except the deceitful Rākṣasa that had gone there a little while ago.

When Hanumān approached Sītā as she was about to strangle herself to death with her hair, she mistook him for Rāvaṇa in disguise. V, 34, 25 : rakṣasāṃ kāma-rūpatvān mene taṃ rākṣasādhipam.

The criterion of her judgment was the disguise and she had been so much deceived by the disguise of Rāvaṇa that she considered even real appearances to be false.

This character of 'Kāma-rupa' is clearly explained by the inhabitants of Citra-kūṭa settlement. II, 116, 14 :

nānā-rūpair virūpaiś ca rūpair vikṛta-darśanaiḥ//
apraśastair-aśucibhiḥ samprayujya ca tāpasān/

The disguises were of different kinds ; of queer forms, of unnatural shapes, and they were unpleasant and awkward. Wearing such disguises and changing costume every moment, the Rākṣasas used to terrify the peaceful inhabitants of the Aryan settlement on the slopes of the Citra-kūṭa hill.

Rāvaṇa himself appeared to Sītā first in a disguise. He approached the cottage as a beggar and asked for alms. This was to draw Sītā out. Sūrpa-nakhā told Rāma that she was a 'Kāma-rūpiṇī,' which by the above discussion appears to mean 'capable of putting on false appearances'.

The next ethnological information supplied to us by the epic is with regard to the marriage customs of the Rākṣasas of whom Rāvaṇa was the lord. Rāvaṇa himself tells Sītā (v, 20, 5) that abduction of women was the law of marriage of his tribe. When he spoke to her of his glory, he told her that all his many wives had been girls brought away by force from different communities (III, 47, 27).

It appears that a Rākṣasa could marry any woman, married or unmarried, and that marriage consisted in bringing away the woman from among her relatives :

bahvīnām uttama-strīṇām āhartānām itastataḥ/

In the sleeping apartment Hanumān saw (V, 9, 69-70)

rājarṣi-pitṛ-daitya-gandharvāṇām ca yoṣitaḥ/

rakṣasām cābhavan kanyās tasya kāmavaśaṁ gatāḥ/

yuddha-kāmena tāḥ sarvā Rāvaṇena hr̥tāḥ striyaḥ/

With a desire to have a pretext to fight he brought away the damsels by force. When their parents came to obstruct, he fought with them and drove them away. Separated from their kith and kin, what could the damsels do but yield to the lust of their abductor ?

Mandodari, Rāvaṇa's principal wife, lamenting over his corpse said (VI, 114, 54).

devāsura-nṛ-kanyānām āhartāraṁ tatas-tataḥ.

When Rāvaṇa consulted his counsellors as to what he should do, since Sītā, however much she had been tempted, refused to share his bed, they advised him, as he was a strong man, to follow the example of the cock-fowl (VI, 13, 4) :

balāt kukkuṭa-vṛttena vartasva su-mahābala.

These instances show that abduction of girls was the law of marriage amongst the Rākṣasas. So long as unmarried girls were brought away there was no trouble. But when married women were so treated, he had to fight. It is said that he had fought with Takṣaka and brought away his wife (III, 32 13)

Takṣakasya priyāṁ bhāryāṁ parājitya jahāra yaḥ/

The parents or brothers do not care so much for their daughters or sisters as husbands do for their wives. When he brought away Takṣaka's wife, the latter went against Rāvaṇa to demand her, but was defeated and driven back, because Rāvaṇa was stronger than Takṣaka. The parents of the girls of marriageable age did not care to waste their energy, because, their daughters must marry some one ; why not Rāvaṇa be that some one ? He was too strong for them to fight with and wealthier than any person living in those days. But the husbands did not allow their wives to be so easily taken away. Rāvaṇa was challenged by Takṣaka : but being of inferior strength, Rāvaṇa could easily repel him. But he could not deal so easily with Rāma ; he had been warned by Mārīca regarding the strength of Rāma ; and the destruction of the Janasthāna Rākṣasas by Rāghava, single-handed, had been a severe intimation of the

proWess of the Ikṣvāku prince. But Rāvaṇa did not pay heed to these warnings and took away Sītā. He was aware that his own men of Laṅkā would not approve of his action. That was the reason why he had not consulted any of them before he started on the adventure. When Rāma with his Vānara horde beseiged his capital, he could not avoid calling the council of war and tell his warriors of the cause of this danger and request them to concert measures to retain Sītā for him and to drive away the invaders. Kumbhakarna, Rāvaṇa's brother, taunted him that he had not been consulted when he stealthily brought away Rāma's consort from the Pañcavaṭī; yet he consented to defend Laṅkā and its king (VI, 12, 30). Mandodarī complained that Rāvaṇa had not heeded the advice of the elders (VI, 114, 76, 78). All these people disapproved of the action of Rāvaṇa, not because it was contrary to the custom of their tribe, but because the husband of the woman was a man of acknowledged valour. Had Rāma been a person of inferior prowess, there would not have been even one dissentient voice in Laṅkā. Every sane person in Laṅkā could understand from the way Rāma had vanquished Khara and his followers, that Rāma was of superior valour.

The marriage of the Kuis consists in the man bringing away by force the woman he loves. If the woman is brought away to the man's house, they become man and wife. "In savage societies marital unions were generally effected by the violent capture of the woman. By degrees these captures have become friendly ones, and have ended in peaceful exogamy, retaining the ancient custom only in the ceremonial form" (Thurston's Castes and Tribes, vol. III, p. 387).

It was this violent union that was suggested by "balāt kukkuṭa-vṛtti", but Rāvaṇa said that he could not adopt that means in this case as he had been cursed by Brahmā for having committed violence on Puñjakasthalī. This story might refer to a social reform introduced into the Rākṣasa community at that time. The need of such a reform might have been felt both by the harm done to the girl and the example presented to them by the more civilized Aryan communities. The savagery is given up now, but the carrying away of the girl and the fighting are still religiously observed. Even after the marriage has been arranged by the parents, the young man lies in ambush on the path along which the bride is expected to go alone or accompanied by friends of her own sex, and pounces on her and carries her off to his house. She resists much but is very soon overpowered by him. Hearing of this, her kith and kin run to the house

of the bridegroom and a fight ensues between the two parties. When both parties are tired, the feast and other formalities commence.

In more civilized classes, the bride is held by the hand and her people pretend as if they were fighting with the party of the bridegroom. In highly civilized communities, as those of the Telugus and the Tamils, some article, instead of the bride, is carried away by the bridegroom from the house of the bride. This is a formality religiously observed after the *Śeṣahoma* rites have been finished. Thus amongst the Dravidian communities in India, the system of the Rākṣasa marriage is seen in all stages from its violent to the most harmless form of the substitution of an article for the bride.

After the bride or the substituted article has been carried off by force and the formality of fight is gone through, the giving of presents takes place. Now in these days, the presents and their value are settled beforehand and are paid before the bridegroom runs away with the bride. All these presents, whether they be clothes, ornaments, grain, or cattle, seem to have been originally intended as an inducement to the woman to consent to live with the man. Gradually some of them became transferred to the bride's parents and brothers. The habit of inducing the bride to live with her abductor by giving her valuable things seems to have been in vogue even in the time of Rāvaṇa. After he had carried away Sitā to Laṅkā, he showed her all his wealth and splendour and offered to make her the queen of all his kingdom. When he approached her, while she was in the Aśoka grove (v, 20, 17f.) he again told her that he would make her the queen of all his wealth and added,

“The broad rich earth will I o'errun,
And leave no town unconquered, none.
Then of the whole an offering make
To Janak, dear, for thy sweet sake” (Griffith).

The abductor must make the bride and her parents happy. It is only then that the bride would consent to marry him. The system of paying the bride price, which is a common custom with great many tribes, seems to have resulted from the offers originally made to induce the woman to live with her abductor or seducer. In the primitive times, when cattle formed the medium of barter and exchange, the price of the bride was paid in the form of cattle. But as other things became substituted as media, those were included in the price paid for the bride. In modern times when metallic currency became common, the

bride is given for so many coins and in certain families the parents grow rich by selling their daughter to the man who pays the highest amount. This custom has gained ground amongst the semi-civilized poor families. But amongst the tribes that live in remote parts the price of the bride is given in kind even in these days.

Now we have to study the custom prevalent amongst the Rākṣasas regarding the disposal of their dead. In my paper on the Aboriginal tribes in the Rāmāyaṇa, it was shown that Rāvaṇa's body was cremated after the Aryan fashion, because Rāma had desired it. In speaking about the disposal of the body of Virādha, it was stated that the Sanātana-dharma of the Rākṣasas was only burial. Kabandha's funeral was a compromise between the Rākṣasa and the Aryan funerals. The body was burnt after the Aryan fashion and the burnt ashes were then buried. That there might be no need of conveying the ashes from the place where it had been burnt to the pit in which they were to be buried, the pyre was arranged in the pit itself and the body was burnt on it. This shows how cleverly the Kabandha class of the Rākṣasas, the descendants of Danu, adopted the Aryan cremation without apparently transgressing their ancient custom of burial. But the case of Rāvaṇa's tribesmen was different. Some had altogether given up the old ways and embraced the Aryan Dharma completely. Vibhīṣaṇa presents to us the type of a thoroughly aryanised Rākṣasa. Another set of men, unable to resist the overwhelming strength of the invaders, temporarily suspended their natural pursuits and retired into the peaceful life of hermits ; but whenever opportunity offered itself, they were ready to show themselves out in their true colour. Mārīca is a type of this class. The majority of the Rākṣasas, being secure in their stronghold of Laṅkā, scrupulously maintained their native customs, uncontaminated by foreign influences ; nor were they afraid of any outward chastisement. They had even tried, by opening a base of operations at Janasthāna, to suppress the Aryans and spread their influence in the whole country to the south of the Jumna.

Rāma was not at first aware of all the ways of the Rākṣasas. Light repressive measures were thought to be sufficient to bring them into the right way. When the Aryan settlers in the Daṇḍaka forest complained to him of the havoc done to them by these cruel people, Rāma thought that a light chastisement was enough to stop their cruelties and make them live in peace with the settlers. Mārīca told Rāvaṇa

that he had been twice taught a lesson by Rāma and that consequently he had chosen to end his life in the peaceful pursuit of a hermit.

But while living in the Pañcavaṭī, Rāma discovered to his dismay that all his repressive measures had no effect on the cruel way of these man-eating inhabitants of the forest. When Khara with all his followers came against him, he killed them all to a man and thought that the Rākṣasas, as a class, had been annihilated. This action of Rāma roused hostilities with a more formidable enemy ; to bring them to adopt the Aryan way and give up their cruel pursuits, he had tried several means but found them stubborn and unyielding. They fought to a man and died in defending their customs. The class as a whole disappeared ; but their dharma persisted. That also must be destroyed and supplanted by a better system of social laws. How can that be achieved in a society wherein all men except the women had died ? It was only by treating the dead body of their leader according to the proposed system that the whole organisation of the Rākṣasas could be altered. Rāma, therefore, desired that Rāvaṇa's body should be given the Aryan cremation. To understand it rightly, it is necessary to quote here briefly the rites sanctioned by the Vedas. In the burning ground the corpse was dressed for cremation (Av., xviii, 2, 57). The face of the corpse was covered with the omentum of a cow (Av., xviii, 2, 58). Then his staff, if the deceased was a Brāhmana, or his bow, if a Kṣatriya, was taken from him (Av., xviii, 2, 59-60). A goat was then slaughtered and its parts laid on those of the corpse. Fire was applied to the funeral pile (*The Age of the Mantras*).

This was the method of cremation amongst the Aryans. Rāvaṇa's funeral was not completely in accordance with it. His body was adorned with jewels and cloths, and parched rice was strewed over it. A goat (medhya paśu) was killed. Along with the body on the pyre were placed all his articles (vi, 114, 115).

pādayoḥ śakaṭaṃ prāpur ūvoś colūkhalaṃ tadā//

dārupātrāṇi sarvāṇi araṇiṃ cottarāraṇiṃ/

dattvā tu musalaṃ cānyaṃ yathāsthānaṃ vicakramuḥ//

Araṇi and uttarāraṇi are the pieces of wood with which fire is kindled. *Musalaṃ cānyaṃ* shows that a staff different from his own was placed in his hand, for his own had been smashed to pieces by the arrows of Rāma (vi, 114, 83); then

116 tatra medhyaṃ paśuṃ hatvā.....

117 gandhair mālyair alaṅkṛtya Rāvaṇaṃ dīnamānasaḥ//

lājair avakiranti.....

Rāvaṇa's body was decorated with sandal paste and flowers, and fried grain was scattered over his body. Then a goat was killed, and his body was covered with its skin.

From this it appears how far the Aryan ritual was followed. Except the burning, there is no other resemblance. Rāma's aim also was only that much. For he told Vibhīṣaṇa to cremate the body (VI, 114, 100):

kriyatām asya saṃskāro mamāpy eṣa yathā tava,

and to accomplish this, Vibhīṣaṇa brought all the required articles.

In 102 saṃskāreṇānūrūpeṇa yojayāmāsa Rāvaṇam Anūrūpeṇa shows that the cremation suitable to a Rākṣasa was given. It does not appear to be reasonable to say that such funeral as was prescribed by the Vedas for the body of a person that had performed yajñas had been given to Rāvaṇa's body. Those that bury the dead place the articles of the dead person in the grave. That was the custom of burial in ancient times and the graves of the ancient peoples show that. But when they learned to burn the dead, the custom of placing all the things that belonged to him by the side of the body was not given up. In the case of Rāvaṇa also, his staff, his utensils and ornaments are said to have been placed on the pyre. Thus Rāvaṇa's funeral was a compromise between the Aryan cremation and the Rākṣasa burial.

The Kuis do not remove the ornaments from the corpse. It is covered with a cloth. Along with it, they carry to the cremation ground the clothes, plates, drinking vessels and ornaments belonging to the dead person. The weapons belonging to him, if there be any, are also taken to the place. In Gumsoor Maliahs the Kuis tie a goat to the foot of the corpse. But in other places, the Kuis take a goat to the cremation ground along with the corpse and leave it there. The Kui funerals are said to extend over a period of twelve days; but Rāvaṇa's funeral is said to have been done in one day. Perhaps, the twelve days' ceremonies are only an elaboration of what is said to have been prescribed for one day in ancient times.

The Kuis have several superstitions, the chief of which is that a man can change himself into the form of a tiger and prey upon men or cattle. "They believe that they can transform themselves into tigers or snakes, half the soul leaving the body and becoming changed into one of these animals, either to kill an enemy, or satisfy hunger,

by having a good feed on cattle in the jungle" (Thurston's Castes and Tribes, vol. III, p. 405).

The superstition was extant amongst the Rākṣasas also. Mārīca told Rāvaṇa that he had transformed himself into a beast of prey and drank the blood of the inhabitants of the Daṇḍaka forest (III, 39).

- 2 rākṣasābhyām ahaṃ dvābhyām anirviṇṇas tathākṛtaḥ/
sahito mṛgarūpābhyāṃ praviṣṭo daṇḍakāvane//
- 3 dīptajihvo mahākāyas tikṣṇaśṛṅgo mahābalaḥ/
vyacaran daṇḍakāraṇyaṃ māṃsabhakṣo mahāmṛgaḥ//
- 4 agnihotreṣu tirthreṣu caityavr̥kṣeṣu Rāvaṇa/
atyantaghero vyacarams tāpasāms tān pradharṣayan//
- 5 nihatya daṇḍakāraṇye tāpasān dharmacāriṇaḥ/
6 ṛṣimāṃsāṣanaḥ krūras trāsayan vanagocarān/

The superstitious belief of the people has been thus recorded by the poet.

The crow is treated as a friend by the Kuis. To kill it is as sinful as killing a friend. In the Rāmāyaṇa, the crow is made to behave in a way inimical to Rāma who was an enemy of the Rākṣasas (v, 38, 12-36). But the poet had taken greater advantage of the enmity the Kuis show to the Brahmani Kite (Garuḍa). They readily kill it ; Vālmīki made Garuḍa and his sons behave in a friendly way to Rāma and his allies.

When Rāma came to reside in the Pañcavaṭī, Jaṭāyu, the younger son of Garuḍa, offered his friendship and promised to keep guard over Sītā when the two brothers went to hunt in the forest. When Rāvaṇa was carrying away Sītā, Jaṭāyu obstructed him and fought with him to release her. The hatred with which the Kuis treat this class of birds is illustrated in the merciless slaughter of Jaṭāyu by Rāvaṇa. The first informant of Sītā's abduction was this Jaṭāyu whose life lingered till he saw the two princes.

Sampāti, the elder son of Garuḍa, showed the place where Sītā had been hidden to the Vānaras while they were despairing of finding her.

Lastly, Garuḍa himself came to the succour of Rāma and his brother when they both lay tied down in the serpent bond. The serpents all fled away when they heard the rustling of his wings ; he went to Rāma and relieved him of all pain by fanning him with his wings. Thus the birds, ill-treated by the tribesmen, are made to behave courteously to Rāma and his followers.

The last ethnological evidence is furnished by the council of elders whom Rāvaṇa invited when his stronghold had been besieged by Rāma and his Vānara host. This council is the prototype of the tribal assemblies held on similar occasions in Kui villages. Matrimonial disputes, cases of abduction, illicit intercourse, quarrels regarding the guardianship of the children that have lost their fathers are some of the questions that are brought before these councils, and under the tree in the centre of the village are flat stones arranged for the elders to sit on, while the headman occupies the one at the trunk of the tree. Whenever the council is to be held, previous intimation is given to all. The place of meeting and the tree are held very sacred by the villagers.

Thus from the statements contained in the epic about the characteristics of the Rākṣasa clan, it is shown how those customs are followed now by the Kui tribes now living in the jungles of the Eastern Ghats. That the Rākṣasas spoke a language allied to the Dravidian tongues and had followed some customs which have now almost disappeared can be known by the study of some words which are found used to designate the Rākṣasas and their lord. In the next paper I propose to take up the study of those words.

G. RAMADAS

Indian Society as pictured in the *Mṛcchakatika*¹

Modern Indian life is more a struggle for existence than an object of enjoyment, but the life as depicted in the *Mṛcchakatika* appears to be one more of play and pleasure than of pity and pain. The intention of the writer of this paper is to make an attempt to illustrate this and to show that the material civilisation of the ancient Indians developed as much as the spiritual side of its counter-

¹ A lecture delivered at a meeting of the Sanskrit and Bengali Association of the Dacca University held on October 3, 1928.