

**The
Ramayana
in
Historical Perspective**

H. D. SANKALIA

M

TO DHIRAJLAL V. SANKALIA
and
REV. H. HERAS, S.J.

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First published 1982 by
MACMILLAN INDIA LIMITED
Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras

Associated companies throughout the world

SBN 33390 390 0

Published by S. G. Wasani for Macmillan India Limited,
4 Community Centre, Naraina Industrial Area, Phase I,
New Delhi 110 028

Printed at Granth Bharati Press, West Rohtasnagar,
Shahdara, Delhi 110032

0 100 200 300 400
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Preface

It is now exactly fifty years ago that I wrote my first research paper. This was on *Kundamala* and the *Uttararamacharita*. In 1929 I was still an undergraduate at St. Xavier's College, Bombay. We had then completed a study of the *Kundamala*, one of the five dramas prescribed for the Sanskrit Honours course.

Earlier we had studied *Uttararamacharita*. Somehow to my young mind—I was entering my twentieth year then—it appeared that the latter was based on the former, not only because of the similarity in their themes, but because several expressions and entire verses in *Uttararamacharita* seemed to be improvements on similar or identical expressions and versions in the *Kundamala*. This feeling so much weighed upon me that one night I got up from my bed and wrote out the entire paper.

It is this very feeling that gripped me in 1952 when I read Sir Mortimer Wheeler's memorable words and later the description of Gajalakshmi in *Sundarakanda*: 'Its (Charsada's) early history thus runs parallel to that of Taxila (Bhir Mound) in the Punjab, and the assertion of the *Ramayana* that Taxila and Pushkalavati were found at the same time accords with the archaeological evidence.'

In 1929 I had no idea that I would ever follow up this subject. But during the next ten years, it became clear to me that there was a great need for what I call 'applied archaeology'. Our ancient literature should not be used for dating monuments and sites, but it should be just the reverse. For clearly, we have much better evidence to date our monuments than to date our literature.

And now after forty years, with several stratigraphical excavations, we are in a much better position to undertake such a study. The present work is perhaps the last major study of this

¹ Sir Mortimer Wheeler, 'Summary', *Charsada*, Oxford University Press, 1962.

nature that I have undertaken and completed. But I would urge the need for many more. One of my pupils, Gauri Lad has completed a general study of 'Archaeology and the *Mahabharata*'; the *Mahabharata* being much bigger, and devoted to diverse topics, cannot be handled by one scholar alone. Many more studies like that of Gauri Lad and that of S.N. Chapekar who wrote on the 'Iconographical Elements in the *Mahabharata*', as far back as in 1958, would be necessary.

The illustrations in this book have been chosen only to illustrate and prove my point of view. Hence I have included the sculptures that draw their inspiration from Rome, the Gajalakshmi as well as the *ihamriga*, the signet-ring motif, the stadium with its wrestlers, the revelry scenes from the excavations at Nagarjunakonda, and lastly the weapons and musical instruments, which are relevant to the period from Gandhara as well as from Andhra Pradesh. These have been reproduced from the recent studies by G.N. Pant² and K. Krishna Murthy³ respectively. At a glance these will show how little progress has been made in the designing of musical instruments and weapons during the last 2000 years, and how very striking are the differences between the indigenous and Indo-Roman types.

The section on the location of Lanka not only gives all the important identifications made so far, but an attempt has been made to examine some of these identifications. A further investigation in eastern Madhya Pradesh was planned during February-March 1977. Unfortunately this had to be postponed because of the Lok Sabha elections and it has not been possible to revive this project. Hence, for the present, a specially prepared map gives all the three likely identifications of Lanka in Madhya Pradesh. I have drawn attention to the fact that as far back as the ninth century, the area around Sonpur was known as 'western Lanka'. This tradition is likely to have deep roots in the past. A first-hand study of the area should be rewarding. Particularly interesting is the site known as 'Asurgad'. It is in the middle of a river, and if its antiquity can be traced back by at least 2000 years, it may be possible to identify it as the site of the original Lanka.

The present study was facilitated when the first General Editor

² G.N. Pant, *Indian Archaeology*, Delhi, 1978.

³ K. Krishna Murthy, *Nagarjunakonda—A Cultural Study*, Delhi, 1977.

of the Critical Edition of the *Ramayana*, the late Professor G.H. Bhatt, presented me with a copy of the *Balakanda* and allowed me to consult the concordance of the *Uttarakanda* at the Oriental Institute, Baroda. The same courtesy was extended to me by his successors, U.P. Shah and A.N. Jani. I take this opportunity to thank all of them.

I am also thankful to my colleagues in the Department of Linguistics, Deccan College, Pune: A.M. Ghatge, M.A. Mehendale and N.M. Sen. Dr Sen took a keen interest in my studies, and was kind enough to go through all that I wrote, and was ever ready to help me trace the literary antiquity of various words used in the *Ramayana*.

All the technical staff of the Department of Archaeology, Deccan College and Poona University, P.R. Kulkarni, S.K. Kulkarni, V.K. Nagpure, G.C. Padwal, Y.S. Rasar, R.B. Sapre and R.S. Warke have at one time or another prepared illustrations for my study. But amongst them, Vasant Nagpure and Prabhakar Kulkarni deserve special mention for their help and keen interest in my work. Two of my former pupils, Rajendra Prasad, of Guntur University, and R. Nagaswamy, Director of Archaeology, Tamil Nadu, have kindly supplied the details about the Rama temples in their respective states. Makkhan Lal gave me considerable assistance in preparing the bibliography and Vasanti Joshi in recording verses in Devanagari.

I would also like to mention the role played by the staff of the Deccan College Library. Besides lending me the books required, they helped me by checking references. I take this opportunity to thank V.B. Belsare, Kusum Mehendale and the members of the library staff. I am grateful to Shobhana Mujumdar for typing the manuscript, and to Shobhana Gokhale for drawing my attention to the Ceylon epigraphs published by Parnavitana.

I am particularly thankful to B.B. Lal, Director of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, for supplying me information regarding his recent excavation of *Ramayana* sites in Uttar Pradesh.

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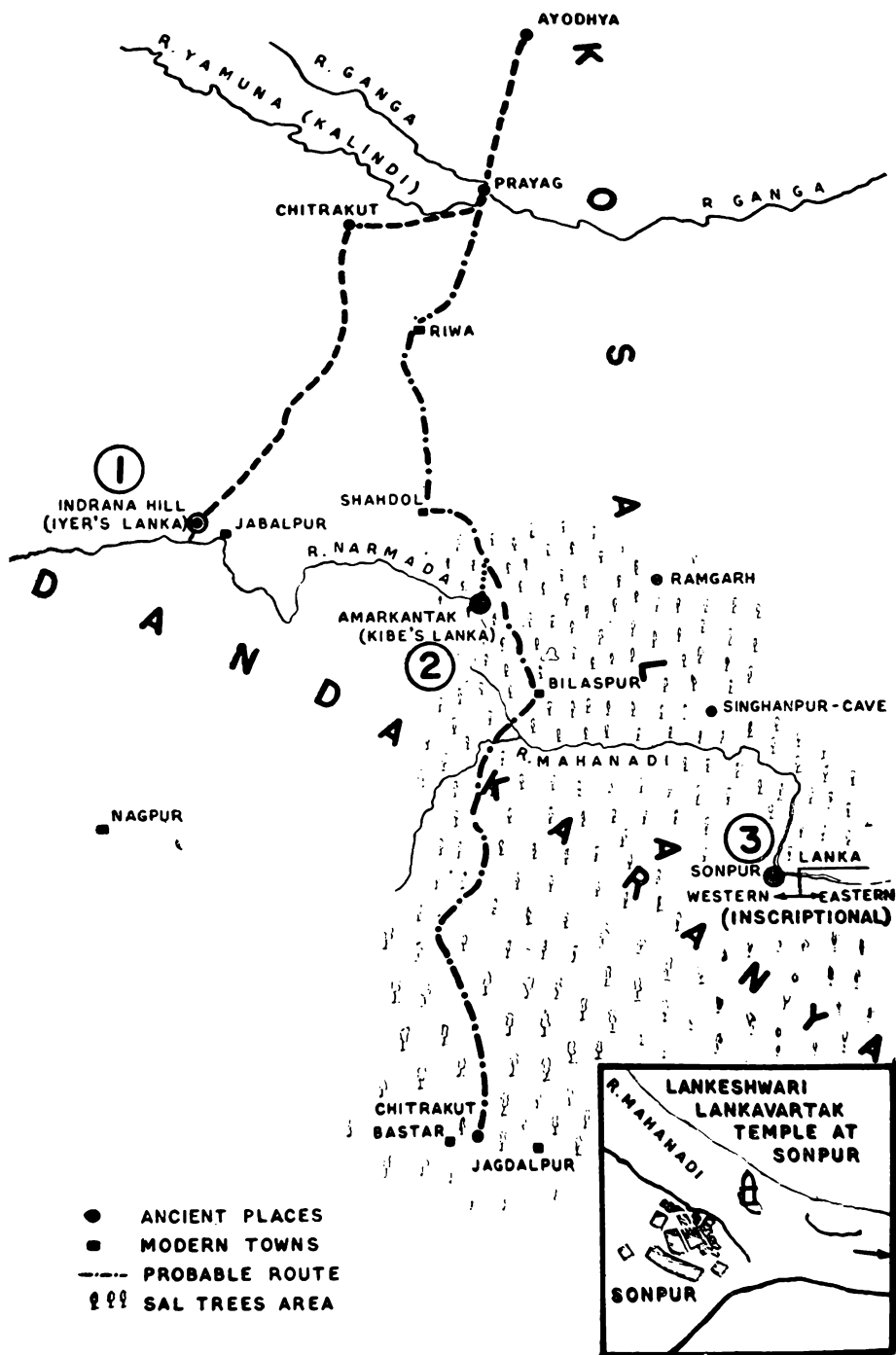
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Abbreviations

<i>ABORI</i>	<i>Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune</i>
<i>AI</i>	<i>Ancient India, Bulletin of the Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi</i>
<i>BDCRI</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Deccan College Postgraduate and Research Institute, Pune</i>
<i>CII</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum</i>
<i>Epi. Ind.</i>	<i>Epigraphica Indica, Ootacamund, Karnataka</i>
<i>IA</i>	<i>Indian Antiquary, Bombay</i>
<i>IC</i>	<i>Indian Culture, Calcutta</i>
<i>IHQ</i>	<i>Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta</i>
<i>JA</i>	<i>Journal Asiatique, Paris</i>
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of American Oriental Society, New York, New Haven/Baltimore</i>
<i>JBBRAS</i>	<i>Journal of Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society, Bombay</i>
<i>JBORS</i>	<i>Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Patna</i>
<i>JGIS</i>	<i>Journal of Greater India Society, Calcutta</i>
<i>JIHM</i>	<i>Journal of Indian History, Madras</i>
<i>JMS</i>	<i>Journal of the Mythic Society, Bangalore</i>
<i>JDL</i>	<i>Journal of Department of Letters, Calcutta</i>
<i>JOR</i>	<i>Journal of Oriental Research, Madras</i>
<i>JRAS</i>	<i>Journal of Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, London</i>
<i>JRASCB</i>	<i>Journal of Asiatic Society, Ceylon Branch, Sri Lanka</i>
<i>JSVOI</i>	<i>Journal of Sri Venkateswara Oriental Institute, Tirupati</i>
<i>MAI</i>	<i>Memoirs of Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi</i>
<i>NAI</i>	<i>New Indian Antiquary, Bombay</i>
<i>PAPS</i>	<i>Proceedings of American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia</i>
<i>PIHC</i>	<i>Proceedings of Indian History Congress</i>
<i>PO</i>	<i>Poona Orientalist, Pune</i>
<i>QJMS</i>	<i>Quarterly Journal of Mythic Society, Bangalore</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländisch Gesellschaft, Leipzig</i>

THREE PROBABLE LANKAS IN M.P.



1. Introduction

For nearly two thousand years the *Ramayana* has been regarded as one of India's twin epics. Unlike the *Mahabharata* it is regarded both as a poem—*adikavya*—as well as a *purana*, an *itihasa*, the source of all knowledge and wisdom, to be resorted to not only in times of need, but to be recited daily. Thus, in one way or another, the *Ramayana* has had a more pervading, all-embracing appeal. Its single theme, the characters of Rama and Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman are popularly remembered by all whereas the *Mahabharata* with its varied themes and characters could attract a comparatively limited number of readers and listeners.

As a result of this universal appeal, Rama came to be regarded as a god, as an *amsa* (semi-incarnation) of *Vishnu* and believed to have ruled on this earth thousands of years ago—according to one view some hundred thousands of years ago—and *ramarajya* came to be cherished as the ideal state.

A definite fillip to this age-old belief was given by the poet-saint Tulsidas. It is due to him that more than fifty per cent of the names of persons—both male and female—in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have Rama as the first part of the name; there are numerous temples of Rama and Hanuman and Varanasi is known today for its magnificent temples of Rama and 'Shankat Mochan' (The Reliever of Difficulties, i.e., Hanuman). And what Tulsidas did for the popularization of the *Ramayana* in the north, Ramdas achieved in Maharashtra. It is due to this revival of the Rama-Hanuman cult that in Pune and in several villages and towns of Maharashtra every street-corner enshrines the figure of Maruti and has at least one temple of Rama and Sita.

To this long legacy, Gandhi added one more. He made it a practice to recite *Rama nama* at least twice a day in his *prarthanas*.

This, in brief, is the traditional view towards Rama and the *Ramayana*. In this view there was at no time an attempt to

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question the historicity of Rama or his times or the various incidents in the *Ramayana* or to regard Rama as less than a god.

The historical and critical interpretation of Indian classics is generally believed to have begun over a hundred years ago, when European scholars started taking interest in Indian literature, particularly in Sanskrit literature. Weber was probably the first scholar to write a critique of the *Ramayana*,¹ after the publication of Gorresio's edition of the epic.²

However, before we proceed, credit must be given to Bhavabhuti who, as early as the seventh century, in his *Uttararamacharita*, questioned through Lava and Kusha and then through Prithivi the actions of Rama—his killing of Vali, and his not accepting the purity or chastity of Sita, even though she had come out of the fire unscathed immediately after the defeat of Ravana. Earlier still, Kalidasa's Sita called him (Rama) a raja (a mere king) when she was exiled and poor Lakshmana had to carry out the delicate duty of leaving her in the forest.

The verses are worth quoting. Prithivi says :

न प्रमाणीकृतः पाणिर्बाल्ये बालेन पीडितः ।

नाहं न जनको नाग्निर्नानुवृत्तिर्न सन्ततिः ॥

(उत्तररामचरितं, vii.5)

Sita says :

वाच्यस्त्वया मद्वचनात्स राजा बल्लौ विशुद्धामपि यत्मुसिम् ।

मां लोकवादश्रवणादहासीः श्रुतस्य किं तत्सदृशं कुलस्य ॥

(रघुवंश, xiv.61)

These instances prove that Rama's acts did not go unchallenged as early as fifteen hundred years ago, when Brahminism reigned supreme, and Hinduism was still not corrupted.

A review of the studies shows that they may be classified into four or five groups. These groups represent the two extremes as well as the various stages in between. There is even a view that the *Ramayana* is a mythological poem—the product of a poet's

¹ A. Weber, *The Ramayana*, trans. from the German by D.C. Boyd, Bombay, 1873.

² Guspare Gorresio, *Valmiki's Ramayana*, Parigi, 1843-67 (in six volumes).

fancy, and thus falls beyond the pale of historical and critical interpretation.

This last point merits brief consideration since on its proper understanding will rest the superstructure of the present study. Granted the *Ramayana* is primarily a poem, still a poet anywhere—in India or elsewhere—must belong to a certain time and environment. Even Dante's *Divine Comedy* represents the religio-philosophical views of an Italian author who lived in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. A work like *The Divine Comedy* could not have been written earlier. Even a Sanjaya would see and describe only things pertaining to his times, however distant these may be. Once this point of view is accepted—and it must be as it is axiomatic—only then are we justified in studying a poem or a drama critically from the historical, archaeological, literary, psychological and other points of view.

We should enjoy the *Ramayana* as a poem, as we should continue to admire Rama and Sita, Lakshmana and Hanuman for the ideal of kingly and filial duties, of feminine chastity and fidelity and of selfless service that they embody. For centuries these virtues have struck the deepest chords in the human heart, and every one of these characters has been idolized and worshipped as a divine incarnation. Nevertheless, such an attitude should not rule out a multifaceted, critical study, either of the *Ramayana*, or for that matter of any of our religious or philosophical books. On the contrary, critical studies like the one I have attempted here will enable us to appreciate better the part played by each character.

Barring the poetic treatment of the Rama-theme and the casual criticism by Bhasa,³ Kalidasa, Dinnaga or Dhiranaga and Bhavabhuti, the rest of the critical studies belong to the last hundred years or so. These, as mentioned earlier, fall into several groups.

Before citing the modern, critical views about the age and growth of the *Ramayana*, a brief reference must be made to the

³ Two plays, *Pratima* and *Abhishekanataka*, are among the thirteen plays attributed to Bhasa. The latter play seems to be quite late, as in it Rama and Sita are identified respectively with four-armed Vishnu and Lakshmi. See T. Ganapati Sastri, *Abhishekanataka*, Trivandrum Sanskrit Series, No. 26, Trivandrum, 1913; and A.D. Pusalkar, *Bhasa—A Study*, Delhi, 1968.

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traditional views. These are not unanimous and vary widely in their estimates of the period when Rama lived.

On the one hand there is the view that Rama lived in the *treta yuga*, nearly a million years ago, and on the other Rama is viewed to have lived in 8, 67 or 102 B.C.⁴

But this is contradicted by the *Ramayana* itself. In the *Uttarakanda*,⁵ we are led to assume that Rama belonged to the *dvapar yuga*. According to one calculation this would be just before 3100 B.C., that is, more than 5000 years ago. Interestingly enough, this is roughly supported by a Sri Lankan tradition.⁶ These traditions were accepted, uncritically we think, by a few European and Indian scholars like William Jones,⁷ Count Bjornstjerna and Ramaswami Sastri.⁸ And the result is that both the illiterate and the well-educated always think that Rama and Krishna lived thousands of years ago and very often demand visible proof of their existence from archaeologists. One of the aims of this study is to collect these 'visible proofs' and discuss their bearing on the date of Rama and the *Ramayana*.

Majumdar⁹ and Gorresio both agree in placing the *Ramayana* between the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries B.C.¹⁰

By a correlation of the Puranic data regarding the various ruling dynasties, Pusalkar reconstructed the chronology of dynasties and kings who ruled in India before the Mahabharata war. His Ramachandra period was assigned a duration of 400 years (2350-1950 B.C.), about 500 years before the Bharata war.¹¹

Sita Nath Pradhan¹², relying more on the Vedic data and also

⁴ K.S. Ramaswami Sastri, *Studies in the Ramayana*, Baroda, 1944, p. 23; and Ananda Guruge, *The Society of the Ramayana*, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), 1960, p. 35.

⁵ Even in the Critical Edition of *The Valmiki-Ramayana*, ed. U.P. Shah, (Baroda, 1972-75), Vol. VII, *Uttarakanda*, sarga xvii, verses 17-31, we are told that Sita was Vedavati of the *krita*, that is *satya yuga*, and was now born in the *treta yuga*.

⁶ Guruge, op. cit., p. 35.

⁷ V.S. Dalal, *A History of India*, Bombay, 1914, p. 196.

⁸ Sastri, op. cit., p. 24.

⁹ A.K. Majumdar, *The Hindu History*, Dacca, 1920, p. 60.

¹⁰ Gorresio, op. cit. Both these references are after Guruge, op. cit., p. 36, as the originals are not available to me.

¹¹ R.C. Majumdar, A.D. Pusalkar and A.K. Majumdar ed., *Vedic Age*, 4th ed., Bombay, 1965, p. 292.

¹² Sita Nath Pradhan, *Chronology of Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1927, p. 175.

on the astronomical calculations of one Archdeacon Pratt, is bold enough to say that the Battle of Lanka was fought in about 1450 B.C. and that when he killed Ravana, Rama was 42 years of age. This would also be the approximate date according to Pargiter.¹³

Hemachandra Raychaudhari¹⁴ after a very careful appraisal of the Vedic, Puranic and the Jataka evidence, arrived at a rather non-committal view, as far as the time and the historicity of Rama were concerned. He tells us that though the *Gopatha Brahmana* mentions Kosala, and though the *Rigveda* knows of river Sarayu and mentions an Aryan inhabitant on its banks, called Chitraratha, no city—not even Ayodhya—is said to have existed in Kosala. Many of the kings of the Ikshvaku dynasty, for instance, Mandhatri, Yuvanasva, Purukutsa, Harischandra and his son Bhagiratha, Rituparna and Ambarisa are mentioned in the Vedic literature. Surprisingly Dasaratha and Rama, though occurring in the *Rigveda*, are in no way connected either with the Ikshvaku dynasty or with Kosala, whereas Rama is the name given to a man in the *Rigveda*. Guruge further thought that this bore no semblance to the hero of the story.¹⁵ More interesting and significant is the reference to Sita.¹⁶ Though used in the sense of a 'furrow', the word is personified and addressed as 'auspicious Sita, come thou near, we venerate and worship thee'. Thus, some connection might be traced with Sita's origins in the *Ramayana*. Lakshmana is said to be a very old proper name.¹⁷

The *Dasaratha Jataka* regards Dasaratha and Rama as kings of Varanasi, and says that Sita had no connection with Janaka.¹⁸

Valmiki and the *Puranas* seem to have woven out a story and genealogies respectively from such floating, uncrystallized material. At most, these enable us to discover the deep-rooted seeds of the *Ramayana*. While studies like those described here do not take into consideration the question of the historicity of Rama

¹³ F.E. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Genealogies and Chronology*, Delhi, 1910, p. 52.

¹⁴ Hemachandra Raychaudhari, *Political History of Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1950, pp. 78 and 101.

¹⁵ A.A. Macdonell and A.B. Keith, *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, London, 1912, Vol. II, p. 222, citing *Rigveda*, X. xciii. 14.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 451; *Rigveda*, IV. lvii. 6-7.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 230, *Rigveda*, V. xxxiii. 10.

¹⁸ V. Fausball ed., *The Jataka*, London, 1887, Vol. IV, pp. 123-30.

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but accept the entire *Ramayana* as historical, scholars like Pargiter, Pradhan and Pusalkar, have devoted their attention to a comparative study of the portions dealing with the dynasties in the eighteen *Puranas* and the two epics. According to these scholars, Rama might have lived as early as in 2800 B.C. or 1400 B.C., or between these centuries. If so, the main incidents might have been enacted during this time. The question is, 'Did we have at that time, say, in about 2500 B.C. or even 1500 B.C. an urban civilization in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and in the distant Sri Lanka if we for a moment identify Ravana's Lanka with this island ?'

Such questions have to be posed every time we say that the times of Rama and Krishna are 5500 years old, or that the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* describe the life of this age.

We should mention that Guruge is perhaps the only scholar to warn us repeatedly that we should not regard the entire *Ramayana* as very old. It is futile to lay stress on these traditions because they are to a great extent prompted by religious, if not national, enthusiasm to ascribe great antiquity to national treasures. Paying due attention to the fact that the *Ramayana*, as we have it today, consists of both earlier and later materials whose dates of composition range from the fourth century B.C. to the second century A.D., we should exercise the greatest caution in employing the material for the reconstruction of the history of India.¹⁹ Further, we should regard every statement contained in the epic as a representation of the society of ancient India during the time it was composed and not the time it is supposed to represent.²⁰

There are two ways by which we can believe or accept the things or events which are said to have happened in the past. First, the events described should have been seen personally by the narrator or heard from persons who have seen these events. These are contemporary or near-contemporary accounts which are regarded as most trustworthy and form the backbone of true history. Of course how far the narrator has truthfully described the events must be examined by what is called 'internal evidence'.

Our two epics and the *Puranas* are sometimes called *itihasa*—

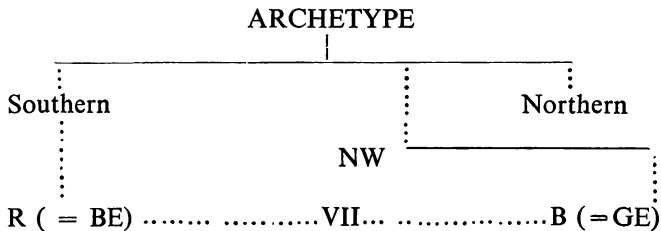
¹⁹ Guruge, op. cit., p. 41.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 45.

accounts which actually describe what happened. *It + ha + asa*. They might have been such, but Indian tradition unequivocally asserts that the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas* were gathered together by Vyasa from the existing body of floating literature.

The *Ramayana*, on the other hand, is the work of a single author named Valmiki. And Valmiki is believed to have been a contemporary of Rama and described as such in the *Balakanda*. But unlike Vyasa he is invariably known as the First Poet. And as a poet he could have taken the liberty of interpreting the life of Rama as poets would normally do.

Several scholars in the past and now the editors of the Critical Edition have come to the conclusion that the *Ramayana*, though originally the work of a single author, has, in the course of centuries, grown like a banyan tree. They now recognize two main branches of this tree of the northern and southern recensions. Each branch has several sub-branches as shown in the given chart.



Various studies, historical, cultural and linguistic, show that the *Ramayana* as represented by these two main versions should be dated between 400 B.C. and A.D. 200.

These studies have further pointed out the line of development of the story. This development falls into the following stages:

First, there were the ballads and cycles of ballads centring round Ayodhya, Kiskindha and Lanka. Secondly, they were put together by the poet Valmiki in an epic of 12,000 verses. Thirdly, the poem which was originally divided into *adhyayas* came to be divided into six *kandas* with tags (additions) of variant metres. Fourthly, the original text was revised further and geographical and supernatural interpolations appeared. Finally, the legendary portion of the *Balakanda* and the whole of the *Uttarakanda* were probably added under Brahminical influence and a new list of contents along with a mythical account of the

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epic's origin through divine inspiration experienced by Valmiki was included. After this, only minor additions were made, which were rejected by later commentators.

This development naturally took a long time. This has been variously calculated, since Jacobi²¹ first wrote in the last century, by western and Indian scholars. The calculations were made on historical, geographical, religious, philosophical, linguistic and even on astronomical grounds.

Jacobi thought that since the *Ramayana* does not mention Pataliputra, known to be founded in about 380 B.C. or refer to Asoka's empire, it must have its kernel, *kandas* II-VI, composed in or about the sixth century B.C. This seems to be reasonable, because in the *Balakanda* (I. xxxi. 4-5), a pointed reference is made to the foundation of Kausambi, Kanyakubja and Kampilya. Again, Mithila and Vaisali are spoken of as twin cities under separate rulers, whereas by Buddha's time, they had merged to form the famous city of Vaisali.

Again, Ayodhya has been repeatedly mentioned as the capital of Kosala, whereas in the time of King Prasenajit, a contemporary of Buddha, the capital was transferred to Sravasti. In the time of Patanjali, we know that the capital was Saketa and not Ayodhya.

Jacobi's other argument that at the time of the *Ramayana*'s first composition, there were small, petty principalities and not large provinces as described in the *Mahabharata*—is equally significant as we shall see while discussing the archaeological background.

Earlier, Monier-Williams²² had also pointed out that the earliest portion of the *Ramayana* appeared to be pre-Buddhist and composed in about the fifth century B.C., because it had no reference to places in western and southern India.

Jacobi²³ also drew attention to the non-existence of the custom of *sati*, while C.V. Vaidya²⁴ stressed on the performance of sacrifices and the non-existence of idol-worship, and the fact that

²¹ Jacobi's views were first summarized by G.A. Grierson in 'Indian Epic Poetry', *IA*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 52-6 from the German original H. Jacobi, *Das Ramayana*, Bonn, 1891.

²² Monier-Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, pp. 316-19.

²³ Jacobi, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

²⁴ C.V. Vaidya, *The Riddle of the Ramayana*, Bombay, 1906, pp. 21-2.

the Kshatriyas competed with the Brahmins in learning and the Brahmins with the Kshatriyas in archery.

Jacobi's argument that the earliest *Ramayana* was pre-Prakritic was opposed by both Keith²⁵ and Grierson.²⁶ However, on the ground that the *kavya* literature seems to have developed out of the style of the *Ramayana*, Keith²⁷ was prepared to place the kernel of the *Ramayana* not later than 300 B.C.²⁸ Winternitz²⁹ agreed with this opinion, while Macdonell³⁰ would date it before at 500 B.C. The nature of the philosophical data, according to Radhakrishnan,³¹ would indicate this date, though he maintained that changes were introduced till the second century A.D.

Thus the consensus of old scholars of Sanskrit literature and Indology were inclined to date the first stage of the *Ramayana*, viz., that of the ballads and cycles of ballads, before 500 B.C., or to the Age of the Brahmanas, though the exact beginning of this stage was difficult to ascertain.

P.V. Kane³² went so far as to say that the core of the *Ramayana* might have been as old as 300 B.C. at the most. And that the *Ramayana* in its present form could not have been later than A.D. 200.³³

Naturally, the second stage, when Valmiki composed the kernel of the epic falls between 500 B.C. and 300 B.C. The main reason for arriving at this date is that Panini in his *Ashtadhyayi*³⁴ does not refer to the names in the *Ramayana* except perhaps to Kosala and Kausalya in IV. i. 15 and IV. i. 171 and Kekaya, Kaikeyi and Bharata in VII. iii. 2.

This inference, based so far on literary evidence, is important

²⁵ Keith, *JRAS*, 1915, p. 322.

²⁶ Grierson, *IA*, Vol. XXIII, p. 55.

²⁷ Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

²⁸ Grierson, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

²⁹ M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vols. I and II, Calcutta, p. 517.

³⁰ A.A. Macdonell, *Sanskrit Literature*, London, 1917, p. 309.

³¹ Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, London, 1962, Vol. I, p. 272.

³² P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Poona, 1958, Vol. I, p. 396.

³³ Guruge, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

³⁴ V.S. Agarwala, *India as Known to Panini*, Varanasi, 1963. However, S.M. Katre, *Dictionary of Panini*, Poona, 1969, Part III, p. 605 translates the word Sita as furrow, track, or line of ploughshare. Further, Kosala is accepted as the name of a country, Poona, 1968, Part I, p. 190. But Kausalya is not; Kekaya and Kaikeya are similarly accepted but not Kaikeyi.

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and we shall see how it is supported by archaeology.

The third stage has been postulated by Ananda Guruge and is said to fall between 300 B.C. and A.D. 100. This is the time when the style of the *mahakavya* is said to have influenced the epic. It is also suggested that the poetic ornaments and imagery of the *Ramayana* are certainly earlier than those found in the Girnar inscription of Rudradaman (c. A.D. 150), and also those used by Asvaghosha in his *Buddhacharita* and *Saundaranandakavya*. The metres of the verses added at the end can also be regarded as older than the ones used by Asvaghosha.³⁵

In the next stage the archetype is believed to have split into main recensions according to Bulcke,³⁶ or various recensions according to other scholars. This period was hitherto thought to be the first or second century A.D. because there are references to Sakas, Palhavas and the Pandyan capital. Guruge³⁷ says that this process could not be more accurately dated, because of the absence of external corroborative evidence. In fact, we have excellent socio-archaeological evidence in the *Ayodhyakanda*, as well as in the *Aranyakanda* and *Sundarakanda*, to date this stage.

This is also the stage when portions showing increased knowledge of the world unknown before the Christian era, didactic portions more akin to the later Smriti literature, and sections dealing with supernatural elements, entered the *Ramayana* as they did the *Puranas* and the *Mahabharata*.

In fact, this was the last stage when numerous legends or references to Rama as an incarnation of Vishnu got into the *Balakanda* and *Uttarakanda*. But as we shall show, this must have been either anticipated by the poet when the first composition took place, or the entire *Ramayana* is a later product. This is because the story, as we have it today, depends upon the fact that Rama was a divine personage, or a hero of unusual strength, so that he and Lakshmana, single-handed, could defeat the Rakshasas.

Even in these very late additions we can distinguish between

³⁵ Asvaghosha, *Buddhacharita*, Parts I and II, Sanskrit with Hindi translation and *Saundaranandakavya* both published by Sanskrit Bhavan, Kathautiya, District Purniya, Bihar, 1948.

³⁶ Bulcke, 'The Three Recensions of the Ramayana', *JOR*, Vol. XVII, 1937-38, pp. 1-32; Vol. XVIII, p. 27.

³⁷ Guruge, op. cit., p. 39.

the Saiva and the Vaishnava—admittedly sectarian—influences. Both these can be archaeologically dated by the temples dedicated to Rama and the occurrences of names based on Rama in inscriptions.

The very last interpolation, according to Guruge,³⁸ was in the seventh century A.D., when the list of contents (*anukramanika*) and the story about the origin of the *sloka* metre were added. It is at this time that the *Ramayana* had travelled to southeast Asia, where at Tra-Kien in Champa, King Prakasadharma (c. A.D. 653-679) dedicated an image and temple to Valmiki.³⁹

यस्य शोकात् समुत्पन्नम्
श्लोकं ब्रह्माभिपूजति ॥

Thus though the latest date according to Guruge of the composition of the present *Ramayana* would be about the seventh century A.D., he thinks that this date might have to be pushed back because :

1. The *Mahabharata* knows of the present *Ramayana* with its later additions called *upakhyanas*.⁴⁰
2. This *Mahabharata* with all its interpolations, about 100,000 verses, was known to the Khoh-copperplate inscription of Sarvanatha, dated A.D. 533.⁴¹
3. Further, Kalidasa also seems to have known this *Ramayana* including the *Uttarakanda*.
4. So also Vimalasuri, the author of the *Paumachariya*, dated 530 years after Mahavira's *nirvana*, that is, in the middle of the first century A.D.⁴²

Thus the *Ramayana* as we have it today, seems to depict the socio-political conditions of India between the fourth century B.C. and the second century A.D.⁴³

But though this might be generally true, certain portions were incorporated later, and such interpolations could have gone on up to the tenth century A.D.

³⁸ Guruge, op. cit., p. 40.

³⁹ K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, 'Ramayana in Greater India', *Journal of Oriental Research (JOR)*, Madras, 1932, Vol. VI, p. 117.

⁴⁰ Winternitz, op. cit., pp. 489-94.

⁴¹ Fleet, 'Gupta Inscriptions', *CII*, Vol. III, p. 137.

⁴² Winternitz, op. cit., pp. 489-94; and Guruge, op. cit., p. 43.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

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However, a very important conclusion⁴⁴ of Bulcke must be noted. After carrying out a careful comparison of the subject matter between the three recensions, he finds that 'the narrative itself has been changed little',⁴⁵ though there is a wide divergence between the recensions as far as the number of *slokas*, say of the *Sundarakanda* is concerned.

The conclusion is significant for our studies for it helps us to be definite in saying something positive about the antiquity of the main story of the *Ramayana*. It also enables us to determine the time of the interpolations of the various details about the date of birth of the princes or the description of Rama's divine prowess in *Aranyakanda*, the description of Ravana's palace and the *Pushpakavimana* and the destruction of the *Chaityaprasada*. The former is indeed present in all the recensions, though it was omitted in the Bengali recension by Gorresio; the latter is absent both in the Bengali and the north-western recension.

The *Balakanda* is thus accepted to be a part of the second and third stage of the *Ramayana*, while the *Uttarakanda*, particularly those passages referring to Rama as an incarnation of Vishnu, are believed to belong to the fourth stage of the *Ramayana*.

All these questions have to be examined once again, and from the point of view of the higher criticism as well as textual criticism. Briefly, we should distinguish verses which portray Rama using divine weapons—the various *astras* to be used with the help of *mantras*, and Rama as an incarnation of Vishnu.

Such a study of the *Ramayana* does not seem to have been done. It must be said at the outset that when Valmiki thought of composing the first *Ramayana*, he must have had before him the extraordinary, almost supernatural feats of Rama (and Lakshmana) first in their adolescence, then while in exile, at Chitrakuta, and later in Dandakaranya and in Lanka which was certainly in eastern Madhya Pradesh, as shown in the sequel. They would truly belong to the Heroic Age. Later came the supernatural interpretation which culminated in Rama being regarded as an incarnation of Vishnu.

What is then the likely date or time of the composition of the

⁴⁴ C. Bulcke, 'The Three Recensions of the Valmiki Ramayana', *JOR*, Vol. XVII, 1937-38, pp 1-32.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Ramayana as we have it today ? How far is the Critical Edition different from it ?

An answer to the latter question will be attempted at the end of this study. At the moment, we may cite what is regarded as an extreme view, that of P.C. Sen Gupta.⁴⁶ He thinks that the *Ramayana* poet, or its final redactor whoever he be, lived in A.D. 438 about hundred years before Kalidasa. This exact date is calculated on the basis of certain astronomical data. Sen Gupta also thinks that Rama is later than Buddha because there are references in the *Ramayana* to Buddha, Tathagata, Bhikshu, Sramana and Chaityaprasada.

We shall have an occasion to refer to these views in detail, and see how far they can be supported archaeologically. Just now we would only say that while these data would justify one in placing the present *Ramayana* in a later period, it would be more proper to say that these reflect two stages of development, one that took place in about the third to the first century B.C. and the other that belonged to a later date.

When the *Mahabharata* acquired a written form in about the fourth or fifth century A.D., there was scope for further development through interpolations. I shall illustrate later how these interpolations or revisions of the story or a part of the story take place before our eyes, when we are listening to a *harikirtana*.

Linguistic analyses by Michelson,⁴⁷ Sen⁴⁸ and others show that the southern versions contained more archaic forms of grammar, which were not to be found in the grammar of Panini, who lived in about the fifth century B.C. These archaic forms were absent in the northern recension. It was found that in the Bengali recension these were regularly replaced by more elegant expressions. This attempt at polishing or 'sanskritizing' the *Ramayana* has been attributed to the fact that in the north, Sanskrit was a living language, so that the readers and listeners as well as the writers and *sutas* and *kathakaras* took the liberty

⁴⁶ P.C. Sen Gupta, *Journal of the Department of Letters*, Calcutta, Vol. XIX, p. 35.

⁴⁷ T. Michelson, 'Linguistic Archaisms of the *Ramayana*', *JAOS*, Vol. XXV, 1904, pp. 89 ff.

⁴⁸ N.M. Sen, 'Un-Paninian Sandhi in *Ramayana*', *JRAS* (Bengal), Letters, Vol. XVI, 1950, pp. 13-39.

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of modifying the old, archaic language in which the original poem was composed by Valmiki. The south, on the other hand, being far away from this development and from the scene of the story, preserved the original language to a much greater extent. This is demonstrated by the remarkable conformity of the language and contents—the number of *sargas* and *slokas*—in all the three principal south Indian versions. This phenomenon of change or alteration near the source and fossilization on the periphery is not peculiar to the *Ramayana*. It has been a normal feature observed in the study of several old languages and cultures in anthropological studies all over the world.

The Critical Edition of the *Ramayana*, therefore, leans heavily on the southern recension. However, enough care has been taken while going through the readings from the various manuscripts of each *kanda*, to reject the reading from the southern recension when the latter 'presents the text in a form which does not suit the context, or which evidently appears to be absurd'.⁴⁹ In all instances the text of the northern recension has been preferred. Further, no attempt has been made to amend or select a reading. A purely eclectic approach has been scrupulously avoided, the only test being the purity and antiquity of the reading. Hence, it has been claimed that the Critical Edition 'is not a blind copy of the southern recension'.⁵⁰ The latter has added, no doubt, but has not tampered with the original text. These interpolations can be detected with the help of the northern recension.⁵¹

The important thing from our point of view is that the earliest manuscript on which the Critical Edition text is based is from Nepal, written in the Nepali script, and dated v.s. 1076, that is A.D. 1020. The other manuscripts all belong to later periods, the latest being of A.D. 1848.

Thus there is reason to assume that the Nepali version might contain certain events which took place or could have happened as late as in the tenth century A.D. Likewise the southern recension as represented by the Telugu, Tamil and Malayalam versions, though fairly uniform, is not earlier than the sixteenth

⁴⁹ G.H. Bhatt, *The Valmiki-Ramayana*, Critical Edition, Vol. I, *Balakanda*, Baroda, 1960, introduction, p. xxxiv.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. xxvii-ix.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. xxiv.

century, the earliest known being of A.D. 1512.

The southern recension, though now almost universally regarded as archaic, as first pointed out by Jacobi nearly a century ago, and proved to be so by the collection of several hundreds of manuscripts and by detailed linguistic studies by N.M. Sen, could still portray things and events which took place in the fifteenth century A.D.

How do we detect these additions, interpolations or revised versions of the events ?

Since the last century, various attempts have been made. The German scholars, Weber and Jacobi, applied historical and linguistic methods, which were then pursued by other scholars, Indian and foreign.

I have already referred to the preparation of the Critical Edition. This is a culmination of the line of investigation first suggested by Weber and Jacobi and later taken up by Ruben and Bulcke.⁵² Indeed, the preparation of the Critical Edition of an old work with several versions is the foundation of all other studies. Once this is ready, the superstructure may be built on it. This may take various forms : (i) linguistic, (ii) historical, (iii) archaeological, (iv) geographical and ethnical, (v) philosophical and religious, and (vi) floral and faunal.

All this may involve what is called 'higher criticism'. By a comparative study one may question :

- (i) the existence or propriety of the use of certain grammatical forms or other forms of expression ;
- (ii) the existence of certain kings, persons or peoples ;
- (iii) the existence of certain places and their location ;
- (iv) the existence of objects and things—cities, monuments, images, ornaments and their raw material at the time referred to in the text ;
- (v) the existence of certain ideas, concepts and practices ;
- (vi) the presence of certain trees, flowers and fruits, in the regions mentioned ; and the presence of certain birds and animals at the time under discussion.

No doubt, every one of these six approaches has been tried in

⁵² Ruben, *Studien zur Text-gechichte des Ramayana*, Stuttgart, 1936, and 'Vir Liebestragodien des *Ramayana*' *Z.D.M.G.*, 1950; Bulcke, *op. cit.*

the past, but these attempts were hampered by the absence of a Critical Edition. In fact, Winternitz wanted not one Critical Edition but critical editions of the three main recensions. Nevertheless researches carried out so far in these fields have enabled scholars to fix the probable time range of the composition of the present *Ramayana* and its various stages of development.

In these researches archaeology has been used off and on, but only sparingly. The reasons for this apparent neglect were several. In the first place, the full scope of archaeology was not known. This is becoming clear only of late.

Secondly, until some twenty years ago, few sites were excavated in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and in south India where the events described in the *Ramayana* took place, so that we had little reliable data about the antiquity of the cities and objects referred to in the *Ramayana*.

Thirdly, with the advent of stratigraphical excavations and the emergence of newer methods of dating, we are now in a position to date certain important episodes in the *Ramayana* more precisely.

However, the archaeological approach has its limitations. Archaeology deals with objects existing on the surface of the earth in the form of monuments and with objects obtained from excavations. However successful these excavations may be, the objects recovered from an excavation normally represent a very small—sometimes insignificant—fraction of the culture or civilization to which they belong. In India an archaeologist rarely discovers an intact tomb like the one of Tutankhamen, which, when cleared, indexed and photographed, revealed at once all the aspects of Egyptian civilization in the fifteenth-fourteenth centuries B.C.

Much less can one utilize the evidence of the surface monuments. Very few monuments exist today after centuries of destruction and devastation by floods and earthquakes and by repeated foreign invasions and numerous internal wars.

Archaeology, thus compared to written work, can tell us very little of the past. Still it has its value, particularly in India, where we have few contemporary historical records, where written records are comparatively recent and where both ideas and objects have the tendency to survive for centuries. Moreover, with the help of modern archaeology we can sometimes pinpoint

an object referred to in our literature—in the *Ramayana* for instance—and thus use it for dating purposes.

This and other archaeological evidence, when used in association with other data, might also help us in ascertaining how and why certain objects, incidents and episodes have been described or crept into the *Ramayana* or in any other similar work under study. When we look at the *Ramayana* in this way, we go outside the sphere of mere textual criticism or factual study and enter the realm of higher criticism. Archaeology is conditioned by what we know so far. In a sense, this knowledge is provisional, for one must always provide for the unexpected. Witness, for instance, the sudden emergence some 45 years ago of the Indus Valley Civilization which with one dig of the spade took India's history back by about three thousand years, and now, for the last ten years, this 'prehistory' is known to have had a still earlier beginning.

How an interpolation or a revision of the old story takes place adding a detail here and a detail there of the times in which the *suta* or the modern *kathakara* or *kirtanakara* lives may now be told. For this illustrates my present approach.

Some twenty years ago I was listening to the *harikirtana* by a famous and versatile scholar from Surat. He was not only a great Sanskrit scholar, but a first-rate story-teller with a melodious voice which could enthral the audience. He related the exploits of Sri Krishna from the *Bhagavata Purana*. The first episode pertained to Krishna's childhood among the cowherds of Gokula, near Mathura. Krishna was very mischievous. Once he and his playmates bolted all the doors of the houses of the cowherds. As a result, the cowherds had no milk in the morning, because no milkman from outside could come in.

The Shastriji did not further add that as a result of this prank, the cowherds could not have any tea in the morning because then this 'on the spot interpolation' would have been apparent to anybody in the audience. But the question still remains, 'Did the Gopalas (cowherds) in the times of Krishna, some 5000 years ago, receive milk from outside, as a citizen in Bombay, Surat or Pune or anywhere in the modern world does today?' The word 'Gopala' means that every resident in Gokula had his own herd of cows and no one was expected to get milk from outside.

Such an incident does not occur in the *Bhagavata*, but the

kirtanakara, in order to make his story more telling and more appealing to the modern times, concocted something which we all experience some time or the other. But its inclusion in the *katha* is anachronistic, and absolutely inappropriate to the times to which the story belongs.

The second interpolation took place while describing the *Rukmini-svayamvara*. This pertains to Krishna's kidnapping Rukmini with her consent when she was to be married to King Sisupala. Here the Shastriji wanted to impress the audience with the magnificence of Bhismaka's court and the way the guests were received. He told us that among several other things, the brother and sisters of Rukmini applied costly *attars* on the assembled guests.

We do not know how old the custom is of besmearing the guests with perfumes. I think it is not older than two or three hundred years, and probably first came into existence when the *attar* of rose was discovered by Nurjahan. The Shastriji once again betrayed himself by introducing a modern, contemporary practice into the old story.

These are very insignificant and trifling details, and pass unnoticed among the listeners. But the modern archaeologist thrives on details. He must be a detective *par excellence*. Applied archaeology knows no limits, and may be reasonably applied to the *Ramayana*.

After completing the archaeological appraisal of the epic, I thought of viewing the various concepts—ethical, metaphysical, political, as well as social and religious—in a historical perspective. This required a change in the approach. Instead of viewing the *Ramayana* as a whole, I began to study each *kanda* again, as a separate unit.

This led to interesting results. I was able to discern variation in detail about the administrative concepts and machinery, the social customs, religious ceremonies as well as details of certain events in the story.

Not only important but probably shocking to many a reader will be my view that the *Sundarakanda*, *Yuddhakanda*, and a part of the *Kiskindhakanda* are late additions to the original story, if we accept the view that the ring incident has materially altered the denouement of the story, as the discovery of the ring did in the *Shakuntala* of Kalidasa.

These additions could have taken place earliest in the first or second century A.D. It was at this time also, or slightly later, that Nagarjunakonda or a similar Indo-Roman city was probably used as a model by the poet for the description of Lanka.

Thus, in more ways than one, all the familiar and unfamiliar scenes and stories have been presented here in a new, highly critical perspective.

2. Balakanda

Unlike the other *kandas* of the *Ramayana*, the *Balakanda* has long since been regarded as a later addition. There is also considerable textual evidence to show that efforts have been made in every century to raise Valmiki and Rama to a higher position than Narada who advises Valmiki to compose the *Ramayana*.¹ The late Professor Bhatt, who edited the *Balakanda*, cited instances of how efforts were made right from the sixth century to polish the original (or we should say the earlier) text and how a comparative study of the northern and southern manuscripts shows the interpolations increase between A.D. 1020 and A.D. 1400.² Still, in this desire to augment the earlier text, there is remarkable uniformity in all the southern versions, and even in some Devanagari versions. This is because, in the south, Sanskrit was not a spoken language whereas the various northern versions show a greater degree of variance, because of the many additions, often at the time of the recitation of the epic as *harikatha*.

Even in the *Balakanda*, as represented by the text of the Critical Edition, one can easily see the interpolations in the opening *sargas*. Still the editor was obliged to retain these interpolated verses and was obliged to relegate all questions to the sphere of higher criticism.³

Hence, with the help of higher criticism or hypercriticism, we should now approach our twin epics, and other mythological works, like the *Puranas*, not only in Sanskrit, but also in Prakrit and Ardhamagadhi—in fact, wherever critical editions exist of old classical works.

Turning to the *Balakanda*, the most important problem that should be tackled is (granted that the *kanda* has been added later, perhaps along with or after the *Uttarakanda*), whether we

¹ G.H. Bhatt, *The Valmiki-Ramayana*, Critical Edition, Vol. I, *Balakanda*, Baroda, 1960, p. xxxiii.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., p. xxxiv.

can say when and how often the interpolations could have taken place. Incidentally, can we, by a very critical, historical and archaeological analysis, stratify the contents, incidents and accounts of persons and places, and say something about the antiquity of the story as a whole ? Indeed, with the help of very interesting evidence, we can throw light on these and other problems by the application of the method of higher criticism. We would review these under the following headings :

1. Persons.
2. Places.
3. Events.
4. Ideas, customs, ethics, philosophical views.

In the account of persons, the most interesting from the point of view of higher criticism is the attempt to project Rama and his brothers as manifestations (partial *avataras*) of Vishnu (I. xv ; xvii.6-10). This done, all the Vanaras had to be similarly elevated, so that they too were regarded as gods (*devatas*) (I. xvi).

While doing this, astrological details, particularly the *lagna* under which Rama and his brothers were born, were added (I. xvii.5). Though these details, particularly about Rama, have been deleted (and relegated to the footnote on page 122), they help in ascertaining when the *Balakanda* as a whole, or these details in particular, were interpolated. For, as pointed out elsewhere, the Indian or Hindu *panchanga* had grown up gradually, and it was only in the fourth century that the name of the day of the week was included. This was also the time, when the *avatara* theory was developed and Rama was elevated to the position of a god.

What is further interesting from our point of view is that while trying to justify or account for what had happened, the bard forgot that he had himself pictured a Golden Age during Dasaratha's rule. If this was actually so, why did this calamity happen, why was there no child born to any of his wives ? In fact, these questions also face us in the *Ayodhyakanda*. However, very few of our ancient or modern commentators have taken note of this glaring discrepancy.

One remarkable exception to this general acceptance of Rama's divine role is Bhavabhuti who, as far back as in the seventh century, questions Tataka's killing by Rama through Lava and Kusha. And, as if in defence of such criticism, we find in the *Balakanda* the specious argument that Rama was merciful in

killing the woman, instead of disfiguring her by cutting off her nose and ear, with a view to upholding the proper functioning of the fourfold system of the society (*chaturvarnya*). This is said to be the duty of the administrator. Hence a woman doing *adharma* could be killed (I. xxiv. 16).

The *janapadas* of Malada and Karusa (I. xxiii. 16), mentioned only once in the *Balakanda*, were situated on the southern bank of the Sarayu (I. xxiii. 10). The region was thickly forested. Here lived Maricha, son of Tataka. Both were originally Yakshas, but were later turned into Rakshasas (I. xxiii. 23-5).

It is interesting to read about Maricha telling Ravana how he ran to Lanka when hit by Rama's arrows (III. xxxvi. 1-17). In the *Balakanda*, we are told that when Rama struck him with the *manavastra*, Maricha was thrown full hundred *yojanas* away, into a sea (I. xxix. 15). Now it stands to reason that this Lanka and the *sagara*—whether it was a sea or a pond—could not be the Sri Lanka in the Indian Ocean. In fact, Rama's subsequent extermination of the Rakshasas in Dandakaranya was a continuation of what he did under instructions from Visvamitra in the forest of Malada, that is southern Uttar Pradesh or Bihar. From the point of view of the Rakshasas, it was but a continuation of a struggle against the Aryans with their new weapon—the bow and arrow.

With regard to the other names, the mention of Aristanemi (I. xxxvii. 4), while describing the family of Sagara, may be considered important, because one Aristanemi was a contemporary of Krishna at Mathura, and later became the twenty-third Jaina Tirthankara. If this Aristanemi is the same person as the one mentioned here, it would approximately indicate the time, about the tenth or ninth century B.C.

With regard to the long genealogy of the Ikshvaku and Janaka families, it would appear that both sides have tried to spin out their pedigree to prove their high and noble status (I. lxix. 30 ; lxx. 13). It will not serve any purpose to analyse these historically. This has been done several times by Pargiter and others.

Turning to some of the places mentioned in the *Balakanda*, from the historical point of view it is interesting to find the origin of Kausambi, Mahodaya, Girivraja, Vaisali, Mithila and Kampilya (I. xxxi. 4-5) narrated by Visvamitra to Rama on their way to Mithila (I. xxxi. 4-5 ; xxxii. 19 ; xlv. 11, 12, 20). All these places,

except Mahodaya, have been archaeologically examined during the last thirty years. Though these excavations were of a preliminary nature, and cannot claim finality, still none of these sites seem to be older than 1500 to 1000 B.C.⁴ Hence, from the point of view of the age or the antiquity of the *Ramayana*, we can say that it cannot under any circumstances be very old, as claimed or understood by popular belief.

This is also indicated by the excavations at Ayodhya. These support the conclusions reached in this chapter.

Further, when we compare this analysis and the resultant conclusions with what we are told in the *Balakanda*, other interesting and important conclusions follow. The *Balakanda* tells us that Ayodhya was ten *yojanas* long and twelve *yojanas* wide (I. v. 7), with well-built roads, and a central royal road (*rajamarga*). These roads were watered (I. v. 8) and there were *prasadas*, *vimanas* and parks. Some of these palaces were multi-storeyed (*attalaka*). Besides the grove of sala trees all around, the city was protected by an encircling wall and a moat. The city was also stocked with rice (I. v. 17) and juicy sugarcane. One could see in the city bazaar horses from Balhika and camels from Kambuja (I. vi. 20). The last two pieces of information are very interesting and more likely to be true.

These as well as the reference to Sakas, Palhavas, Yavanas and Yavana-*misrita* (Indo-Greeks) are important for dating the *Balakanda* (I. liii. 18 ; liv. 3). For it is only after the second Greek invasion, when the distant Pataliputra, as well as Madhyamika, near Chitor in Rajasthan were besieged, that the Indians became really familiar with the Greeks or the Indo-Greeks. Then came the Sakas and Kushanas. Later still the Abhiras and Hunas and still later the Gurjaras. Nowhere in the *Ramayana* do we find mention of the Abhiras and the Hunas. Thus, the *Balakanda*, or a portion of it at least, can be dated earlier than the second century A.D. but later than the second Indo-Greek invasion.

These are also important for tracing the history and development of weapons and warfare, for we are told how Visvamitra fought first with certain conventional weapons. Then Vasishtha's Sakas,

⁴ Nowhere have cultures earlier than the painted grey ware been traced, though at Kausambi a few shards of painted pottery have been found and these are claimed to be of the Malwa ware. Indeed more proof is necessary. See Vibha Tripathi, *The Painted Grey Ware*, Delhi, 1976.

Palhavas and Yavanas fought with *dirghasi* (broad-edged sword?) and *pattisa*. Against these Visvamitra released some *astras* (I.liii.23). However, when these did not help, he is said to have retired for some time, and learnt the entire *dhanurveda* from Mahadeva. This, incidentally, is the only reference to Siva as Mahadeva (I. liv. 15-16).

Thus armed with additional *astras*, Visvamitra re-entered the fray (I.liv.19-28 ; lv.1-24). But all his knowledge—secret and otherwise—was of no avail against the *brahmastra* of Vasishtha (I.lii.23). This particular feature is also helpful in suggesting that Brahminism was asserting its superiority over the Kshatriyas. The Karna incident in the *Santiparva* of the *Mahabharata* illustrates this trend, and it becomes a normal feature of all the *Puranas*.

While these few details indicate the recency of the *Balakanda*, the three references to *aksauhini* (I. xix.3 ; l. 21 ; liii.12), the mention of only *ksauma*, as the item of dress material (I.lxxvi.16), and no reference to *kauseya* (silk) given to all the daughters of Janaka, including Sita, at the time of marriage, are suggestive of certain earlier features, but not earlier than the fourth century B.C.

Visvamitra, while describing the origin of Vaisali, refers to the *samudramanthana*, and incidentally tells us about the origin of Varuni. She is described as the daughter of Varuna. As soon as she appeared, she was seized by the gods (I.xliv.21-3). Thus we get to know indirectly the true origin of this drink. It had nothing to do with the Vedic Varuna as held by some Sanskrit scholars. But it came out of the sea. This was indeed true. It was imported in huge, two-handled, earthen pots known as amphora from the Mediterranean, around the first century B.C.

As far as the few geographical names of places and countries go, there are fairly accurate and detailed accounts of eastern India beginning with the mention of Ayodhya on the banks of the Sarayu in the Kosala *janapada* (I.v.6), some idea of the country south of the Sarayu (I.xxi.9), references to the *janapadas* of Malada and Karusa (I.xxiii.16), Mithila and Vaisali, and the kings of Anga, Kasi, Mithila, Kekaya, Sindhu, Sauvira and Saurashtra (I.xii.22). But only a general reference to the kings of the south in the same verse shows that even when the *Balakanda* was composed the author did not have (or care to give) a detailed idea of south India. Such a conclusion will have an important bearing on the location of Lanka. As is well known to

scholars Lanka was placed in the Indian Ocean and sought to be identified with Sri Lanka on the evidence of instructions given by Sugriva in *Kiskindhakanda*. But the interpolated nature of these few *sargas* is very obvious and can be established by an overall study of the *Ramayana*.

There are references in the *Ramayana* to Vishnu, and once to Mahadeva, to Kartikeya, Skanda, Sadanana, and Kumarasambhava (I. xxxvi.25-31). Of these, Skanda occurs in the later Vedic literature, though he is not mentioned in the *Vedic Index*. Both Kartikeya and Sadanana are represented in early coins of the Yaudheyas, while the expression *Kumarasambhava* recalls the famous work of Kalidasa.

The story of the birth of Kumara (I. xxvi. 36) again helps in dating this *kanda* after the fourth century A.D. For, when we examine the entire history of Skanda—his first appearance in the later Vedic period, his worship as an independent deity in the Mauryan, and the early Gupta period as testified by temples dedicated to Skanda-Kartikeya and his gradual decline or absorption in the Saiva pantheon—it is clear when the episode in the *Balakanda* took place as well as in the more famous work of Kalidasa's *Kumarasambhava* when this process had started. This *sarga* was specifically composed, it would appear, to explain all the names of Skanda-Kumara, Kartikeya and Sadanana.

The *Ramayana* refers to copper (*tamra*), iron (*karsnayasa*), silver (*trapu*) and lead (*sisaka*) (I.xxxvi.19). Not only were these four metals known but Siva's bow was reportedly kept in a chest (*manjusa*) of iron or copper (*ayasa*) (I.lxvi.4-5). This chest was apparently very large, more than six feet in length and it moved on eight wheels (*ashtachakra*).

We should accept this, but we cannot place the manufacture of such a large metal box at a very early period. It could well be made in the early centuries of the Christian era, and certainly by the fourth or fifth century A.D. when the Iron Pillar, now in Delhi, was made.

With regard to the administration of Ayodhya, we are told that Dasaratha was assisted by a council of eight ministers (*amatyas*) (I.vii.1). Besides, Vasishtha and Vamadeva and others were well-versed in various *sastras*. The treasury and the army too were well looked after, and nobody was unhappy in the kingdom (I.vii.16).

It is interesting to note that this seems to be a development of what we are told in the *Ayodhyakanda*. For in this *kanda*, we find that Dasaratha first took the advice of his people (*parisad*) and then asked Vasishtha to prepare for the royal coronation (II.ii.1). Should we infer from such variation in details that the existence of the council of ministers is indeed a very late feature in the development of ancient Indian administration? The small section in Kautilya's *Arthasastra* (Ch. VIII)⁵ anticipates a fairly long existence of the practice of having a council of ministers as advisers to the king. So whatever be the exact date of the *Arthasastra*, we can safely assume the existence of this practice by the fourth century B.C.

There are a few verses which extol the virtues of *kshama* (forgiveness). It was said to be not only an ornament for men as well as women, but the possession of this virtue was as good as *dana*, the giving of gifts, *dharma*, *yajna*, performance of sacrifices, *satya*, speaking the truth, and the embodiment of *dharma* (I.xxxii.7-9).

When we see these particular virtues in a historical perspective, they seem to have had a gradual development. In fact, earlier, man or society must have placed a higher value on *dana*, *yajana* and *satya*. But then we find that in both the epics—*Gita* in the *Mahabharata*, and these verses in the *Ramayana*—forgiveness is equated with all these virtues and regarded as *dharma* itself. Therefore, Rama in the *Ramayana* is portrayed as an embodiment of forgiveness. He not only forgives his mother Kaikeyi and his father, but prevents Lakshmana from even referring to Kaikeyi's conduct in the *Aranyakanda*. And later, as noted in the *Yuddhakanda*, he orders Vibhisana to perform the *samskara* of Ravana, saying that all enmity has to be forgotten after the enemy's death.

⁵ R. Shamasastri, *Kautilya's Arthasastra*, Mysore, 1929, pp. 14-16.

3. Ayodhyakanda

It is commonly believed, not only by laymen but even by scholars well-versed in Sanskrit and ancient history, that whatever we are told about the places, persons and incidents in the epics is very old. Though, for the last hundred years and more, scholars like Jacobi and Weber have repeatedly said, and recently Guruge has pointed out, that the social and political conditions depicted in the *Ramayana*—in all its versions—were not very old, and certainly, not older than the second century A.D.

However, these scholars did not take the archaeological evidence into consideration, nor did they discuss the various aspects in a truly historical perspective. Admittedly, both these sources though available in India are sketchy and often cannot be verified.

Confining our attention first to Ayodhya, the scene of the main story, and assuming that the Rama story goes back to 1500-1000 B.C. as is believed by some scholars, the questions that we should pose are :

1. Could the description of Ayodhya as occurring in the *Ayodhyakanda* be of a city of this period ?
2. Could a king of Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh, think of marrying a daughter of Kekaya, in the far-off Punjab or the North West Frontier Province ?
3. What were the means of communication between the two countries, as known from the *Ramayana* and other sources ?
4. What light can be thrown on these important questions by stray references to social, political, religious and other events ?

Although the questions raised pertain to the domain of higher criticism yet they do not question the competence of the various editors of the Critical Edition. Even so, there will be occasions in our study when we shall disagree with the editors and point out that the text or passage in the constituted text which has been relegated to the position of a footnote should be retained as it is, as the passage was interpolated in the original *Ramayana* at

a certain period in Indian history and reflects the social or political conditions of that period.

Ayodhya in the *Ramayana* is often described as a well developed city. Its various aspects—the layout, the arterial roads, the parks and ponds, the various kinds of mansions, some several storeys high, a moat and the fortification around the city—are discussed in some detail, though very often these descriptions are highly conventional and fanciful. However, we shall try to see what truth these descriptions are likely to contain.

Though Ayodhya later became the capital of Kosala, it does not feature in early Vedic literature. In fact, there is no mention of it in the *Vedic Index*. However, according to Law,¹ Ayodhya is described as a village in *Aitareya Brahmana*, VII. 3 and *Sankhyanasrautasutra*, XV. 17-25.

These references, if true, fittingly place Ayodhya almost at the end of the Vedic period. Even otherwise Kosala was one of the last regions to be colonized by the Aryans as a part of their eastward migration. It is in this *sutra* (*Sankhyanasrautasutra*, XVI.20-5) that a connection with Kasi and Videha is first mentioned.

As we have mentioned before, according to Law, Ayodhya was a village during the late Vedic times. Apparently this reference is not correct, because it is based on a footnote by Pargiter,² where he discusses the legend of Sunahsepa. The sources mentioned above give this story, but do not mention Ayodhya by name. Hence, it does not find a place in the *Vedic Index*, nor in the indices to the works mentioned earlier. These works only say that Rohita, son of Harischandra, returned to the village. This has been interpreted as Ayodhya, because it is understood or implied that Harischandra, who belonged to the Ikshvaku family, ruled at Ayodhya.

According to the *Puranas*, as interpreted by Pargiter,³ Ayodhya was one of the earliest capitals of Ikshvaku, one of the first descendants of Manu. Later Ayodhya is mentioned with varying details in the *Ramayana* and other *Puranas*.

Not only is Ayodhya claimed by the Hindus to be a sacred place, being the birthplace of Rama, but according to Law,⁴ it

¹ B.C. Law, *Historical Geography of Ancient India*, Paris, 1954, p. 67.

² F.E. Pargiter, *JRAS*, 1917, p. 52.

³ F.E. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, Delhi, 1972, p. 143.

⁴ B.C. Law, *Some Jaina Canonical Sutras*, Bombay, 1949, p. 174.

was also the birthplace of the first (*Adinatha*) and the fourth Tirthankaras of the Jains. References in late Jaina literature have little to say either about the growth or the antiquity of the site. The first reference in early Buddhist literature places Ayodhya as well as Saketa in Buddha's time.⁵

Epigraphically, the most important evidence is an inscription from Ayodhya itself which tells us that it was included in the kingdom of Senapati Pushyamitra, who had performed two *asvamedhas* during his reign⁶ and who is specifically called 'the lord of Kosala'.

Fa-hien and other Chinese pilgrims note that Ayodhya was once the seat of Buddhism, though Fa-hien also tells us that Deva temples were in the majority.⁷

There is no doubt that Ayodhya is an ancient site. The real problem is how ancient is the site? Does it go back to about 2000 B.C. or is it only as old as the seventh century B.C., when it was first mentioned in the later Vedic text? On this crucial point, only excavations can throw some light. On my first visit, in 1967, I had picked up a shard of the painted grey ware. This, according to Professor B.B. Lal who dug at Ayodhya during March and April 1975, probably belongs to the later phase of this culture. Hence, provisionally he is inclined to place the occupation of Ayodhya later than that of Hastinapur and other sites in Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh.

Whether this is the justification for Lal to place Rama later than Krishna, is a moot point.⁸ For in the first place, neither he nor anybody else has conclusively proved that the little data from Hastinapur, even if it belongs to the so-called *Mahabharata* sites, establishes the existence of Krishna at this time. Hence such parallelisms should be left out for the moment. The sooner we examine the town plan of Ayodhya, and its earliest foundation, the better will it be for all those interested in these problems.

For our immediate purpose, we can derive little knowledge from Ayodhya as an archaeological site.

⁵ B.C. Law, *Geography of Early Buddhism*, London, 1932, p. 5.

⁶ *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. XX, p. 57.

⁷ Legge, *Travels of Fa-hien*, Oxford, 1886, pp. 54-5; Watters, *Yuan Chwang*, Vol. I, London, 1904, pp. 354-9.

⁸ However, if this is conclusively established by future excavations, then what Kane had said about the *Ramayana*, that even its core was later than that of the *Mahabharata*, should be regarded as prophetic.

A critical study of the *Ramayana* implies that we examine in detail the possibility of the rulers of Ayodhya being able to maintain marital and other relations with distant rulers in India. While such relations with the kings of Kosala in the south and Videha in the east were quite natural and expected, how far was it possible and why was it necessary for a king of Ayodhya to marry a daughter of a king of Kekaya, which was situated in the extreme northwest of India ?

That this relationship was there cannot be doubted. For Kaikeyi, a daughter of the king of Kekaya, plays a crucial role in the story. In fact, but for her, things would have gone on normally and smoothly and Rama would have been crowned. However, to understand why this alliance took place, we have to examine the political and topographical features of northern India. Such a study cannot be undertaken without adequate data. Unfortunately the *Ramayana* itself provides very little. Whatever we know has to be gleaned from three or four chapters (*sargas*) in the *Ayodhyakanda*. These are : (i) *Ayodhyakanda* II. 1-9 ; (ii) *Ayodhyakanda* II. lxii. 1-15 ; and (iii) *Ayodhyakanda* II. 63-5.

Of these the account in (i) is the least useful. Here we are simply told that Yudhajit, a son of the king of Kekaya and Bharata's maternal uncle, had come to fetch Bharata, the son of Kaikeyi, and Bharata took Shatrughna with him. No further details—the name of the place where they were to go, or the route and the mode of transport—are mentioned. Though this may be all right from the point of view of the poet, we miss an opportunity to have some historical facts.

In (ii) we have the following information :

1. The name of Bharata's maternal uncle's residence—Rajagriha (II. lxii. 2-6).
2. Names of gifts—*kauseyas* and ornaments (II. lxii. 2-8), sent by Dasaratha to Kekaya.
3. The route the messengers followed in going to Girivraja and an idea of the route taken by Bharata to reach Ayodhya.

The messengers from Ayodhya proceeded by the west of Aparatala, crossed the Malini, and went towards the north of Pralamva; they crossed the Ganga at Hastinapura and arriving at Panchala, proceeded westwards through

Kurujangala where they saw lakes full of lotuses. Then they darted past the Saradanda, where they worshipped the tree called *satyapayachana* on its western bank, and entered the city of Kalinga ; then they passed Teyobibhabana and arrived at Abhikala, and then crossed the Ikshumati belonging to the Ikshvakus.

Here they saw Brahmins well-versed in the *Vedas*. Then they went through Vahilika and proceeded towards Mount Sudama. Here they saw the footprints of Vishnu and proceeding a long way along the Vipasa and the Salmali, they reached Girivraja.⁹

BHARATA'S RETURN JOURNEY

Bharata while returning from Girivraja first went in an easterly direction, saw the river Sudama and crossed it. He then crossed the broad Hradini and the Satadru. Further on he crossed a river at Eladhana and came to Aparapavata and then crossed the Sila and the Akarvati, and arrived at Agneya and Salyakarsanam. He then saw the Silvavaha and purified himself, and then passed the Mahasailas, and entered the forest of Caitrahatha. Then he came upon the confluence of the Ganga and the Sarasvati and entered the forest of Varunda lying to the north of Viramatsya. Next he crossed the Kulinga and the Hradini surrounded by hills. He stopped by the Yamuna where they all bathed. Then riding in an excellent *ratha* he entered a big forest, and proceeded to Ansudhana, crossed the Ganga at Pragvata, and went over to the Kutikoshtika and then proceeded to Dharmavarddhana and then going south he came to Jambuprastha. He then came to the beautiful village of Varutha. Here he stayed a while, and then proceeded eastwards where he passed by the priyaka trees. Then sojourning at Sarvatirtha, he crossed the northward flowing river, and arrived at Hastiprithaka. Then at Lohitya, he crossed the Kapivati, at Ekasala the Sthanumati, and at Vinaya the Gomati. He

⁹ M.N. Dutt, *The Ramayana*, Calcutta, 1891, 'Ayodhya-Kandam', section LXVIII, pp. 380-2 ; W.L. Pansikar, *The Ramayana of Valmiki*, Bombay, 1930, pp. 261-2; and P.L. Vaidya, *The Valmiki-Ramayana*, Critical Edition, Vol. II, *Ayodhyakanda*, Baroda, 1962, pp. 375-7.

then reached the forest of sala trees in (or near) the city of Kalinga. He passed the forest at night and reached Ayodhya built by Manu by sunrise. Bharata spent seven nights on the journey.¹⁰

All the versions say that Bharata spent seven nights on the journey.

The accounts of the journey by Bharata from Kekaya to Ayodhya and the messengers from Ayodhya to Girivraja have not drawn the attention of scholars of ancient Indian geography. There is no reference to it at all in Guruge, Cunningham (revised by Sastri), Dey, and D.C. Sircar.¹¹ (Though the last mentioned scholar does cite some of these places from other *Puranas*.)

However, as will be shown presently, these brief accounts are important from several points of view.

First, the reference to the crossing of the Ganga at Hastinapura definitely shows that the poet had composed this portion of the *Ramayana* after the foundation of this city.

According to the dynastic lists it was founded by Hastin, who was the sixth descendant of Bharata.¹² Whatever be the exact position of Hastin in the succession list of the Kurukula, he certainly belonged to a much later date than Rama and Dasaratha.

Secondly, the capital of Asvapati, the lord of Kekaya, is called Rajagriha and Girivraja. These were, as is well known, also the names of the capitals of Jarasandha, of the Brihadratha dynasty of Bihar. Since Jarasandha was definitely known to be a contemporary of the Pandavas and Krishna, these Bihar names should be regarded as later additions, and a clear case of toponymic transference.

Thirdly, the messengers, while going to Kekaya, pass through Panchala and Kurujangala, but on Bharata's return journey no such country is mentioned, except the village Varutha, Kalinga-

¹⁰ Dutt, op. cit., pp. 386-7; Pansikar, op. cit., pp. 265-6; and Vaidya, op. cit., Adhyaya 65, pp. 387-90.

¹¹ Ananda Guruge, *The Society of the Ramayana*, Ceylon, 1960; S.N. Majumdar Sastri, *Cunningham's Ancient Geography of India*, Calcutta, 1924; Nundolal Dey, *The Geographical Dictionary of Ancient and Mediaeval India*, London, 1927; and D.C. Sircar, *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Mediaeval India*, Delhi, 1971.

¹² F.E. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition*, p. 146.

nagara, and several rivers, some like Hradini, twice.

Fourthly, the messengers had to pass through at least a couple of forests, but Bharata while returning had to cross through only one forest. And this was not an ordinary forest, but one of sala trees. Now this reference, though perhaps casually given by the poet, accurately describes the geographical character of the country.

The sala trees grow even today in the Himalayan foothills, south Bihar, western Orissa, Bengal and eastern Madhya Pradesh. For some reason, Bharata had to go to Kalinganagara and then enter Ayodhya, that is, he must have entered the city from the east and not from the west.

With regard to the mention of the various places and rivers, a few can be easily identified. The rest may be correctly located if detailed maps and gazetteers are available.

Among the places mentioned, Kekaya appears in the *Satapatha Brahmana*, X. vi. 1, 2 ; and *Chhandogya Upanishad*, V. iv and later in Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* VII. iii. 2. There it is an epithet of Asvapati. Ayodhya however, does not seem to find a place in Vedic literature. Hastinapur also finds no mention, though we have 'Hastina' and 'Hastipa' (*Vedic Index*, II, p. 502). Ikshumati, a river, though associated with the Ikshvakus in the *Ramayana*, does not seem to occur as such in the *Vedas*.

Vipasa is mentioned several times in Vedic literature and twice in the *Rigveda* as Vipas. Panini also mentions a river by this name (IV. ii. 74). However, the form in which it appears in the *Ramayana* is post-Vedic. Vipas or Vipasa is the modern Beas, 'the Hyphasis or Bipasis of the Greeks'.¹³

Satadru is the modern Sutlej, the most easterly river of the Punjab. But in the *Rigveda* it is mentioned twice as Sutudri. The *Ramayana* name hence is post-Vedic, and signifies a river which flows in hundred channels.

The name Gomati occurs for the first time in the *Nadi-Stuti*, in the tenth *mandala* of the *Rigveda* (X. lxxv. 6). There it is identified with the Gomal, a western tributary of the Indus.¹⁴ But the name was applied to a river in Kurukshetra, and later to other rivers in the east.

Then Bharata crosses the Gomati at Vinaya: it is most

¹³ *Vedic Index*, Vol. II, p. 301.

¹⁴ *Vedic Index*, Vol. I, p. 258.

probably the present Gomati in western Uttar Pradesh.

However, the most interesting from the point of view of dating this portion of the *Ramayana* is the mention of Lohitya (the same as Brahmaputra)¹⁵ and Kalinganagara. While Lauhitya seems to be no other than the Lauhitya in Assam, Kalinganagara¹⁶ must be the capital of Kalinga in Orissa. This city was definitely there in the third century B.C.

While Bharata and the messengers seem to have gone to Kekaya by the southern or southwestern route and then proceeded northwards, on the return journey Bharata took the upper or northern route to reach Ayodhya.

Dr Moti Chandra,¹⁷ in his excellent discussion on the highways and by-ways of ancient India, only refers to the route that the messengers took while going to Kekaya's capital from Ayodhya, but he does not even mention the route taken by Bharata when returning to Ayodhya. However, Dr Moti Chandra does refer to the two routes from Peshawar to the Gangetic plain. The first—the northern one to Lucknow—passes through Saharanpur, as the present railway line does, and then proceeds further eastwards to Tirhut, Katehar and Assam. It was this route which Bharata took.

The messengers from Ayodhya, according to Dr Moti Chandra, crossed the Ganga at Hastinapura (present Hasnapur), then passed through Kurujangala. Here they saw the Varuni tirtha, and crossed first the Sarasvati, and then Sahardanga (the present Sirhind) and entered the country of Bhulingas. Then they crossed the Sutlej and Beas flowing at the foot of the Siwaliks. Thus they reached Sakala (modern Sialkot) on the river Ajakula (modern Aji). Then by the way of Taksasila, they reached Kekaya's capital Girivraja, which Dr Moti Chandra identifies with Jalalpur, also known as Girjak (after Cunningham). This Jalalpur is about one mile north-northwest of Lahore. Alexander crossed the Jhelum very near this place. However, he offers no comments on this name,¹⁸ nor does he identify all the names of rivers, hills and plains. Further, we do not know from

¹⁵ Sircar, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁶ Identified with Mukhalingam near Srikakulam; *ibid.*, p. 171.

¹⁷ Moti Chandra, *Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India*, New Delhi, 1977, p. 16.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 12 and 16.

where he gets the name Bhulinga¹⁹ for Kulinga. Much more interesting would have been Dr Moti Chandra's comments on Bharata's arrival at Ayodhya via Kalinganagara.

When we turn from the names of places to the political organization in the *Ramayana* and view the data gathered from the *Ramayana* and juxtapose it with that given in the *Vedic Age*,²⁰ period by period, we shall find that the *Ramayana* polity can on no account be compared with the early Vedic period. At best it may reach the later Vedic age, about seventh century B.C., though many portions would be as late as the fourth century A.D., as first suggested by Weber.

By the time the *Ayodhyakanda* was composed *dharma* was already well-defined or understood in its various aspects. But it is Rama alone, and then Sita to some extent, who stand out most prominently, and tell us emphatically what their duty was in their respective capacities as son or husband and wife. Though the one and only instance of Guha, the Nishada chief telling us what his duties were is no less interesting.

When Rama and Sita slept on the bank of the river before crossing over to go to Chitrakuta, Guha said that he would stay up all night with his clansmen (*jnatibhih*) because that was his *dharma* (II. xlv. 1-6).

This Guha was later called a *sthapati* (II. lxxviii. 11). A *sthapati* was someone who held an important position in Vedic society ! Why Guha was called thus, we do not know, unless he and his clansmen were boat-makers as well, like the Navadas at Maheshwar on the Narbada, or because in the *sutras* of *Katyayana* and *Apastamba*, *sthapati* was one who was the local chief of a part of the kingdom.

If this is so, this may be regarded as a survival of the Vedic tradition. We can further regard this part of the *Ramayana* as belonging to the fifth century B.C.

With regard to the power of the king, though Dasaratha no doubt consulted the *purohita* and other advisers, such as the *sabha* and various limbs of the administrative machinery had developed since early Vedic times, he was still supreme and was regarded so, as we can gather from the heated dialogues between Rama and Kausalya, Rama and Lakshmana and Rama and Sita. A

¹⁹ This was the name of a tribe. Sircar, op. cit., p. 31.

²⁰ Ed. by R.C. Majumdar *et al.*, Bombay, 1965, p. 429.

few of these dialogues are quoted here.

Curiously, while the mother and the daughter-in-law first express surprise, and then intense grief at Dasaratha's meek attitude Lakshmana makes a spirited protest, so much so that he is even prepared to kill or destroy single-handed all who participated in this decision.

अहमेको महीपालानलं वारयितुं बलात् ॥ (II.xx.24)

न शोभार्थाविभौ बाहू न धनुर्भूषणाय मे । (II.xx.25)

तथैव मां शाधि तवास्मि किकरः । (II.xx.35)

This has the most dramatic effect, though little known to the masses and even to the scholars, for few have given thought to these incidents.

Some of our so-called young Turks, if they had known of Lakshmana's protest would have welcomed it. But what is significant is that neither Vasishta the *purohita*, nor the other advisers, nor the *sabha* and the citizens seemed to have protested against these most unforeseen and indeed heart-rending happenings. And these indeed highlight Rama's oft-repeated sayings that the king is supreme. Probably all of them thought as Rama did, that Dasaratha was bound to implement the promise, if he had indeed given his word, however unpleasant the consequences.

Hence, Dasaratha's order to Rama to go to the forest, and Rama's acceptance of the order from his father and king. In spite of all persuasions and protests, Rama obeyed the order, thus becoming an ideal upholder of *dharma*.

..... ।

राज्यं चाहं च रामस्य धर्मं वक्तुमिहार्हसि ॥ (II.lxxvi.11)

शाश्वतोऽयं सदा धर्मः स्थितोऽस्मासु न रर्षभ ।

ज्येष्ठपुत्रे स्थिते राजन्न कनीयान्भवेन्नृपः ॥ (II.xcv.2)

ज्येष्ठः श्रेष्ठश्च धर्मात्मा...

लब्धुमर्हति काकुत्स्थो राज्यं दशरथो यथा ॥ (II.lxxvi.12)

अनार्यजुष्टमस्वर्ग्यं कुर्या पापमहं यदि । (II.lxxvi.13)

अर्थधर्मौ परित्यज्य यः काममनुवर्तते ।

एवमापद्यते क्षिप्रं राजा दशरथो यथा ॥ (II.xlvii.13)

अधर्मभयभीतश्च परलोकस्य चानघ ।

तेन लक्ष्मण नाद्याहमात्मानमभिषेचये ॥

(II.xlvii.26)

..... ।

धर्ममेवाचरिष्यामस्तत्र मूलफलाशनाः ॥

(II.xlviii.15)

Later he prided himself upon being the upholder of the duties of a Kshatriya, against all odds and consequences. This view was put forth even in the *Ayodhyakanda*, so that we are not taken by surprise when Rama reaffirmed it in the *Aranyakanda*. And one can rightly say that this was the ideal which Valmiki had taken upon himself to illustrate in the *Ramayana*.

नैवाहं राज्यमिच्छामि न सुखं न च मैथिलीम् ।

त्वामहं सत्यमिच्छामि नानृतं पुरुषर्षभ ॥

(II.xxxi.32)

Just as Rama typifies a dutiful son, subject, and later husband, so Sita typifies by her conduct the ideal Hindu wife. A wife's place is always with her husband, wherever he be—in a palace or in a forest. And when Rama is not inclined to allow her to accompany him, she threatens to commit suicide by taking poison, by drowning or by immolation in fire. And it is this threat that finally seems to work. Later, when Sita meets the aged Anasuya, wife of Atri, Anasuya gives the same advice: an Aryan wife has to regard her husband as the *parama daivatam* in all circumstances (II. cix. 24).

त्वया च सह गन्तव्यं मया गुरुजनज्ञया ।

न्वद्वियोगेन मे राम त्यक्तव्यमिह जीवितम् ॥

(II.xxvi.3)

पतिहीना तु या नारी न सा शक्यति जीवितुम् ।

(II.xxvi.5)

..... ।

भर्तारमनुगच्छन्ती भर्ता हि मम दैवतम् ॥

(II.xxvi.14)

यदि मां दुःखितामेवं वनं नेतुं न चेच्छसि ।

विषमग्निं जलं वाहमास्थास्ये मृत्युकारणात् ॥

(II.xxvi.19)

It is this very concept which Kausalya has to follow, for she too was desirous of following Rama to the forest. But Rama said that her *dharma* was to remain with Dasaratha.

And we see the reaffirmation of all these, but particularly the law or the principle of primogeniture in the family of the

Ikshvakus. Bharata thus refused to be crowned but proceeded to bring back Rama to Ayodhya, and when Rama refused to come back, Bharata brought back Rama's *paduka* and installed them on the throne. Bharata thus exemplified yet another aspect of *dharma*, the duty of a brother, and the implicit obedience of the family's long standing tradition (II. lxxvi. 10-13). The expression *anaryajustamasvargyam* (II. lxxvi. 13), reminds us of a similar expression in the *Gita*, meaning that it is contrary to the Aryan way of life, and one that will not permit one to attain *svarga*. Hence we may characterize this period as the 'Age of Obedience'.

In the *Ayodhyakanda* we get a verse which though included in the Critical Edition (II. lxiv. 9) seems to be out of place, and is very probably a much later interpolation. Here Bharata describes to the messengers from Ayodhya, the nature of his mother Kaikeyi. She is selfish (*atmakama*), always fierce (*candi*), angry, and very sensitive of her status or position (*prajnamanini*). This delineation of Kaikeyi's nature and character is certainly true but it is not obvious till she asks Dasaratha to banish Rama. What evidence has Bharata to say so ? As far as we know, none. Thus, here is a clear instance of the forestalling of an incident which was about to happen; from the hypercritical point of view most inappropriate at this stage in the story.

Besides a few allusions to *pusya yoga*, to *daivajnas*, and to ill omens, the only reference to the worship of gods is found in a few verses which tell us of the daily life of Kausalya. In this connection it might be noted that neither Dasaratha, nor Rama or anybody else goes to any public place of worship, when it is decided to crown Rama. This might suggest that no public temple had come into existence at that time, or that whatever was done, was done within the four walls of the king's palace.

The allusions to the worship of Narayana by Rama and Sita (II.vi.1), and the fact that both of them slept on a bed of *kusa* grass in a temple (*ayatana*) of Vishnu, and then dressed in pure *ksauma* clothes, bowed to Madhusudana (II.vi.7), seem to imply that all the activities were performed, prior to the coronation, at home in their own residence. The references to the so-called temples (*chaityas*) are of a general nature (II.vi.10-12). Earlier we are told that Kausalya meditated on Janardana after performing *pranayama* (II.iv.33). These are the only names of Vishnu that we get in this *kanda*. Few as they are, names like Govinda,

Gopala, or even Krishna indicating Vishnu's identification with the child Krishna, are significantly absent.

Another important pointer about the date of the composition of the *Ayodhyakanda* is that at this time the total number of gods was believed to be just 33 and not 33,000. Kaikeyi could not invoke a larger number to witness the promise affirmed by Dasaratha (II.x.21). When Rama, in spite of Kausalya's request and Lakshmana's forceful speech, decided to go to Dandaka, Kausalya invoked, at the time of performing an auspicious ceremony only Sadhya, Visvadeva, Marut, Dhata, Vidhata, Pusa, Bharga, Aryama, Soma, Skanda, Brihaspati, Nakshatras, Graha, besides Indra and Garuda who helped in bringing *amrita*. In this list we find some Vedic deities, Indra and Garuda from the *Puranas* and the great god Skanda (II.xxii. 2-5). Though Indra's worship was becoming less popular his *ketu* (pillar or flag) has been referred to several times. And we know that these pillars were in existence in about the first century B.C. in parts of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. A fleeting reference to such pillars helps to date the *kanda* around this period or slightly later.²¹

The list is fairly long. It is suggestive of two facts: the survival of the Vedic tradition, and the emergence of the newer cults and deities, such as Skanda. Surprisingly, nowhere is there any reference either to Siva, or to Kartikeya and Ganesha. Thus, we may conclude that the time when this portion was composed seems to be the end of the Vedic, and the beginning of the early historic period when gods like Skanda were just becoming popular. The numismatic evidence would date this period at about the third century B.C. It is about this time that we have the earliest remains of temples, first from Nagari, then Vidisha and Mathura.²² Unfortunately the one discovered at Ahichchhatra as far back as in 1944-46 has not been fully exposed.

Ayodhyakanda contains a few allusions to omens and astrological and astronomical incidents. These should be discussed in their historical framework, so that we may know where to place the *kanda* or the verses which mention these things.

²¹ P.V. Kane describes the festival, though from the references cited by him, it does not seem to be very old. *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. II, Poona, 1974, p. 825.

²² H. Haertel, *Results of the Excavations at Sonkh* (near Mathura) reprinted from *German Scholars in India*, Vol. II, 1976.

The auspicious occasions most frequently referred to are the month of Chaitra and the *pusya yoga*, the ideal time for Rama's coronation. Then suddenly, just before the coronation Dasaratha had bad dreams. He spoke of *daivajnas* (astrologers) who predicted dire events, because, 'the star of my life has been afflicted by terrible planets like the Sun, Mars and Rahu, (II. iv. 18).

The idea of *subha* (auspicious) and inauspicious is probably ingrained in the human mind. A brief survey of Sanskrit literature, right from the *Rigveda*, shows that the concept of the auspicious and the inauspicious existed.

In the *Rigveda* (VII.lxxxviii. 4), there is a reference to *sudina* (good day). *Taittiriya Samhita* (VI. i. 4) speaks of a person who gives up his vow of silence at the rise of the *Nakshatra*.

However, the belief in *grahas* (planets), particularly Rahu and Ketu, cannot be traced back to the early Vedic period. *Graha* is mentioned first in the *Satapatha Brahmana*, but there it refers to the Sun, and denotes a power exercising magical influence. According to the *Vedic Index*, the question whether the planets were known to the Vedic Indian is a vexing one. Even now 60 years after the publication of this very useful dictionary, and the discovery of the Indus civilization, we have not made much progress.

While there is a reference to Rahu or Ketu in the sense of a meteor or comet in the late *Adbhuta Brahmana*,²³ there is no reference to Rahu or Ketu in Panini at all, as would appear from the exhaustive study by the late V.S. Agrawala.²⁴

It is also interesting to note that in the section on 'Divisions of Time' (Chapter III, *Social Life*), there is no reference to *tithi* or day, either as *vara* or *vasara*. Though *vasara* occurs in Vedic literature, *vara* does not. Hence, even Shankar Balkrishna Dikshit, who wrote *The History of Indian Astronomy* more than 80 years ago, had to admit that the division of the month into days was not an Indian concept. It had come into existence by the time of *Yajnavalkya Smriti*, though the seven *grahas* were known by the time of *Atharva-Jyotisha*.²⁵ In fact, a definite mention of the day occurs in a late fifth century inscription from central India.²⁶

²³ *Vedic Index*, Vol. I, p. 186.

²⁴ V.S. Agrawala, *India as Known to Panini*, 2nd edn., 1963.

²⁵ Dikshit, p. 165 and 137; and note his words on p. 138: 'Seven days are not really Indian but Chaldean'.

²⁶ See fn. 28.

Dikshit has also shown that the beginning of the year was with Chaitra and the month of Chaitra was more auspicious than other months because of its connection with the *pusya yoga*.

With regard to the seven-day week, Kane, after an exhaustive review,²⁷ has to say that the available evidence does not conclusively prove that the Indians had a seven-day week from the Vedic times; at the same time he points out that the Indians did not borrow either the concept or the system *en bloc* from the Greeks or the Chaldeans.

As far as the epigraphic evidence is concerned, we cannot cite any record earlier than the Eran Stone pillar inscription of Budha Gupta of the Gupta era 165 (i.e., A.D. 484).²⁸ This mentions Thursday and the twelfth *tithi* of the bright half of Asadha.

Kane also reviews the literary evidence: The *Pancasiddhantika*, while summarizing the *Romaka Siddhanta*, mentions Monday; then Garga, in the first century B.C., refers to the seven-day week from Sunday to Saturday. After taking into consideration some other evidence, Kane concludes, 'the above references furnish a *terminus ad quem* for India's knowledge of the planetary weekdays (viz., first century B.C.-first century A.D.). The *terminus a quo* cannot be shown with certainty.'²⁹

He then cites a few other theories about the days of the seven-day week in India, but assumes at the beginning of the section that the Indian system already had the elements of the weekday, and developed it further by coming into contact with the Babylonians and Syrians. And we should say the Romans as well.

Now this is an important concession when we examine the *Ramayana* historically. For we are told several times that Dasaratha thought of Rama's coronation, because it was Chaitra,³⁰ and because it was in conjunction with *pusya* (*pusya yoga*). Though one wonders why in spite of all these auspicious signs, the whole affair went so completely wrong.

Dikshit had to say that certain things in the *Ramayana* are later than the Vedic and Vedanga. So far I have not found any reference to *divasa* or *vasara* or to Rahu and Ketu in Kautilya's

²⁷ P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. V, Part I, p. 681.

²⁸ J. Fleet, *Inscriptions of Early Gupta Kings and their Times*, Delhi, 1970, p. 89.

²⁹ Kane, op. cit., Vol. V, p. 681.

³⁰ *Ayodhyakanda*, II.ii.10, and II.iii.4, 24.

Arthasastra.³¹ Nor is there a reference to the *Pusya-nakshatra* as one which is the auspicious *nakshatra* for the coronation. But all these and the term *daivajna* occur in the *Brihat Samhita* of Varahamihira.³² And this astronomer-astrologer is known to have belonged to the end of the fifth and the beginning of the sixth centuries.

This should be regarded as the lowest limit to which we can place all the references to omens and superstitions based on astrology. Of course, by a further study of all the literature (at present relegated to the appendix), we might be able to detect a few more, and also depending upon the versions in which these occur, connect these up with the superstitions at present current in each major region, such as in Bengal or Kashmir or Nepal. This, however, entails an independent study, which will have to be taken up if our epics and *Puranas* are to be studied from the point of view of higher criticism.

In the Critical Edition of the *Balakanda* we are only told that Kausalya gave birth to Rama who had half of Vishnu's personality (*mahabhoja*) in him. Bharata had one-fourth, Lakshmana and Shatrughna had also inherited one-fourth of Vishnu's personality. There is one version that gives the astronomical details of Rama's birth, that it was in the twelfth month, on the ninth *tithi*, *Aditi-nakshatra*, in *Karkata-lagna*. These verses have been omitted from the Critical Edition.

In the *Ayodhyakanda*, there are three occasions when a reference is made to the ceremonies performed by the near relatives of Dasaratha after his death:

1. Immediately after Dasaratha dies (II. lix) and until Bharata returns, the body is immersed in oil (II. lx. 12-14).
2. After Bharata returns from Kekaya ((II. lxx; II. lxxi. 1-9, 11-23).
3. When Bharata and his three widowed mothers meet Rama, Lakshmana and Sita (II. xcv. 21-33).

On the last occasion, they perform what is called *jalakriya*. Lakshmana is asked to fetch *ingudipinyaka*, *cira* (fresh bark). And then Sita is asked to proceed, followed by Lakshmana and

³¹ Dikshit, op. cit., p. 127; Shamasastri, Bangalore, 1915.

³² Subrahmanya Sastri, Bangalore, 1947, cf., adh. XLVIII, sloka 3 : 'The royal astrologer and preceptor should give the ablution on a day with the asterism of Pusya' (p. 380).

Rama. They all go on a *tirtha* to the Mandakini where with pure water (*aigunda*) mixed with *ber* (fruit), *pinyaka* is offered on a bed of *darbha* (grass). This is something like a *sraddha* ceremony, and characteristic of the situation was the offering of *ingudi* and jujube fruits, because this was part of the usual diet of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita (II. xcv. 31).

यदन्नः पुरुषो भवजि तदन्नास्तस्य देवताः ।

Pending Bharata's arrival, Dasaratha's body was laid in a vessel containing oil, but not actually embalmed, as the following words show :

तैलद्रोण्यायथामात्याः संवेश्य जगतीपत्तिम् ।

..... ।

(II.lx.12)

उद्धृतं तैलं संक्लेदात्स तु भूमौ निवेशितम् ।

आपीतवर्णवदनं प्रसुप्तमिव भूमिपम् ॥

(II.lxx.4)

It would be interesting to find parallels to such a custom at any time in India or elsewhere. For the immersion of the body, it is necessary to have a large metal vessel, and sufficient quantity of oil, at least two maunds or half a quintal. But this no primitive society can provide; such a ceremony is possible only in a fairly advanced stage of civilization.

The death ceremony undertaken after Bharata's arrival, was of the usual Hindu type. The body was placed on a bier, and taken in a procession, distributing gold and clothes to the poor on the way. The funeral pyre was made of all kinds of scented wood. Then followed the recitation of *sama* by the Brahmins. What is particularly interesting in this description is the reference to people going to the burning ghat on the river Sarayu in litters and conveyances, suitable to their status.

शिविकाभिश्च यानैश्च यथार्हं तस्य योषितः ।

(II.lxx.19)

All the wives of Dasaratha and other women also accompanied the dead body. Then the ten-day period of mourning was observed.

The practice of immersing the dead body in oil is mentioned by *Satyasadhasrautasutra* (XXIX.iv.29), and *Vaikhāṇasasrautasutra*

(XXXI. xxiii), as cited by Kane³³ prescribe that if an *ahitagni* died away from his people, his corpse should be laid down in a tub or trough filled with sesame oil and brought home in a cart.

It is interesting to note that the word for the receptacle—tub or trough—in the *śrautasūtras* is *drona*. As far as this occasion is concerned, the people at Ayodhya had to wait for Bharata; so in the end, the result was the same. The age of these *sūtras* is not very old, about the fourth century B.C.

More interesting is the description in the *Mahāparinibbana Suttanta*.³⁴ This is also a work of about the third century B.C., and here we are told that the Buddha's body was wrapped in new cloth, cotton-wool, etc., and placed in an iron vessel full of oil, which was covered with another vessel of iron. Then the funeral pyre was built of all kinds of wood and perfumes, and the body placed on it.

Here again the reason for immersing the body seems to have been the time taken for wrapping so many types and quantity of cloth, and collecting all sorts of perfumes and wood.

The reference to the carrying of Dasaratha's body on a palanquin (*sibika*) was again a practice recommended by later Vedic texts and Smritis.³⁵

However, the fact that not only could the body be carried in a cart, but even the mourners could accompany it in various kinds of conveyances is interesting. It was perhaps out of necessity, because usually the cremation took place on the river bank, and this was some distance away. And if women were allowed to accompany the body, then provision had to be made for taking them along. However, all these customs gradually disappeared, so much so that women were completely prohibited from going to the cremation ground.

When Bharata decided to go to Chitrakuta to request Rama, Sita and Lakshmana to return to Ayodhya, he was accompanied by a large army. Apparently there was no road for an army with all sorts of vehicles between Ayodhya and the Ganga (though we are told that Rama had left in a chariot and after three days journey reached the Sangama).

Either the author who composed this chapter did not know of

³³ Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. IV, p. 232.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 234-5 ; also Fleet, *JRAS*, 1905, pp. 635.

³⁵ Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

this, or we are to assume that there was some kind of road for a small *ekka* (one-seat cart), so popular until recently in Uttar Pradesh.

Anyway, here is an excellent example of how interpolations may take place. But more than that we learn how new tracks were made in unknown, uncharted areas. Indeed, it reminds us of the modern army commander, blasting out roads through hills and forests, and building bridges over rivers, with the help of sappers, miners, and diggers (*bhumipradesanja, khanaka, yantaka*), wood-cutters (*vrikshatakshaka*), well-diggers (*kupakara*) and architects (*sthapati*), or 'local lords' (II. lxxiv. 1-3).

They levelled the roads, filling up cavities, and removing hillocks, built bridges (*babandhu bandhaniya*) and even planted trees where there were none (*a-vrikshesu desesu*) (II. lxxiv).

And very soon a fine road was ready decorated with flags, festoons and sprayed with sandalwood-scented water. With all the preparations completed Bharata started on the journey in an auspicious moment.

Few writers on the *Ramayana* or towns and cities in ancient India have ever noted these verses, about twenty, in the Critical Edition. These admirably describe what a progressive state should have: artisans, technicians, craftsmen and engineers. They would be a credit to a modern municipal corporation or the Public Works Department.³⁶

It is well known that when Rama refused to return from Chitrakuta, and Bharata threatened to fast until death, Rama agreed to return after his fourteen years' sojourn in the forest and for that duration gave Bharata his *paduka* (sandals). These sandals were not ordinary ones; they were not made of grass, wood or leather. While the actual material with which these sandals were made is not mentioned, we are told—and this appears in all the versions—that they were studded with gold, though in the *Dasaratha Jataka*, these sandals are said to be of straw.³⁷

Now it is not surprising to learn that kings in those days wore gold-studded footwear. While in many cases, this may be regarded as an exaggeration, there is no doubt about the existence of

³⁶ I was glad to find that Dr Moti Chandra, op. cit., p. 54 had expressed a similar view.

³⁷ V. Fausball ed., *The Jataka*, London, 1887, Vol. IV, pp. 123-30.

such things, because we have gold embroidered sandals of the young Tutankhamen from his tomb in Egypt.

But what is worth inquiring into is how Rama happened to have such gold-studded sandals with him, at Chitrakuta. He had left everything behind and gone as a hermit, in clothes made of bark. Only Sita was allowed to keep her ornaments, and she had donned a hermit's garments over her silk sari!

So this incident of the sandals is a later interpolation. While one edition that was used by M.N. Dutt for his English translation mentioned that Rama gave the gold-studded sandals as demanded by Bharata, the Critical Edition says that Bharata (suddenly) produced such gold-studded sandals, and asked Rama to put them on and then return them to him. And Rama wore them for a second, and gave them back to Bharata.

In this connection it would be interesting to examine the growth of the concept of 'footprints'.

In Vedic literature there is little of image-worship, though we are told of the 'three steps of Vishnu'. However, nowhere is there any indication that the footprints of a divine person, or a sage, or in their absence, the sandals worn by such a person, were ever worshipped.

As far as we know, this concept was first introduced or popularized by the early Buddhists. When they were forbidden by Buddha to worship him in human form, the devotees, as is usual in India and many countries, began to worship his relics, and immortalize incidents in his life. Thus, we have 'Buddha's footprints', besides the scenes from his life, in several early Buddhist monuments such as Sanchi, Bharhut, Bhaja, Karle, and *stupas* like Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda.

So this incident of Bharata getting the *padukas* of Rama and worshipping them, could not have been introduced before the third century B.C. Then, while recasting the *Ayodhyakanda* the sandals became studded with gold. For after all, Bharata could not worship ordinary footwear.

When I pointed this out in an article, some scholars mentioned that Bharata knew that Rama would not return. So he had taken the gold-studded *padukas* with him! There he suddenly produced them when Rama advised him not to fast until death, but to return to Ayodhya. According to this version included in the Critical Edition, Rama put on these sandals, then took

them off, and gave them back to Bharata. However, this whole scene seems to have been concocted in the second century A.D. and interpolated later in the *Ramayana*.

There are two incidents in this *kanda* to which attention of scholars and laymen has not been drawn, so they have passed almost unnoticed and have not elicited any comments so far.

The first is the offer of a hundred pots of wine (*sura*) by Sita to the Kalindi when she saw the formidable, almost sea-like river before her. Sita promised an oblation of a hundred pots of wine to this mighty river, if she would allow them to cross and return safely.

To the editor of this *kanda* (Dr P.L. Vaidya) and his staff the mere mention of a hundred pots of *sura* looked repugnant and they promptly relegated this verse to the footnote. For they rightly thought that *sura* was used by the Aryans and non-Aryans from time immemorial and no Vedic sacrifice or ceremony enjoins such a usage. It is indeed reminiscent of the popular practice, usually among women, of taking a vow, called *badha* in Gujarati, *navas* in Marathi, and *shapath* in Hindi.

Usually such a vow is taken for having a child, preferably a son. If the wish is fulfilled, then the woman performs a pilgrimage or undertakes to accomplish some difficult task. Whatever the promise, there must be an element of difficulty. The work to be performed should not be easy.

Now, when Sita undertook this vow, it is implied that it was not easy to procure a hundred pots of wine. Had it been locally made, there should have been no difficulty. And the only foreign or imported wine that we know of is the wine from the Roman world. This came in specially made earthen vessels called amphoras. Such amphoras have been found all over India in deposits of the first century B.C. during the last thirty years. Thus, we can legitimately suggest that Sita had such Roman amphoras of wine in view when she took this vow before crossing the Kalindi in a boat. Of course this verse or the idea could not have belonged to the original composition of the epic.

More or less the same conclusion is reached when we examine the propriety of the inclusion of the *satkara* or *atithya* of Bharata, his three widowed mothers, and the entire army in the *asrama* of the sage Bharadvaja at Prayaga (II.lxxxv. 11-77). Here again, an ordinary, simple reception would be in order. But not the

grand reception with wine, women, meat and all sorts of delicious food which was served to Bharata's soldiers. It was nothing short of revelry, which was most inappropriate and inopportune at this juncture, when everybody was in mourning, particularly Bharata and the three widows. However, we find that the soldiers were so pleased with the grand reception, that they plainly told Bharata, 'Oh Bharata, you go wherever you like—Ayodhya or Dandaka. We will stay here!' Had Bharadvaja thought of this consequence, I think he would never have given such a reception.

The editor of the *Ayodhyakanda* had not thought of all these implications, nor had the scholars and readers of the *Ramayana* in all these centuries. When I pointed these out in a lecture at Baroda, some members of the present staff of the *Ramayana* Department, in the Oriental Institute, realized the impropriety of including this episode in the Critical Edition, but wondered that if all such episodes were excluded, what would remain.

However, like the *sura* incident, this *satkara* episode, too, is a reflection of the social conditions in India as a result of the impact of Roman trade, particularly the flooding of the Indian courts with Roman wine and Roman women.³⁸

Thus, from the point of view of higher criticism, both these incidents would be inappropriate in the original *Ramayana*. But their inclusion in the Critical Edition would help in dating the *Ayodhyakanda* definitely to a period after the first century B.C.

We reach the same conclusion when we examine the occurrence of *sura* and *surapana* in a historical perspective. Kane has discussed both these in four volumes of his *History of Dharmasastra*.³⁹ The word *sura* occurs only six times in the *Rigveda*. Though *soma* was regularly offered to gods in numerous sacrifices, and drunk by Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, *sura* was not.⁴⁰

Though *sura* was offered to Indra in the *sautramani* sacrifice, it was not drunk by any priest after the ceremony. Some Brahmin

³⁸ E.H. Warmington, *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India*, Cambridge, 1928, p. 261; and below pp. 83-4 on Roma.

³⁹ Vol. II, pp. 792-8; Vol. III, pp. 965-8; Vol. IV, pp. 20-2; Vol. V, pp. 1078-81.

⁴⁰ Dr G.S. Ghurye says that wine or spirituous liquor (*sura*) was an essential offering to the Fathers. He also thinks that it was a fairly common drink among the wealthy of the Rigvedic society, and further it might have been introduced into the *sautramani* sacrifice by the priestly class. See G.S. Ghurye, *Vedic India*, Bombay, 1979, p. 220.

had to be hired to drink this, and if nobody was found, it was poured over an ant-hill.

Gradually *surapana*—drinking of *sura*—was regarded as a sin, and it could not be offered to a god. This was so throughout the Vedic and the Smṛiti period (c. 1500 B.C.-A.D. 400). Later the emergence of Tantricism made *surapana* a respectable thing. It had also become a fashion in royal courts, but the Hindu religious books always regarded it as a sin. However, these books were responsive to changes in social ideas and practices. Hence the chapter on *Kalivarjya* (things to be avoided in the *kali yuga*) ‘unmistakably shows how the most authoritative dictates of the *Vedas* and of ancient sages and law-givers were set aside and held to be of no binding authority because they ran counter to the prevailing notions.’⁴¹

Hence Sita’s offer of a hundred pots of wine to Kalindi was certainly a non-Vedic and even non-Smṛiti practice. But such a practice was quite normal with Tantrics—Hindu as well as Buddhist.

However, in the mention of just hundred pots of wine we might see the survival of a very early Vedic practice. *Rigveda*, I.cxvi.7, mentions, among the deeds of Asvins, one particular deed: that they filled a hundred jars of *sura* from the hooves of their powerful horse.⁴²

Thus we have one more instance of how the very old and the very new come together in our epics all the time.

Whatever be the actual nature of the first or the earliest Ayodhya, its description, as it appears in the Critical Edition of the *Ramayana*, is of a well laid out city, with arterial roads—a *rajamarga* or a *patha*, with fortification all around, and a moat or *parikha*. Within the city, there were various kinds of buildings: *harmya*, *prasada*, *vesma* and *vimana*. Some of these buildings were seven or eight storeys (*attalaka*) high.

There were checkpoints (*gulma*), parks and gardens, besides drinking houses (*panagrihas*), houses for recreation (*kridagrihas*). There were shops or bazaars, where all sorts of things could be bought, and godowns stocked with paddy. The merchandise was brought from far and near by ox-drawn carts, as well as on camelback.

⁴¹ Kane, Vol. III, p. 967.

⁴² Kane, Vol. II, p. 792. This appears strange, but the hoof is compared with *karotara*, which Kane translates as ‘a strainer made of leather’.

No detailed description of a single house is available, nor any inkling given as to how these were built: with mud, mud bricks, baked bricks and lime or stone. Nor are we told how they were roofed: with tiles or simply thatched. Some houses had terraces from where the residents could see the procession passing through the main highway.

Very few writers seem to have noted the interesting fact that though the houses or palaces had several rooms, some of which could be approached seated in a chariot, all the three queens of Dasaratha, as well as his son Rama, lived in separate houses. Rama's residence was not near to that of Dasaratha, but at some distance, for when he was called by Dasaratha, a chariot had to be sent for him.

Whether this description is of a real city or whether much of it is imaginary, is a question to be examined in detail with the help of available evidence. Little thought has been given to such questions by all previous authors who have written on the *Ramayana*. Confining our attention to India we can say, with Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa and Lothal before us, that Ayodhya could have had arterial roads and fortification. A moat is also not impossible with the perennial waters from the Sarayu.

The city could have had a number of small and large houses with two or three or more rooms. There could have been other features as well, besides parks and gardens.

At Mohenjo-Daro some houses had two storeys, and probably all of them had flat roofs or terraces. This is possible in the dry climate of Sind, but not in central Uttar Pradesh, where Ayodhya was situated.

The question now remains of very tall houses with seven or eight storeys, some of which had Kailasa-like towers or *shikharas*.

Either these descriptions are completely imaginary or they are based on the fairly tall structures that existed in eastern India, either in the form of *stupas* or temples, and residential houses with at least two or three storeys. Unfortunately, no city-site, except Taxila and Nalanda, has been excavated in India from which we could form some idea of the tallest residential houses in ancient India, leaving out *stupas* and temples. As far as the structural history of temples is concerned, there were no temples with tall *shikharas* before the sixth century A.D. And even these

shikharas might be compared with Kailasa as far as the conical / nature of their structure is concerned.⁴³

Over 40 years ago Ananda Coomaraswamy brought out the character of the early cities and nature of the early Yaksha shrines in *Eastern Art*, Vol. II, 1930 and *Yakshas*, 1928, 1931. This evidence was later amplified by Dr U.P. Shah as far as the superstructure of the temple in 'Beginnings of the Superstructure of Indian Temples'.

Fa-hien,⁴⁴ who visited Ayodhya in the fifth century, did see a Buddhist *stupa*, whereas two centuries later, Hiuen-tsang⁴⁵ noticed more than a hundred monasteries with thousands of Mahayana and Hinayana Buddhists, and only ten Deva temples.

The seventh century A.D. is the lower limit to which we could ascribe the description of a highly developed city in the *Ramayana*. Those who do not like such a late dating, will have to be satisfied with the other limit, which cannot be earlier than the third century B.C. For the earliest *stupas*, as far as we know today, belong to this period. It is at this time that we have the earliest representation of multi-storeyed houses, with men and women peeping out from small windows in the extant panels of the gateways of the *stupas* at Bharhut and Sanchi.

As far as the layout of the city with arterial roads is concerned, we have some idea from the Mauryan Taxila excavations of Marshall.⁴⁶ This is not at all encouraging. Unlike the later Sirkap, near Taxila, the roads, indeed lanes, go zigzag and are not well laid out. Nearer home, Kausambi could have provided the best evidence. Unfortunately it has not yet been dug up horizontally. But probably this site, as well as Ahichchhatra, and so many others in the Gangetic Valley, besides Ayodhya itself, will not give a better picture of town-planning in Mauryan India. To say anything about Ayodhya before this period, or about its reputed antiquity, be it in the *treta* or *dvapar yuga*, dated to 5000 B.C. and beyond, would be pure speculation. However, if the excavations so far conducted in India outside the Indus Valley and the Punjab are any guide, the earliest houses at

⁴³ Pramod Chandra ed., *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture*, New Delhi, 1975, pp. 80-9.

⁴⁴ Legge, *Travels of Fa-hien*, pp. 54-5.

⁴⁵ Watters, *On Yuan Chwang*, Vol. I, pp. 354-9.

⁴⁶ Marshall, *Taxila*. For a full discussion see Appendix II.

Ayodhya—whatever be the period, perhaps not earlier than the eighth century B.C. if the account in the *Aitareya Brahmana* is indeed correct (viz., that it was a village, even in the time of Harischandra, one of the kings mentioned in the *Puranas*)—could not be better than mud huts, exactly as we see in the villages near Ayodhya today. Possibly, and I say this with great hesitation, a hint to this effect is contained in the description of Kausalya's body being covered with dust (*pamsu*) as she falls down unconscious on hearing of Rama's banishment to the forest. Though nowhere are we told how the houses were built, such covering with dust is not possible, not expected, on a well-made floor, of a house built with baked bricks or stone. Hence, this unconscious reference possibly tells us that the houses were nothing but mud huts in the earliest Ayodhya.

The conception of the provision of separate houses or palaces for Dasaratha's three queens, and also for Rama and Sita, and the existence of the guilds of craftsmen, barbers, musicians, merchants and traders, and the fact that respectable women never exposed themselves to public view, that women were usually confined to the inner apartments, that when they went out, they moved in palanquins or by other conveyance which were adequately covered with veils or curtains—all this again suggests a highly developed social organization, and social values which we do not normally expect at a very early period.

Unfortunately, both scholars and laymen are used to reading the classified description of these ancient cities in imaginative and therefore, unhistorical rendering of the *Puranas* and the epics. Hence we are all accustomed to imagining that Dwarka, Hastinapur and Ayodhya were fully developed cities. But an integrated picture, reconstructed with all available evidence, is bound to be different, and certainly very disappointing to scholars and laymen alike. For few of them are aware of the centuries of development that lie behind these descriptions.

An exhaustive survey of 74 excavated sites—including the well-known epic sites such as Hastinapur, Ahichchhatra, Kampil (or Kampilya), Kausambi, Kanauj, Rajgir, Pataliputra, Vaisali and Sravasti, all yielding the painted grey ware, black-and-red ware, the northern black polished ware and iron—showed that the earliest houses were made of mud or mud bricks, and the floors were occasionally plastered with lime. It was only in the later

phase, dated by typical finds and Carbon-14 to a period after 500 B.C., that baked bricks were used.

The story is the same with regard to fortifications. All earlier constructions were made of mud or of mud bricks. And the alleged brick rampart at Kausambi was probably an embankment and certainly a later construction because it has not been stratigraphically correlated with any habitational phase in the city itself.

Thus the present archaeological evidence from several sites in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar precludes the possibility of a brick-built Ayodhya as described in the *Ramayana* before the fourth century B.C.

A similar conclusion is suggested by the few details of the way these royal residences were furnished. While all kinds of ornaments of gold—*hiranya* and *suvarna*—besides those of diamonds and pearls were worn by both men and women, there are also references to seats or chairs of gold, even cots and chariots, and costly coverlets for the bed.

So much wealth can only be produced by trade and commerce and perhaps conquest in war. As we know our history now, such a flourishing state was ushered in about the first century B.C., with the regular establishment of trade with the Roman world both by sea and land, after the formation of the Kushana and Roman empires.

Thus on the basis of our integrated study, the following stages in the development of Ayodhya may be suggested:

1. A village or a small town, as stated by the *Aitareya Brahmana* (c. 1000-800 B.C.), dependent on stock-breeding, hunting and agriculture, specially paddy.
2. A slightly larger town during the time of Buddha (Ajatasatru) with the economy more or less the same as in the first stage.
3. Further development took place under Asoka, when some *stupas* and monasteries might have been built.
4. A growing city under Pushyamitra, when one or two *asvamedha* sacrifices were performed after defeating the Yavanas, as suggested by epigraphical evidence. Palaces and the earliest temples were built at this time.

It was at this fourth stage that we could expect a regular contact between Ayodhya and other cities in eastern India and the distant Gandhara either by the Lower Ganga or the Upper Ganga route. Though it is possible that when Chandragupta Maurya drove out Alexander's outposts and concluded a fresh treaty with Seleucos Nikator, this distant country must have been under the political hegemony of Pataliputra.

5. The city was further developed under the early Gupta kings. It is at this time that a larger number of Deva temples, as seen by Hiuen-tsang a few centuries later, must have come into existence. The city must have assumed the form as described (of course with much exaggeration) in the *Ramayana*.

It is apparent that, if this was the likely development of Ayodhya, then the present *Ramayana*, even the Critical Edition gives only a one-sided picture of the city. Of course, this is to be expected. There is no reference to the Buddhists and Jains, who we know from Chinese travellers, lived in the city as early as the fifth century B.C. It is hoped that the excavations which are being conducted at Ayodhya since 1975 by Professor B. B. Lal, will throw more light on the problem. Probably a proper surface exploration alone could tell us how large was the extent of the ancient habitation. No doubt it was more long than broad, and a considerable portion must have been eroded by the river. Even then, such a survey should be useful. Meanwhile, what one can be sure of is that the original habitation, whatever be its true nature, a village, a city or a town, was surrounded by sala trees and was well-stocked with paddy as these are truly indicative of the ecology of the region. Perhaps the sala trees do not grow in the vicinity today. Possibly this tree line has receded further eastwards, but the two references to sala forests and trees in the *Ayodhyakanda* indeed belong to the earliest stages of the composition of this *kanda*.

As far as the socio-religious and astrological and astronomical references or practices are concerned, we see a steady growth, almost paralleling that of the settlement. The worship or invocation of the Vedic deities like Aryama, Indra and Pusan by Kausalya is indeed a legacy of the Vedic times. To this was

added the worship of Vishnu or Narayana and later that of Skanda. For, as is well known Skanda-Kartikeya is not even referred to in early Vedic literature. As far as the archaeological evidence goes, Skanda worship started in about the third century B.C., and there was a Skanda temple at Sonkh, near Mathura in the Kushana period.

Surprisingly, there is no reference to Siva in any form, though in the *Uttarakanda*, we are told in a late interpolation, how Rama worshipped Siva at Ramesvara. This feature, however, could not have entered the epic before the third stage.

The astrological and astronomical allusions also belong to this period, whereas the reference to the seven-day week while giving the details about Rama's birth (which have been deleted by the Critical Edition), could not have found a place in the epic, according to this view, before the fifth century A.D. Though, as Kane has argued, this could have happened a few centuries earlier. The absence of the practice of *sati*, and the preservation of Dasaratha's body in oil in a large vessel, are two very interesting features which take the beginning of the story to the fifth century B.C. and are a reminder of the practices of this period.

The powers and duties of the king as well as the *purohita*, the references to Guha as *sthapati* (local lord), the rights of the *paurajanapadas*, all these well reflect the ideas found in the late Vedic literature; while the institution of spies and other such details as regards the administration of the kingdom that appear in the series of questions which Rama asks Bharata, could be found in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. This is unfortunately not firmly dated, but after considerable discussion Kangle has gone back to the traditional date, fourth century B.C.⁴⁷ However, Kane has shown that no less than twenty-nine verses of the *sarga* occur in the *Sabhaparva* of the *Mahabharata*, and some of these are inappropriate and irrelevant.⁴⁸ This shows that these verses are interpolated, probably after the *Sabhaparva*. This section has been definitely enlarged after the first century A.D. as the references to Roma and Marichipattanam would show.

Both Roma and Marichipattanam are mentioned with several other places and countries in the southern expedition of Sahadeva in the *Sabhaparva* of the *Mahabharata* (II. xxviii. 45-8).

⁴⁷ R.P. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthashastra*, 1951, Part III, p. 106.

⁴⁸ P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. I, p. 401.

And what Professor Edgerton says about Roma is worth recording. He says, 'This must now be recognized as the oldest occurrence of the name of Rome, and the only known occurrence in Sanskrit of the name with its proper feminine gender, *Roma*. It justifies the inference that our text cannot have been composed at any time before this city came to the knowledge of the Indians. This means surely not before the first century B.C.'⁴⁹

Marichipattanam is the Muziris of the *Periplus*. According to two Tamil poets quoted by Moti Chandra,⁵⁰ 'The foreign ships bring gold to the seaport of Muchiri within the boundary of Kerala....Bags of black pepper were exchanged for this gold.'

Cranganore, a famous port on the Kerala coast is supposed to be the Muziris of the Graeco-Roman writers.⁵¹

Thus, a number of intangible elements like the institution of the king, *purohita*, *mantris*, *sabha*, and *paurajanapadas*, the invocation of Vedic gods, the absence of the practice of *sati* and the repeated insistence on the performance of *dharma*, all these show comparatively early features. But the tangible or material things and their descriptions, starting with the layout of the city of Ayodhya, the construction of palaces, furniture, means of transport or conveyance—all indicate a highly developed state, reminiscent of towns and cities in the early historical periods, between 250 B.C. and A.D. 350. This is truly the characteristic of Indian culture. Even now, in the last quarter of the twentieth century in the midst of the latest scientific and industrial development, an early Vedic feature, such as the performance of the *homa* will suddenly crop up. But as surely as we cannot date the entire show as Vedic, but have to call it ultra-modern, in the same way, while studying our epics and *Puranas*, we have to use these criteria supplied by archaeology and history.

⁴⁹ F. Edgerton ed., *The Sabhaparvan*, Poona, 1944, p. 28.

⁵⁰ Moti Chandra, op. cit., p. 15; and E.H. Warmington, *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India*, Cambridge, 1928, pp. 9-10.

⁵¹ Warmington, *ibid.*, pp. 8, 18, etc.

4. Aranyakanda

The *Aranyakanda* deals with Rama's early life in the forest, after he left Ayodhya with Sita and Lakshmana. Here we are told how for ten years they lived in an *asrama* around Chitrakuta before entering Dandakaranya. We are also told the main cause of the enmity, as Rama admits, between Rama and the Rakshasas. This clearly comes out in the dialogue between Rama and Sita, after they enter the Dandaka.

There is a definite indication of where the 'original' Lanka lay, in the testimony of Maricha, and suggested by the way Surpanakha hastened to Lanka to report to Ravana about her discomfiture. Further support to this is found in Ravana's flight to Lanka with Sita on his lap.

Along with these indications which have not been critically analysed by earlier writers so far, there are other definite indications that suggest that the redactor of the epic had Ceylon in mind, and not any other place in Andhra or in Madhya Pradesh. These references would help in dating the redaction. Besides these, the belief that Ravana had ten heads and twenty arms had also entered the epic (III. xxxiii. 9).

Incidentally we learn from Sita herself that Rama was 25 years old (III. xlv. 10) ; that Sita was dressed in yellow silk (*pita kauseya*), that she wore a necklace, and anklets (*nupura*), (III.l. 21, 27, 31) which were later intentionally dropped by Sita while she was being kidnapped by Ravana. We are also told that Ravana had not noticed this as he was in a confused state of mind (III. lii. 1-3). Thus, the poet himself dispels doubts as to how Ravana could have allowed such a thing to happen.

Ravana was black or dark (*nilanga*) and Sita fair (III.l.21,28). This is later confirmed in *Kiskindhakanda* when Suparsva first describes how he saw a person carrying away a woman in his arms and later learnt that it was Ravana.

Some idea of home decoration in those days can be had when Sita tells Rama that even if he could not bring the golden deer

alive, it did not matter. If he brought it dead, its skin would help decorate her inner apartment (*antahapura*) (III. xli. 16).

Equally interesting and instructive is the insight about chariots, in the repeated mention that the chariot on which Ravana rode, from Lanka to meet Maricha, and which was later destroyed by Jatayu was not an ordinary chariot but a war chariot (*samgramika*) (III. lx. 32).

Still more interesting is the fact that this chariot was drawn by asses (*khara*) and not horses. For this indeed was a very early practice, documented archaeologically from Iraq (Mesopotamia), and going back to c. 3000 B.C. It is well known that horses were first yoked to a chariot in western Asia by the Kassites, in c. 1700 B.C.

A few incidents give us an insight into the character of Sita and women in general and a few social customs when women are in distress. Equally interesting is the list of impossible acts mentioned by Sita. When examined historically, their earliest mention, whether singly or collectively, might help us date this particular section in the *Aranyakanda* more precisely.

A comment on the nature of women is found when Sita abused Lakshmana for being reluctant to leave her alone and to go and help Rama (III. xliii. 22-5). Lakshmana could not help saying that though he would not reply in the same tone, as she was *daivata* (as good as his elder and hence to be respected), it is a woman's nature to be free (*vimukta dharma*), very quick-tempered (*capala*) and (*tiksna*), and the creator of dissensions (*bhedakara*) (III. liii. 25-7), and that she suspected his motives because of the essentially distrusting nature of women (III. xliii. 29).

Sita in turn threatened to commit suicide by drowning in the Godavari, or by swallowing a strong poison or by entering a fire, but would not touch another man. And then began to beat her stomach (*udara*) with both hands (III. xliii. 32-5).

गोदावरीं प्रवेक्ष्यामि विना रामेण लक्ष्मण ।

आबन्धिष्येऽथवा त्यक्ष्ये विषमे देहमात्मनः ॥

(III.xliii.33)

पिबामि वा विषं तीक्ष्णं प्रवेक्ष्यामि हुताशनम् ।

न त्वहं राघवादन्यं पदापि पुरुषं स्पृशे ॥

(III.xliii.34)

इति लक्ष्मणमाक्रुश्य सीता दुःखसमन्विता ।

पाणिभ्यां रुदती दुःखादुदरं प्रजघान ह ॥

(III.xliii.35)

Since when has woman acquired such a bad reputation and where do we find such a custom for expressing sorrow ?

Even in the forest, after completing the building of a leaf-hut (*parnashala*), Lakshmana performed the usual *grihashanti* according to rites practised by Hindus when a new house is built or when a family occupies a house for the first time (III. xiv. 23).

This is an ancient Vedic custom, but what excites our admiration is the observance of this practice even in a forest.

As mentioned in the preliminary remarks, there are three incidents which help us in locating the original position of Lanka and its later identification with Ceylon.

The first occasion is when Surpanakha goes to Lanka to report to Ravana how Rama has killed Khara, Dusana and 14,000 Rakshasas and rid Janasthana of all Rakshasas.

Here we have a brief description of Ravana and his golden throne, but we are not told how she (Surpanakha) reaches Lanka (III. xxx. 3-22).

Next we find Ravana riding in his ass-drawn chariot with Maricha. Since this chariot could be moved by will-power (*kamaga*), we need not wonder how it went through forests and over hills (III. xxxiii. 1-36). But before he saw the western seaboard (*anupa*), and the lord of Sindhu and then reached the *asrama* of Maricha, the journey was indeed long. On the way he saw groves or gardens of Maricha (black pepper), and heaps of conch shells and clusters of pearls (III. xxxiii. 23-4). Though we regard the latter reference as characteristic of the whole of the west coast, still it is well known that large conch shells and pearls can be found only at Kanyakumari, and it is only in Kerala that one can see gardens of pepper. In fact Muziris/Cranganore was known as Marichipattanam, because it was from here that the Romans collected pepper and other spices and sent these to the Roman world.

MUZIRIS AND CRANGANORE

There were two well-known ports on the Kerala coast from where pepper was exported to the Roman world. Both the epics speak of Marichipattanam. This is the Graeco-Roman Muziris, and identified with the modern Cranganore.¹

¹ E.H. Warmington, *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India*, Cambridge, 1928, p. 10, etc.

Thus, this one reference is sufficient to tell us that the poet who recomposed the *Aranyakanda* had some vague notion that Lanka was in the Indian Ocean. And very probably this re-composition took place after the second century.

Actually, such notions were later responsible for the interpolations in the *Kiskindhakanda* and the grand descriptions of Lanka in the *Sundarakanda* and the *Yuddhakanda*.

Exactly opposite, simple, straightforward, without much exaggeration, is Maricha's statement about Lanka. When Ravana tries to persuade Maricha to help him lure Sita by assuming the form of a golden deer, Maricha tells him that he has experienced the might of Rama. When he used to dwell in Dandaka living on the flesh of *rishis*, Visvamitra sought the help of Rama. And the latter came and with only one arrow threw him into the deep waters of a *sagara*. Regaining consciousness he went to the city of Lanka (III. xxxvi. 1-17).

पातितोऽहं तदा तेन गम्भीरे सागराम्भसि ।

प्राप्य संज्ञां चिरात्तात लङ्कां प्रति गतः पुरीम् ॥

(III. xxxvi. 17)

This testimony of Maricha is, I think, extremely important in giving us some idea about the location of the 'original' Lanka. Even though we find the words *sagara* ordinarily translated as 'sea', or a large mass of salty water, and *puri* as city, still these only suggest that the original Lanka was in the midst of a large mass of water, and that it was larger than other habitations. Where could this Lanka be ? By no stretch of imagination could it be regarded to be in the Indian Ocean.

For this conclusion and the reasonable identification of this Lanka, we must go back to the *Balakanda*, and recall the incident when Visvamitra had gone to Ayodhya, and from there taken Rama and Lakshmana to the south of the Ganga, into the forests of Malada and Karusa.

Thus, the Dandaka from which Maricha was originally shot at was south of the Ganga. And from here he ran to Lanka.

Therefore, Lanka could not logically be hundreds of miles away from Chitrakuta and Dandakaranya. Hence Pampa, Matangasara, Savari-*asrama* and Rsyamuka, near where Sugriva lived, could not be very far from the original Dandakaranya. All these places, in fact, were north of the Narbada, as the late

D.R. Mankad showed in his introduction to the *Kiskindhakanda*,² thus supporting the earlier view of Paramasiva Iyer.³

And this is what the itinerary of Rama and Lakshmana definitely indicates.

This is also suggested by a brief narration of Ravana's return to Lanka with Sita. From Dandakaranya, they crossed the Pampa and went towards Lanka (III. lii. 5). In this journey there is no reference to hills, forests, or to the Malaya mountain and the reference to the sea is of a general nature (III. lii. 8).

The Lanka which they entered had well laid out roads (III. lii. 11). Ravana then showed Sita round his palace with a pillared hall (III. liii. 6-12). But a little earlier (III. lii. 20-7) he sent eight powerful Rakshasas to protect Janasthana, and tried to kill Rama. Those scholars who think that Lanka was Ceylon or somewhere in that island have never realized the impossibility of protecting a region in the heart of India from a place in the Indian Ocean. We may, however, regard all this as a figment of the poet's imagination. But if any sensible meaning is to be extracted from these conflicting accounts, we must follow the road we have chosen in our study.

Normally we find that Rama did not make any disparaging remarks about Kaikeyi, nor did he allow Lakshmana to do so. However, while lamenting the loss of Sita, he says that, 'at home in Ayodhya, Kaikeyi will be glad to know about this loss' (III. lvi. 7). Though no further remarks are made still these words spoken at a time of mental tension show that deep in his heart Rama knew how he had been wronged by Kaikeyi and how he and Sita had to suffer because of Kaikeyi.

Though Maricha was still a boy when he was shot at by Rama, he was so afraid of Rama that he saw Rama everywhere in the forest. As Maricha puts it well, 'The whole forest had become Rama' (III. xxxvii. 16).

रामभूतमिदं सर्वमरण्यम् ।

(III. xxxvii. 16)

Now this is a psychological feeling or concept. Either extreme love or extreme hatred is necessary to arouse such a feeling of oneness with the lover or the enemy. A similar instance is cited

² D.R. Mankad, *The Valmiki-Ramayana*, Vol. IV, *Kiskindhakanda*, Baroda, 1965, p. lix.

³ Paramasiva Iyer, *Ramayana and Lanka*, Bangalore, 1940, p. 31.

in the *Bhagavata* about Hiranyakasipu who, because of his intense hatred of Vishnu, sees him in everything or everywhere.

Both these concepts have been held to be true or possible by modern psychology. They probably became prominent in Indian philosophy after the gradual emergence of the Bhakti cult as earlier the performance of sacrifices was regarded as a normal means of attaining earthly or other-worldly objectives.⁴

Another interesting psychological trait is evident in Rama's behaviour. He was so heartbroken at the loss of Sita, that he asked various trees, one after the other, whether they knew anything about Sita (III. lviii. 12). Exactly the same device is employed by Kalidasa in the *Vikramorvasi* where we find Purarava asking this tree and that to tell him something about his beloved (Urvasi).

In III. lviii. 24 the words '*na te-asti karunamayi*' remind us of a similar expression or words uttered by Rama in the Third Act of *Uttararamacharita* where Sita was made invisible and we were shown through Rama's grief how dearly he loved Sita.

न तेऽस्ति करुणा मयि । (III.lviii.24)

ता कथं नास्त्येव । नन्व करुणे वैदेहि ।

(उत्तररामचरितं, III.xlii.43)

It would thus appear that by the early centuries of the Christian era, such expressions and methods of expressing the intensity of feeling had become a common stock of Sanskrit poets. And it is difficult to say who the originator was and who the borrower. But there is little doubt that all these were directly the outcome of the growth of the Bhakti movement.

Rama returned after killing Maricha, bringing the flesh with him (III. xlii. 21) to Dandakaranya also called Janasthana (III.lii.20-7), and was the home of the Rakshasas, as Ravana told Sita (III.xliv.27). Then they entered Krauncharanya (III.lxv.5). But, before entering this forest, they saw Jatayu lying fatally injured, and on his death-bed. They collected some dry wood and cremated the dead Jatayu (III.lxiv.28-35) who, before dying, told them that Ravana had abducted Sita, and flown away southwards with the help of *maya* (III.lxiv. 9-10).

⁴ See P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Poona, 1962, Vol. V, pp. 950-80.

After cremating Jatayu, Rama and Lakshmana went first westwards and then southwards. Leaving the Janasthana they entered the Krauncha forest. Here they saw the huge Kabandha with his arms spread out. With these he caught hold of Rama and Lakshmana who were each armed with a sword, a bow and arrows (III. lxx. 14-24). The brothers with their swords chopped off Kabandha's arms. Kabandha then narrated his own account and asked Rama to enter into an alliance with Sugriva in order to recover Sita. The latter lived in Rsyamuka. This was near Pampa, also called Puskarini (III.lxx.5). Arriving on the shore of the Pampa, they saw Savari-*asrama* (III.lxx.4). This was situated in Savari-*vana*, also called Matanga-*vana* (III. lxx. 16-17). Here there was a lake of the same name (III.lxxi.13).

However, of all the insights we have gathered about material objects, as well as of customs, manners and psychological concepts, I think the most important is the discussion or dialogue between Rama and Sita almost at the beginning of the *Aranyakanda*. Hundreds of people, scholars as well as laymen, must have read this. Many know these verses by rote and some orthodox scholars recite them daily. Still, from my study, it would appear that few scholars and writers have given any serious thought to the import of the discussion or the great truth that lies behind this discussion, which might appear to be just matter of fact. This is given at the end of this chapter.

The mention of Sabari, and the kind of penance she is said to have performed is interesting for the first, i.e., *sramani*, suggests that this Sabari was a Buddhist. This is also suggested by the kind of penance she was practising, as we can make out from the kinds of questions asked by Rama.

That she was a Savara, an adivasi of this region, is also proved by the fact that she would not have been allowed to perform the Aryan or Vedic type of penance, because she was a Sudra. Later we are told in the *Uttarakanda* how Rama had to kill Sambuka, because he was a Sudra and not supposed to practise penance.

Anyway, Rama was extremely pleased with his visit to this place, for he said that all the evil atmosphere he had experienced after the kidnapping of Sita in the forest had now gone; Sabari was also pleased, and gave up her life of her own accord.

The mention of Savari-*asrama* is also important for tracing

Rama's route to Lanka. At present, the place known as Savari-Narayana⁵ or Sheorinarayan in the tourist map of Madhya Pradesh is situated about 40 km (or 30 miles) southeast of Bilaspur. This is the heart of the adivasi area, where, besides Savaras, there are Gonds and several other aboriginal tribes. The present site is situated on the northern bank of the Mahanadi.

Either this is the site of the original Savari-*asrama*, or the *asrama* was situated somewhere in this region.

Anyway, if Rama had taken this route from Allahabad after crossing the Triveni at Prayag, he might have taken the route due south and passed through Rewa-Govindgarh, Shahdol, Bilaspur, Sheorinarayan, Raipur, and entered the heart of the Gond forest in the present Bastar district. Epigraphically this was the Dandakaranya. And the original Lanka should have been situated in this region.

Thus Rama had no occasion to cross the Narbada, for the entire region, with its headwaters at Amarkantak, is situated to the west of his southwards route. As Mankad said earlier. 'It is all Vindhya; they (the monkeys) never left the Vindhyas and they never crossed the Narbada.'⁶

Further, as pointed out in the section on Lanka, even now, the people of Andhra Pradesh call small islands in the river as 'Lanka'. The *Aranyakanda* mentions two other interesting points.

The first is the curious social custom of the the right of a younger brother to the elder brother's wife. Sita taunted or scolded Lakshmana, when the latter was unwilling to leave her alone by saying that he would not be able to marry her (after Rama's death). Probably this was the normal practice, that if the elder brother died, the younger could acquire his wife in marriage (III.lvii.15).

भाबो मयि तवात्यर्थं पाप एव निवेशितः ।

विनष्टे भ्रातरि प्राप्ते न च त्वं माभवाप्स्यसि ॥

(III.lvii.15)

The second interesting point is in praise of *kshama* (forgiveness). Lakshmana told Rama that this was the prime virtue of an Arya, and advised him to be patient, find the culprit who had kidnapped Sita, rather than try to destroy everybody (III.lxi.3-5).

⁵ Savari is the Sanskrit equivalent of Sabari which is in Prakrit.

⁶ Mankad, op. cit., p. lix.

Fig. 1. Gajalakshmi standing on a lotus backed by two elephants (Excavations at Kausambi, 1956-57, c. 100 B.C.)



Fig. 2. Terra-cotta plaque showing Ravana carrying away Sita (Allahabad Museum, c. 100 B.C.)



Fig. 3. Lakshmi standing on a lotus backed by two elephants
(Sanchi Stupa, c. 100 B.C.)



Fig. 4. Rama and Sita seated in their hut while Surpanakha approaches Lakshmana
who refuses to listen (Gupta Temple, Deogarh, c. A.D. 400)



Fig. 5. Terra-cotta plaque showing Sita engrossed in thought in Asokavatika (Banahet, M.P., c. 100 B.C.)



Fig. 6. Sita offering alms to Ravana (Nachna, M.P., c. A.D. 400)

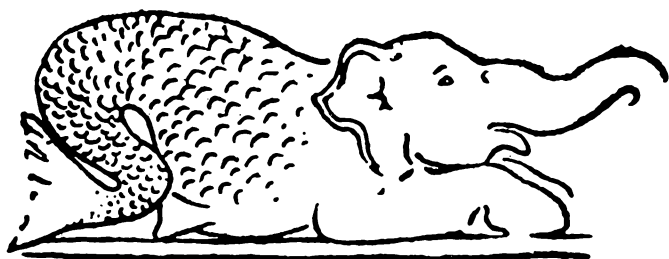


Fig. 7. *Ihamriga*; elephant with body of a fish (Amaravati, c. A.D. 100)

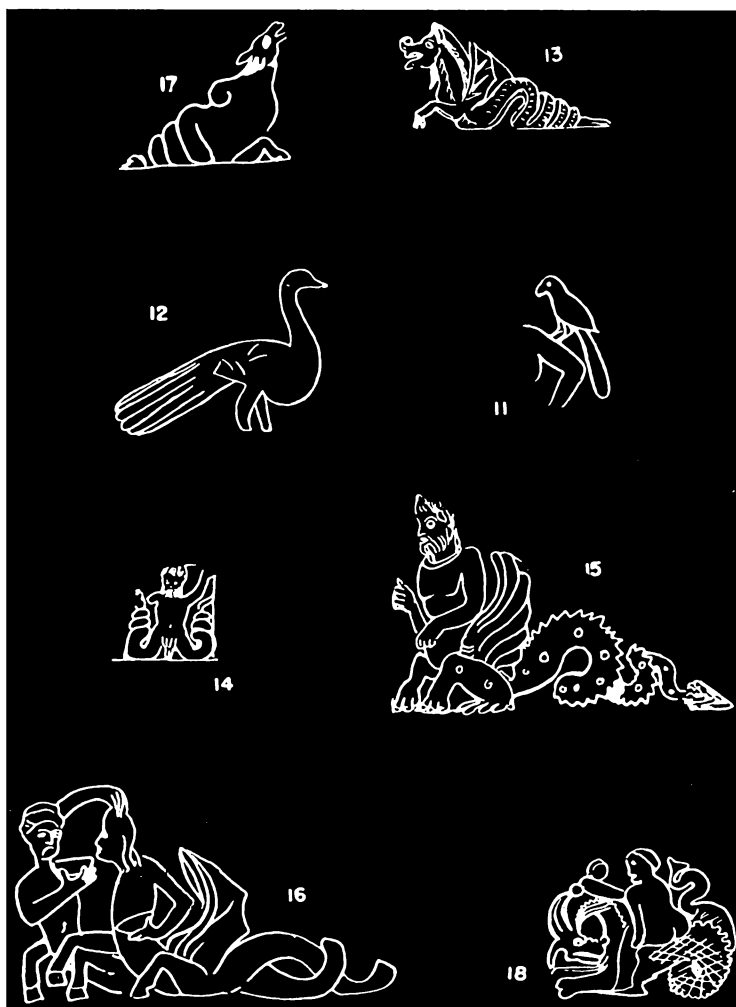


Fig. 8. *Ihamrigas*: figures with human or animal faces and serpent, dragon or fish tails (Gandhara fauna)

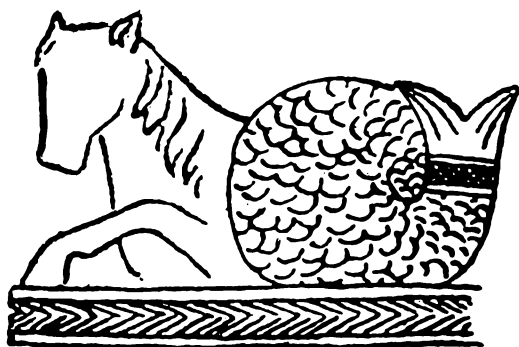


Fig. 9. *Ihamriga*: horse with body of a fish
(Amaravati, c. A.D. 100)



Fig. 10. *Ihamriga*: hippocampus on a sea-monster with horse head and fish tail (Depicted on a gold object from a Scythian monument, fourth century B.C.)

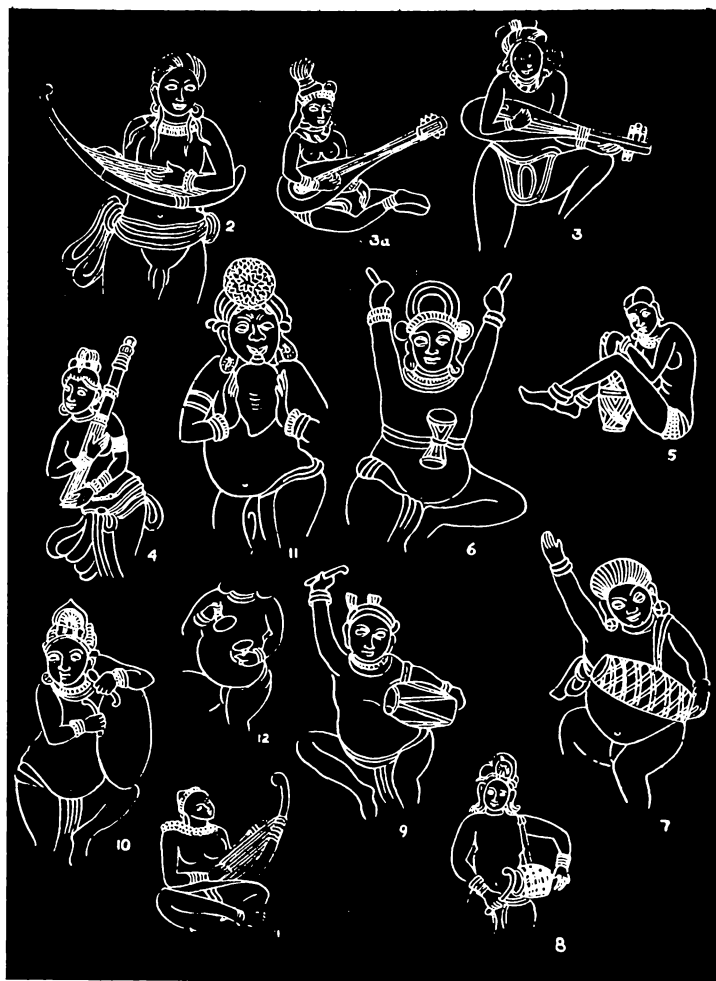


Fig. 11. Musical instruments: 1—4 string; 5—10 percussion; 11 blow *sankha*; 12 cymbals (Nagarjunakonda)



Fig. 12. Musical instruments: 1—4 typical Roman or Indo-Greek (Gandhara)

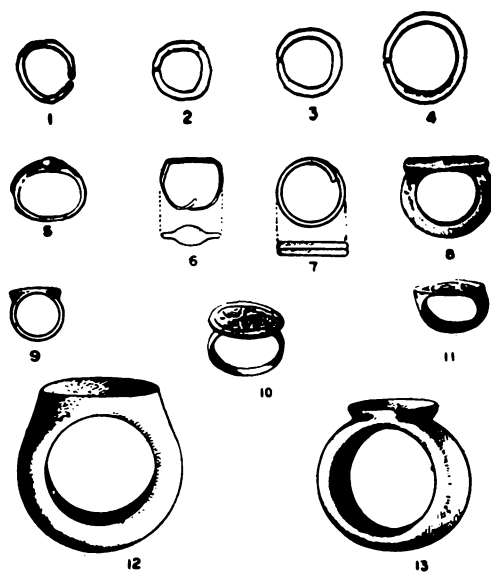


Fig. 13. Finger-rings of India: 1—5 from Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro, c. 2500 B.C.; 8—9 from Hastinapur, period III, c. 100 B.C.; 10 from Eran, M.P., c. 100 B.C.; 12—13 from Taxila, c. 50 B.C.

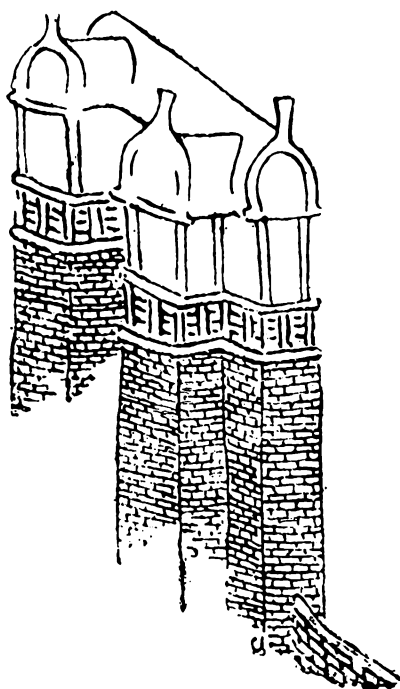


Fig. 14. Gateway of Amaravati city showing *attaka sala* (c. A.D. 100)

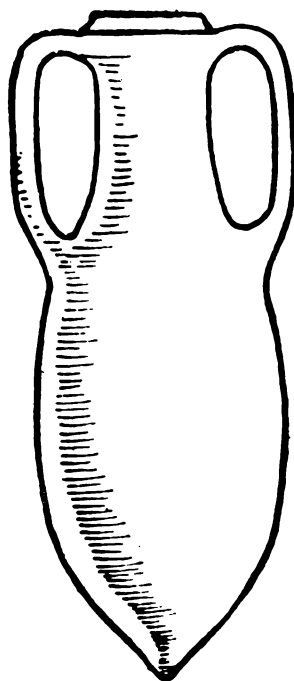


Fig. 15. Roman wine amphora

अदृष्टपूर्वं संक्रुद्धं दृष्ट्वा रामं स लक्ष्मणः ।

अब्रवीत्..... ॥

(III.lxi.3)

चन्द्रे लक्ष्मीः प्रभा सूर्ये गतिर्वार्यौ भुवि क्षमा ।

एतच्च नियतं सर्वं त्वयि चानुत्तमं यशः ॥

(III.lxi.5)

Though the *Ramayana* has indicated the real cause of the Rama-Ravana conflict in the *Aranyakanda*, this has scarcely been noticed or laid before laymen as well as the scholars, who have been led astray throughout the centuries by the subsequent, and more repugnant cause—the kidnapping of Sita by Ravana.

In fact, Sita had visualized the conflict, though perhaps not dreamt of her own abduction. This is hinted at by Jatayu when he first met Rama, after Rama left Chitrakuta and proceeded to Panchavati, for he said of his own accord that he would protect Sita during the absence of Rama and Lakshmana (III.xiii.34).

After leaving Ayodhya in a chariot, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana reached the Kalindi. This they crossed in a boat, and by slow stages reached Chitrakuta. This is a solitary granite hill, indeed a most picturesque scene among the drab Kaimur sandstone ridges. Hence its name is most appropriate, 'the picturesque hill'.

After staying here for a long time—ten years—Rama and his party entered Dandakaranya. Here a number of hermits lived; some 'on air' and others 'wrapped in wet cloth'. All animals moved about freely, without fear.

When, in such a free, natural atmosphere, Sita saw Rama 'heavily armed' all the time, with bow and arrows and a sword, she told him, 'I do not like to go (with you) or enter the Dandaka (forest), so heavily armed. Though ostensibly these weapons are for the protection of the hermits and other forest-dwellers, wearing them all the time (*nityam*) will make your mind (*buddhi*) violent or warlike (*raudri*), as it happened in the case of a hermit, in whose *asrama* Indra had cleverly planted a sword' (III.viii. 1-19). How psychologically true is Sita's observation and advice, not order, that is expressed out of 'love and respect for Rama'? This she carefully and shrewdly told Rama, as a truly devoted Hindu wife alone could do. She further explicated her observation, 'Why these weapons, in this forest, where austerities are practised? And why kill Rakshasas, residents sheltered in

Dandaka without any cause ?' (III.viii. 21-3). It is significant that this point is stressed by Surpanakha in her dialogue with Ravana (III. xxxii. 9) and in the latter's (Ravana's) discussion with Maricha (III.xxxiv.8). Then follows Sita's more general observation, 'Our mind is tainted (*kalusa*) by resorting to or keeping arms in a forest or hermitage. You may follow your Kshatriya profession (of fighting) after going to Ayodhya. This is true *dharma*; by its observance follows wealth (*artha*), happiness (*sukha*), everything, in fact this whole world' (III.viii. 26).

न हि मे रोचते वीर गमन दण्डकान्प्रति ।	
कारणं तत्र वक्ष्यामि वदन्त्याः श्रूयतां मम ॥	(III.viii.10)
स्नेहाच्च बहुमानाच्च स्मारये त्वां न शिक्षये ।	(III.viii.20)
बुद्धिर्वैरं विना हन्तुं राक्षसान्दण्डकाश्रितान्	
अपराधं विना हन्तुं लोकान्वीर न कामये ।	(III.viii.21)
नित्यं शस्त्रं परिवहन्क्रमेण स तपोधनः ।	
चकार रौद्रीं स्वां बुद्धिं त्यक्त्वा तपसि निश्चयम् ॥	(III.viii.18)
स्त्रीचापलादेतदुदाहृतं मे	(III.viii.29)
ते चार्ता दण्डकारण्ये मुनयः संशित व्रताः ।	
मां सीते स्वमात्रम्य शरण्याः शरणंगताः ॥	(III.ix.4)

This wholesome advice received a characteristic reply from Rama, a reply which we are accustomed to hear throughout the ages, but particularly during the last thirty years, after the two world wars.

Said Rama, 'Sages, hermits and other residents of the Dandaka forest have themselves sought my protection from the Rakshasas who are cannibals (live on human flesh) and harass hermits practising penance' (III.ix.6).

ते वयं भवता रक्ष्या भवद्विषय वासिनः ।	
नगरस्थो वनस्थो वा त्वं नो राजा जनेश्वरः ॥	(III.i.19)
ततस्त्वां शरणार्थं च शरण्यं समुपस्थिताः ।	
परिपालय नो राम वध्यमाना न्निशाचरैः ॥	(III.v.18)

Hence he, that is, Rama was determined to protect them, even though he had to risk his own life, or those of Sita and Lakshmana (III.ix.18).

अप्यहं जीवितं जह्यां त्वां वा सीते सलक्ष्मणाम् ।

न तु प्रतिज्ञां संश्रुत्य ब्राह्मणेभ्यो विशेषतः ॥

(III.ix.18)

Of course, he said this out of love and friendship (*sneha* and *sauharda*) because what she had said was truly befitting her character and family tradition (III.ix.20).

सदृशं चानुरूपं च कुलस्य तव शोभते ।

(III.ix.20)

Not only did Rama pay no heed to this friendly and womanly (*stri-chapalya*) advice, but he was prepared to abandon her. For he was determined to punish or even kill the Rakshasas who, it was alleged, were disturbing the hermits practising penance in the Dandakaranya.

With a view to achieving this Rama was further granted or equipped with the divine bow of Vishnu by the sage Agastya when he visited his *asrama* on the way to Panchavati on the Godavari. Along with the bow he was also given an inexhaustible quiver of arrows (III.xi.28-33). Rama also received one more delegation of the hermits who again requested his protection.

The consequences of this apparently innocent march southwards were as foretold by Sita. As long as Rama and his brother remained around Chitrakuta, that is, in the present Mirzapur-Banda districts of Uttar Pradesh, no notice seems to have been taken of Rama's long, ten years' stay (III.x.25) as not a single incident of a quarrel or a fight with the Rakshasas or *asuras* (the aboriginals) is mentioned. This region formed a part of *dakshina-Kosala*, and was an integral part of the Ikshvaku dynasty with its capital at Ayodhya. However, when the party, though small, but armed with the 'latest weapons', penetrated further south where the aboriginals lived, a conflict was naturally expected. First, the advance outposts of Ravana were destroyed. And the first rounds were fired by Khara and Dushana, who are described as brothers of Ravana.

However, both these brothers with their army and followers, supposed to be no less than 14,000, were killed, single-handed, by Rama. Shorn of exaggeration and myth this might only mean that the aboriginals, with their weapons of stone and wood, were no match for Rama, who was armed probably with a 'composite' bow, and had arrows of several types. This is definitely indicated

in the *sargas* which describe the battle. The first fourteen Rakshasas fought with *shula* (spears) only. The large army of 14,000 fought with many other weapons but not the bow and arrow. Even Dushana fought with primitive weapons. Khara alone is said to have used a bow. But this compared with that of Rama, must have been a simple one.⁷

The story of this terrible carnage was told by Surpanakha, who hurriedly ran to Lanka. (She could not have gone to Ceylon in a hurry.) She also advised Ravana to avoid an open battle with Rama, because he was said to be invincible.

जनस्थाननिमित्तं हि कृतवैरोऽस्मि राक्षसैः । (III.lv.9)

This was most probably the cause of the Rama-Ravana conflict in the original story. In fact Rama himself expressly says so. Equally noteworthy is the fact that in this itinerary of Rama from Chitrakuta to the Godavari, there is no reference to the Vindhya and the Narbada, though there is one reference to Agastya, who had stopped the further growth of this mountain range (III.x.83).

The Vindhya and the Narbada are two such outstanding topographic features of central India, that no one can bypass these and think of going south. The only routes are the present Agra road which crosses the Narbada at Khalghat, or the ferries at Maheswar and Mandla upstream. As against these the delegation of hermits which had come to invite Rama to go further south to Panchavati had expressly mentioned the woes, the daily murders, of the residents of the river Pampa, and the rivers following the Mandakini (*anu-Mandakini*) and those of Chitrakuta (III.v.16).

एहि पश्य शरीराणि मुनीनां भावितात्मनाम् ।
हृतानां राक्षसैः॥ (III.v.15)

पम्पानदीनिवासानामनुमन्दाकिनीमपि ।
चित्रकूटलयानां च क्रियते कदनं महत् ॥ (III.v.16)

⁷ A composite bow was one, as the name suggests, which was made not of one material alone, like bamboo or other pliable wood, but any one of these, and strengthened in the middle and at both the ends by the addition of copper strips, and tough animal hide; such bows were first made in c. 2000 B.C., in western Asia.

With such clear, unambiguous clues in the *Ramayana* itself how can one think of the Godavari in Nasik, the Pampa in Karnataka and Lanka in Ceylon ? And that too based on later, badly interpolated passages in the *Kiskindhakanda* ?

Anyway this lesser known story has a much wider significance or lesson for the world today. And hence the immortality of the *Ramayana*.

5. Kiskindhakanda

Kiskindhakanda,¹ as the name suggests, deals primarily with Kiskindha, the home of Sugriva. This is mentioned at the end of the *Aranyakanda*, by the transformed Kabandha, who says that Sugriva would help Rama to find Sita.

We are told that Kiskindha, as well as Rsyamuka, the Pampa and Prasravana, were adjacent to Dandakaranya which was in the Vindhya.

There are also definite indications that the original Lanka was in this natural setting. It was on a hill, which was situated in or near a large natural lake.

However, when the original story was tampered with, and the epic recomposed, the miraculous and fantastic elements were added. Any critical reader can detect this, though some of the finer points, which help in dating the probable time of these additions, would require a good knowledge of ancient Indian history.

All doubts about the existence of interpolations are removed when one reads Sugriva's 'world view', that is, the instructions given by him to the Vanaras going in the four cardinal directions to search for Sita. However, this obvious interpolation has not received the attention it deserves for a critical study of the epic.

It is in this interpolation or as a consequence of it that we come across the incident of the ring. This is not an ordinary ring, but a signet-ring, a ring bearing Rama's name (*Ramanamankita*), which Rama gave of his own accord to Hanuman, so that Hanuman might easily be recognized by Sita as an emissary of Rama. This incident is of great historical significance, but has curiously remained unnoticed so far.

Though the views on ethics, metaphysics, polity and religion in the *Kiskindhakanda* are comparatively few, still these will be pointed out and discussed.

¹ D.R. Mankad, *The Valmiki-Ramayana*, Vol. IV, *Kiskindhakanda*, Baroda, 1965.

That the so-called Vanaras were ordinary human beings, residents of the Vindhya hills and forests is obvious, though the poet has often described them as monkeys, and given them various names according to their appearance and natural habitat.

Their transformation from animal to human form was facilitated by the fact that these Vanaras were *kamarupa* (they could change their form at will) and *kamaga* (they could go anywhere at will), though one would like to know, if the Vanaras were *kamagas*, why could they not cross the ocean? Why was it necessary to persuade Hanuman to undertake this difficult task? (Strictly speaking, these questions are irrelevant, because a poet is free to have his flights of fancy.)

Having taken the liberty to regard the Vanaras as capable of changing their form at will, the poet next describes Kiskindha as a city (*puri* or *nagari*) (IV.xx.7). But while doing so, the poet repeatedly reminds us that Kiskindha was nothing but a large cave (IV.xxiv.20),² well provided with all kinds of comforts (IV.xxix.10). Even this description of a cave-city seems to have undergone some changes. For when Sugriva occupied it, it was just a 'city'. Later when Lakshmana visited it, it not only had guards on the outer gate, but palaces and numerous houses, some with seven rooms or courts (*kaksya*) (IV.xxxii.19). There was a royal road as well (IV.xxxii.2). The ruler of this royal city had to be crowned as a king in a ceremony with waters from the seven seas, in golden pitchers (IV.xxiii.20-33). But there were no Brahmins for this ceremony. Sugriva was crowned in this way, and Vali was cremated as an Aryan. Sandalwood and other fragrant woods were brought from a long distance, and the body burnt on the river bank. After the cremation, all those assembled, including the women, were sprinkled with water (IV.xxiv.43). Thus, whether living or dead, the Vanara chiefs were regarded and described as normal Aryan kings.

Through all this make-believe of their not being human, one can easily discern their very human nature, as Vali and Sugriva, and even Hanuman, were forest-dwellers (*vanavasis*), and not familiar with advanced weapons like the bow, arrow and the sword. Thus, when Sugriva first saw Rama and Lakshmana so

² All the references are to the *Kiskindhakanda*.

armed from a distance, he got frightened, and instructed Hanuman to find out who these 'heavily-armed' people were and what their intention was.

Likewise, the citizens, including the guards of Kiskindha, were frightened when Lakshmana went to Kiskindha to remind Sugriva that the time to search for Sita had arrived (IV.xxxii.2-3).

However, the best testimony is provided by Vali, who, when mortally wounded by Rama, told him, 'Why have you killed me, a forest-dweller, one who lives on fruits and roots? What wrong have I committed and how were you justified in killing me, when I was not fighting with you?' (IV.xvii.21-6).

वयं वनचरा राम मृगा मूलफलाशनाः ।

एषा प्रकृतिरस्माकं पुरुषस्त्वं नरेश्वरः ॥ (IV.xvii.26)

While this question gives us a true insight into the character of the Vanaras, the reply which Rama gave to this protest is equally significant (IV. xviii. 6-11) and important for locating the original Lanka. No scholar seems to have noticed this verse. It definitely tells us that Kiskindha formed a part of Kosala, southern Kosala to be specific. So it is absolutely wrong to locate it somewhere in Karnataka.

इक्ष्वाकूणामियं भूमिः सशैलवनकानना ।

मृगपक्षिमनुष्याणां निग्रहानुग्रहावपि ॥ (IV.xviii.6)

In the Critical Edition, *sargas* 39-42 occupy a unique position. It is in these sections alone that we find references to various hills, rivers and countries of India for the first time. Earlier even when south India was mentioned, its important rivers like the Kaveri and Tamraparni seemed to be unknown. A glance at the list of places that the Vanaras were to visit in the east, north, west and south, would show the reader that these *sargas* were afterthoughts and interpolated at a much later date. Interestingly, the lists contain not only obvious mistakes, often about the general location of the place or the country, but older and newer names are mentioned together. It is these which help in dating the interpolations.

We shall not attempt to identify all the places and countries in these lists, though this has to be attempted some time or the other.

It is also worth ascertaining the place from where Sugriva gave these instructions to Hanuman. Simple logic would suggest, as would be clear from the sequel, that this place was somewhere in Madhya Pradesh, more in its north or centre than in the south. As Mankad has shown, it was to the north of the Narbada.

Vinata, the leader of the Vanara legion which went east, was asked to search the rivers: Bhagirathi, Sarayu, Kausiki, Kalindi or Yamuna and the hill Yamuna, Sarasvati, Sindhu, Sona, Mahi and Kalamahi; and the countries of Videha, Malava, Kosala, Kasi, Magadha, Mahagrama, Pundra, Vanga, the port (*pattana*) of Kosakara, the land (*bhumi*) of Rajatakara, Kirata (residents of an island), Yavadvipa, with its seven kingdoms, and the mountain Sisira, beyond Yavadvipa, the Lohita-sagara, the Ksiroda-sagara, the mountain Risabha, the Jaloda-sagara, the great mountain Kanaka (the abode of thousand-headed Ananta) and Sudarsanadvipa.

In this long list of hills, rivers, oceans, countries and peoples, some can be easily identified, and might be said to belong to the east or northeast of a place like Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh. Except the river Sindhu and Malava, the rest might be said to be situated generally in the east.

Amongst the *dvipas* and the *sagaras*, Yavadvipa stands for Java and the archipelago, whereas Lohita-sagara should be identified with the river Brahmaputra. Again the use of the suffix *sagara* shows that the word did not always connote a sea, or an ocean.

The leaders of the southern legion were Angada and Hanuman. They were asked to search (IV.xl.8-41) : the thousand-peaked Vindhya, Narbada, Godavari, Krishnavena, Varada, Mekhala, Utkala, Dasarna, Avanti, Abhravanti, Vidarbha, Rishika, Mahisaka, Vanga, Kalinga, Kausika, Dandakaranya, Godavari, Andhra, Pundra, Cola, Pandya, Kerala, Kaveri, Malaya hill, Agastya (*asrama?*), Tamraparni, Kavata of the Pandya, Mahendra mountain, island on the other side, Puspitaka hill, mountain named Suryavan, mountain Vaidyuta, the city (*puri*) of Bhogavati of Vasuki, Rishabha mountain and a *gramani* named Sailusa.

As said earlier, this is the first and the last time that the rivers and countries of the south are mentioned in some detail. All

the rivers except the Godavari, that is, the Narbada, Krishna, Venna, Varada, Kaveri and the Tamraparni, are mentioned in a fairly correct geographical order.

As far as the countries and people are concerned, the order of their occurrence is again fairly accurate and detailed, except for the mention of Dasarna and Avanti and the repetition of the name Vanga. This might only indicate that the interpolater was a northerner. If so, all these countries would still be supposed to be situated in the south.

It is interesting to note that the interpolater cleverly restrains himself when he mentions an island in the southern ocean; he does not name it. For this has to be discovered by Hanuman.

Susena, father of Tara, was nominated the leader of the western group. He was asked to search in the west—the Varuni, that is the country of Varuna (IV. xli. 2-40). The places where he searched were named Surastra, Balika, Abhira, the groves of Ketaki and Tamala and Narikela, Marichipattana (IV. xli. 10), Jatipura, the confluence of the Indus and the sea, the hill Hemagiri, Pariyatra, Chakravaka mountain in the midst of the sea, Varaha mountain in the midst of the ocean, Pragjyotishapura of Naraka, and Meru mountain.

Here again the narrator committed an error by including Pragjyotishapura, as well as Meru among the important places and mountains in the west. In spite of these grievous errors, the list gives very important evidence for dating the entire interpolation. This is provided by the mention of Abhiras and Marichipattanam—the pepper port. The former became an influential political set-up of western India in about the third century A.D. We have coins of three or four Abhira kings. These are imitative of the silver coins of the Western Ksatrapas. And it appears that for a time the Abhiras had supplanted the former.

It was at this very time, or slightly earlier, in about the first century B.C. that India had a flourishing trade with the western world, exporting spices, particularly *maricha* (pepper) from Kerala, and fine cloth, etc. Western geographers like Strabo and Pliny mention Muzuris and Nelcenda on the Kerala coast as the ports from which pepper was bought by the Romans. The inclusion of Marichipattana helps us a great deal in fixing the lower

limit of the time of the latest additions to this *kanda*.³

The group of Vanaras under Satabali who were sent to the north (IV.xlii.10-53) were to search among : Mlecchas, Pulindas, Surasena, Prasthala, Bharata, Kuru, Madraka, Kambojas, Yavanas, Sakas, Arattaka, Balhika, Risika, Paurava, Tankana, China, Paramachina, Nihara, Darada, Kailasa mountain, Krauncha hill, Mainaka mountain, Vaikhanasasara (lake), lake or river Sailoda on the shores of which grow : canes (*venu*) called Kichaka, Uttarakuru and Somagiri.

This comparatively longer list of places, countries, peoples, hills and lakes shows that the narrator was not fully aware that the Bharatas, Kurus and Pauravas had long since ceased to exist as separate people. However, their memory survived. Hence they are mentioned along with the newer peoples like the Sakas, Yavanas and Cinas and Paramaecinias. These are generally identified with the Tibeto-Chinese people and the Chinese proper, according to Dr Sircar, who seems to be unaware of the references in the *Ramayana*.⁴

The absence of the Huns in the list helps us again in fixing the lower limit. They became a force only in the fifth century in the political arena of northern and central India. Hence we can safely date these *sargas* to a period between the second and fourth century A.D.

When we remember that the ring incident is a part of or a sequel to this late interpolation, we can easily appreciate its inclusion in this *kanda* and its effect on the development or the denouement of the rest of the *Ramayana*, as we know it today.

The introduction of this incident, viz., the ring bearing the name of Rama (*Ramanamankita anguliya*) may be viewed in a double perspective, historically or archaeologically, as also from the point of the composition of the story, as it definitely indicates that the author knew the consequences of its inclusion in the story.

The incident forms a part of the 'special' or 'additional'

³ There is a very good article in the *Reader's Digest*, September 1977, pp. 137-45, entitled 'Pepper—King of Spices'. This very ancient trade passed from the Arabs to the Greeks and Romans and later to the Portuguese. We have already cited E.H. Warmington, *The Commerce between the Roman Empire and India* and the numerous references it contains to Muchiri or Muziris or Cranganore.

⁴ Sircar, op. cit., p. 34.

(*visesa*) instruction which was given by Sugriva to Hanuman who was proceeding southwards (IV. xliii. 1). Rama told Hanuman 'You alone have all the wisdom for diplomacy (*nyayapandita*) and know how to act according to the conditions of the place, time and occasion' (IV. xliii. 6). Rama also thought that Hanuman was the right person for the job as he (Rama) gave the ring bearing his name to Hanuman who could produce it, if required, and identify himself as an emissary of Rama before Sita (IV. xliii. 11-12). Little thought has been given by previous writers on the *Ramayana* to this incident. In the first place, in some versions of this incident narrated later to Bharata, instead of a ring, a simple jewel (*mani*) is mentioned.

From our point of view, the incident is of a great significance, particularly if we accept the reading as included in the Critical Edition. But even the reading *mani* needs discussion. How and whence did Rama produce this jewel? He and Lakshmana had left for the Dandaka as hermits, abandoning their normal clothes and ornaments, keeping only the three weapons, the bow, arrows and sword. The same argument applies to the ring.

But, if we accept the reading as 'signet-ring', then a further question arises: 'When did India have such signet-rings?' Do they occur in the Indus Valley civilization or the Harappan and subsequent cultures? This question can be easily answered archaeologically (and even historically, based on the evidence collected from ancient literature).

Now it is nearly sixty years since the Indus Valley civilization was discovered. We have detailed reports on Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa and Chanhu-Daro, and a good account of Lothal and some articles on Kalibangan, Kot Diji and such other sites in Sind, Punjab and Rajasthan. Though finger-rings of terra-cotta and copper-bronze and perhaps bone and ivory have been found from some of these sites, all these rings are ordinary (Fig. 13).

Later, sites of ochre-coloured pottery were discovered from Uttar Pradesh and Haryana. Some of these might be late Harappan as well. None of these have yielded any rings so far, probably because the sites known are small and not fully excavated.

These cultures were succeeded, it appears at present, by the painted grey ware culture in around 800 B.C. So far many sites of this culture have not been excavated. But what we know from

Hastinapur and a few other sites such as Ahichchhatra is that culturally this period of four hundred years was poorer than the Indus Valley civilization or the subsequent northern black polished ware culture. Even in the latter period which coincides with the period of the Mauryan empire, though we have many other things besides fine pottery, no finger-rings have so far been found with writing on them.

To our present knowledge, such finger-rings or signet-rings appeared for the first time when the Indo-Greeks and others ruled in Taxila and the country in the northwest of India. In fact, the best and perhaps the only evidence of signet-rings of an early period is available from Taxila. Fortunately, this has been fully discussed and illustrated by Marshall.⁵ It may be mentioned here that it will not do to produce a finger-ring even with early Brahmi writing on it from somewhere and say 'Behold, here we have a ring with early Brahmi letters!'. Such a ring must be obtained from a well-conducted, stratigraphical excavation.

With this background about the introduction of this topic in this *kanda*, and the history of the ring in India, we can say with confidence that not only these *sargas* but the entire *kanda*, and the subsequent *Sundarakanda* and *Yuddhakanda*, were recomposed in or after the second century at the earliest.

So much about the composition. But the question would still arise whether or not the identification episode was there in the earlier or shall we say the original, *Ramayana*? As mentioned before, some versions of the *Ramayana*, for instance the one used by Dutt⁶ speak of a *mani* and not a ring, which was used by Hanuman as identification. If this can be proved by a further textual study of all the different versions extant today, then the point we have made about the recomposition of the *Ramayana* will get additional support.

If, however, the ring episode, though apparently small and insignificant, was added later, in or after the second century, then we shall have to say that its introduction has dramatically helped in the development of the story, exactly as the recovery of Dusyanta's ring did in *Shakuntala*.

A critical study of the *Kiskindhakanda* has also shown that

⁵ John Marshall, *Taxila* (in three volumes).

⁶ M.N. Dutt, *Ramayana*, 'Kiskindhakanda and Sundarakanda'; a signet-ring is mentioned on p. 826.

the poet was not yet sure that Lanka was outside Madhya Pradesh, really beyond some hill-range in Vindhya, that it was to be identified with Simhala, which till the other day, was known as Ceylon, and now called Sri Lanka. Curiously, while the *Mahabharata*, several *Puranas* and even Varahamihira's *Brihadjataka* mention Simhala as quite distinct from Lanka, the *Ramayana* does not mention Simhala even once. It is shown elsewhere how all inscriptions, right from Asoka's time until about the twelfth century, refer to Simhala as quite different from Lanka.

The two incidents that throw some significant light on the position of the 'original' Lanka occur in connection with Sampati, the brother of Jatayu.

In the first incident, Sampati himself told the Vanaras headed by Angada and Hanuman how he saw Sita being carried away by Ravana. He says, 'With my wings burnt, I fell in or among the Vindhya.' Lying thus he saw a young, fair, beautiful woman, wearing ornaments and dressed in a yellow silk garment, being taken away by Ravana. According to Sampati, this Ravana, a Rakshasa, lived in Lanka which was situated in a sea, full one hundred *yojanas* in length. On reaching the southern shore (*kula*), Angada and Hanuman would be able to see Ravana (IV. lvii. 2-23). Still more revealing is the small account of Suparsva, narrated once again by his father Sampati to the Vanaras. Sampati said, 'My son Suparsva was sitting in or across the (narrow) entrance of Mahendra hill in the Vindhya. It was almost evening, and he had not been able to obtain any food for his hungry father. So seated on the edge of a *sagara* (lake ?) blocking the narrow passage, he saw a person carrying in his arms a very fair woman (or a woman with the complexion of the rising sun). In contrast to this fair woman, the man was very dark (*bhinnaanjanachayaupama*). However, he very politely and diplomatically requested for a passage (*samnavinitena-panthanam-abhiyacitah*). Naturally, when so requested, Suparsva allowed him to pass. But latter he learnt that this person was no other than Ravana, and the woman, Sita' (IV. lviii. 7-21).

महेन्द्रस्य गिरेर्द्वारमावृत्य च समास्थितिः ॥ (IV. lviii. 13)

... ..

तत्र कश्चिन्मया दृष्टः सूर्योदयसमप्रभाम् । (IV. lviii. 15)

स्त्रियमादाय गच्छन्वै भिन्नाञ्जनचयोपमः ॥ (IV. lviii. 16)

... ..

स च मे रावणो राजा रक्षसां प्रतिवेदितः ॥ (IV. lviii. 20)

हरन्दाशरथेभार्यां रामस्य जनकात्मजाम् ।

भ्रष्टाभरणकौशेयां शोकवेगपराजिताम् ॥ (IV. lviii. 21)

As was already pointed out by Paramasiva Iyer⁷ more than thirty years ago, here we have the most authentic, uncontaminated, first-hand report about the kidnapping of Sita. What it amounts to is extremely important for understanding the genesis of the story. Suparsva does not say, as his father said earlier, that he saw Ravana flying in the air with Sita's yellow silk upper garment shining in the sky, but he tells us that :

1. Ravana was an ordinary human being and black or dark in colour.
2. Ravana was going on foot with Sita in his arms.
3. He was going through a narrow mountain pass, so narrow that hardly one person could pass, with another in his arms.

Now, this account can be accepted *in toto*, because it is so natural. Normally, this is the only way that a man or woman or even an animal could be taken away through the thick-forested mountain passes. Such passes can be seen even today in the sal forests of Madhya Pradesh, not broad roads where one could ride in a horse-drawn chariot or even on a horse. So the later account that Ravana flew in the air with Sita in his arms is pure fancy, a fine piece of poetic imagination.

From this first-hand account another important conclusion follows that Ravana's destination could not be far. It might have been on the other side of the *sagara*, which could have been a large pool of water, or a lake, but certainly not the sea. And even now, one can see a number of such large lakes while going through the forest from Amarkantak to Jagdalpur in eastern Madhya Pradesh.

In fact, this is exactly the scene which the Vanaras under the leadership of Angada and Hanuman saw and even experienced. For nearly a month they searched in every corner of the Vindhyas. And while doing this, they are said to have entered a cave (*bila*) from which they could come out or were brought out only

⁷ T. Paramasiva Iyer, *Ramayana and Lanka*, Bangalore, 1940, p. 23.

after their eyes were blindfolded by a *tapasi*. When they came out from this nightmare, they found themselves on the edge of a hill overlooking a large lake (*sagara*) (IV. lix. 7-9; lxiii. 2-3). All these incidents took place in the Vindhya hills. And by no stretch of the imagination can we say that these Vindhya hills are different from those in central India, and refer to some hills in the south. Though one might cite some text for such toponomical transference of names for the Mahendra and even Malaya hill, there is none to be cited for the Vindhya hills. And it is in the Vindhya hills alone, as far as my personal experience goes, that one suddenly sees large *sagaras*, when crossing one hill after another.

However, when this *kanda* was redacted, the poet had conceived a vague idea about Lanka being somewhere in the Indian Ocean. So on Sampati's instructions, the Vanaras proceeded southwards, came to the Mahendra and on climbing it found themselves on the shores of a *sagara*. This is supposed to be the northern shore of the Indian Ocean (IV. lxiii. 4). Thus, Hanuman is not only made to jump or fly across the Indian Ocean, but the entire Vanara army is taken from central India (the Vindhya hills) to the south.

Some idea of the south—hills and rivers—we do have in Sugriva's 'world view', but one has to remember that the Vanaras under Hanuman, all this time, were in the Vindhya hills. Somehow the poet forgets all about this, as also do a large number of scholars (except Paramasiva Iyer) who have written on this subject.

However, this Lanka in the Indian Ocean, as will be shown in the sequel (in the section on the location of Lanka) has had no existence. It is all an imaginary description of a place, conceived by a poet sitting somewhere in northern India.

Besides these interesting and important incidents about the search for Sita, the introduction of the signet-ring, and the way in which Sita was abducted, we have an insight into a few customs and concepts of the times.

The friendship between Rama and Sugriva was solemnized in the presence of a sacrificial fire and by an offering of flowers (IV. v. 14-16). And then Sugriva tells Rama (not advise) as a friend, 'to have courage' (IV. vii. 12-13).

It is interesting to note that Vali is addressed as *aryaputra* by Tara and later cremated exactly as a Hindu would be (IV. xix. 27).

Further, the bier—*sibika*—was carried on the shoulders, as we do today, by strong, able-bodied people (IV.xxiv.18). Thus, even though these Vanaras might have belonged to some aboriginal tribe, still in the *Ramayana*, they have been treated as full-fledged Aryans (though it also appears that Tara was treated as Sugriva's wife) (IV.xxviii.4; xxxiv.5-13). These verses confirm the impression which was created by Sita's taunt to Lakshmana that the younger brother inherited the wife of the elder brother. Though we might expect such a custom in the Vanara society, it appears to be common for both Aryans and non-Aryans. Anyway, she laments at first that she has become a widow; still later Hanuman gives a human touch by saying that she will forget all this, if she sees Angada crowned (IV.xxi.11). Likewise, Sugriva's coronation was

संस्कार्यो हरिराजस्तु अंगदश्चाभिषिच्यताम् ।

सिंहासनगतं पुत्रं पश्यन्ती शान्तिमेष्यति ॥

(IV. xxi. 11)

performed according to Vedic rites. A white umbrella with a gold handle, and water from the seven seas was brought. Sixteen virgins performed certain ceremonies, but curiously there were no Brahmins, though the ceremonies were performed according to the *sasiras* (IV.xxv.31).

The punishment for kidnapping another's wife (in this case his brother Sugriva's) was death, so Rama said that he was justified in killing Vali. As far as the present *Ramayana* is concerned, we find that Vali accepts this punishment as just, though originally he protests and rebukes Rama for such a cowardly and unlawful act (IV.xviii.41-4).

However, we should note that right up to the seventh century, this explanation was not universally accepted. For we find Lava protesting against it in the *Uttararamacharita* (V.xxxv).

Another very interesting, but also curious statement is made by Tara. While lamenting the lot of a widow, she says, one should not give one's daughter to a warrior, because she is liable to become a widow.

शूराय न प्रदातव्या कन्या खलु विपश्चिता ।

(IV.xxiii.8)

पतिहीना तु या नारी कामं भवतु पुत्रिणी ।

धनधान्यैः सुपूर्णापि विधवेत्युच्यते बुधैः ॥

(IV.xxiii.12)

One wonders if such a cowardly statement could be made at any time in a country's history, and particularly in ancient India, when battles were comparatively more frequent. Such statements are absent in the *Mahabharata* and when we compare this cowardly utterance with that in the *Rigveda* (X.lxxxvi.9) where Indra's wife told the malicious Vrishakapi, 'I am the wife of (brave or warrior) Indra', we see how much social values had deteriorated.

The observance of *chaturmasa* (four months) as a period of rest, when no outdoor work, tour or invasion was undertaken, was fairly well established. So the search for Sita was undertaken only in the month of *Kartika*, at the end of this period (IV.xxix.30-2). This has an important bearing on the popular belief that on this day, which falls in September-October each year, Rama killed Ravana on Dassera, or that he started the invasion of Lanka.

कातिके समनुप्राप्ते त्वं रावणवधे यत ।

(IV.xxv.15)

It should be recalled that the conclusions we have reached about Rshymuka, Kiskindha and Lanka are not quite new. Two scholars had already come to this view, after a careful study of the *Aranyakanda* and the *Kiskindhakanda*. Paramasiva Iyer also tried to identify these places by an excellent penetrating topographical study of the map prepared by the Survey of India.

These conclusions were confirmed by D.R. Mankad, who edited the *Kiskindhakanda*. Mankad also visited the area around Jabalpur, particularly the region around Indrana hill, and thought that Iyer's identification deserved careful consideration.

Mankad had also concluded⁸ that the four *sargas*, 39-42, were interpolated later, that is, after the original *Ramayana* got bifurcated into two main versions, the northern and the southern. He also found out by a very careful comparative study of the *Matsya* (CLXIII.60-89) and other *Puranas*, particularly the section on geography or *Bhuvanavinyasa*, how the *Ramayana* had borrowed all this information about hills, rivers, lakes, oceans, places and countries from the *Matsya Purana*. However, Mankad wondered why the interpolater had distributed this information

⁸ Mankad, op. cit., pp. xxxv-viii. He has given all the relevant references to the *Matsya* and other *Puranas*.

into four quarters. The reason, according to us, was that the person who added this wanted to show the vast knowledge of Sugriva. And while doing so, he had committed blunders, as pointed out by us, either by repeating names or by placing them in the wrong locations.

Mankad, further, could not identify such places as Marichipattanam, though his general conclusion that this addition was done after the fourth century A.D. seems to be reasonable. However, his further statement that 'all these incidents where additions are made to the *Ramayana* are of pre-Rama or Rama days' is difficult to understand.⁹ If it means that everything else is very early, then we cannot agree.¹⁰ For instance, the ring incident which Mankad thinks belongs to the original *Ramayana*, as we have shown archaeologically, is not earlier than the second century B.C.

Mankad's other conclusion about the mention of a river Godavari near Chitrakuta is worth noting. After a careful correlation of all the versions, Mankad found that as far as the *Aranyakanda* was concerned, the name of the river Mandakini occurs in nine cases out of eleven. So the reading 'Godavari' was added later.

The *Kiskindhakanda* contains only a few observations about other matters. Such things as relevant to the main topics—Kiskindha, Lanka, the Vindhya and the cremation of Vali—have been commented upon. Now only a few things such as the position of a widow, astrological occurrences, the punishment for usurping a brother's wife, and clothes of Anjana, remain to be touched upon.

The fight between Vali and Sugriva has been compared to that between the planets Budha (Mercury) and Angaraka (Mars) (IV. xii.17).

According to Rama, he was justified in killing Vali, because he had usurped his brother's wife. And the punishment for such a crime was death (IV. xviii. 22).

A woman deprived of her husband is called a widow (*vidhava*) though she might have a son (IV.xxiii.12). And as noted earlier, the younger brother had a right to treat her as his wife. From the fact that even Sita thought like that when she taunted

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 39.

Lakshmana, it appears to be a normal custom among all classes of people.

Ksauma (linen) seems to have been the most common material for a person's clothes for Anjana, who was an *apsara* in her former birth, and later became the mother of Hanuman, was dressed in *ksauma* (IV.lxv.11). This evidence confirms the one given in the *Balakanda* and the *Ayodhyakanda*.

6. Sundarakanda

The fifth book of the *Ramayana*, *Sundarakanda*,¹ is the finest from the poetic point of view. Here the poet has given full vent to his fancy and imagination in his description of Hanuman's flight across the sea to Lanka. This event could not have been possible, unless Hanuman gathered that much strength and stature. How he did it is vividly described in the book.

After crossing the sea in one leap, Hanuman then assumed the form of a small cat, and entered Lanka at night. Thus disguised, he had his first glimpse of Lanka. The scenes of revelry, drinking and eating of all varieties of meat are so realistic that one feels that whoever has described it must have had an opportunity of a first-hand experience of life in the cities. We do not usually find such a description in our classical poetry or drama, nor in the other epic—the *Mahabharata*. But our poet must have had some model before him and it will be our endeavour to discover it, and find out reasons for its or their existence. As far as the description of Lanka itself is concerned, we have discussed it, along with its description in the next *kanda*, so also the nature of the various weapons. We may note that among the Rakshasas, Indrajit alone is said to have the knowledge of the use of the *astras*, and particularly the *brahmastra*. This he uses to catch Hanuman.

Among the Vanaras, Angada boasts that he alone can fight single-handed with a person having the knowledge of *astras*.

Normally Vanaras including Hanuman, are never seen employing weapons other than the sal trees and rocks. But in his fight with the Kinkaras—the soldiers of Ravana, Hanuman is said to have used a *parigha* (V. xlii. 15) which he swings round his head and hurls at the enemy. Later he also uses a sal tree in a similar fashion (V. xliv. 30).

While admiring the unbelievable exploits of Hanuman, we

¹ G.H. Jhala, *The Valmiki-Ramayana*, Vol. V, *Sundarakanda*, Baroda, 1966.

have to remember the element of the miraculous. Hanuman was introduced in the *Kiskindhakanda* as one of the immortals, who could not be killed by anybody. Thus, whatever weapons the Rakshasas produced, were of no avail against him. And even the *brahmastra* was made ineffective by the foolishness of the Rakshasas. Not knowing or realizing that the *brahmastra* completely incapacitated Hanuman, the Rakshasas in their ignorance tried to secure him further by ordinary means such as strings or ropes of *sana* (jute), *druma* (trees), *valkala* (bark of trees) and finally *karpasa* (cotton).

This little misadventure of the Rakshasas not only tells us when this *kanda* was composed, but that strings or ropes of jute and cotton were in normal use. The reference to jute in all the three *sargas* (V. xlvi. 44 ; li. 6) suggests the likely confirmation of the incident. As is well known, *sana* (jute) is grown extensively in Bengal. Hence, we might say that the occurrence of jute in the *Ramayana* provides one more evidence for placing Lanka in eastern Madhya Pradesh.

As far as the reference to cotton is concerned, we find that Rama and Dasaratha in Ayodhya, Janaka in Mithila, Ravana in Lanka and Anjana, mother of Hanuman wear clothes of *ksauma*,² whereas Sita alone wears a *uttariya* of *kauseya* (silk).³ This, as I have already pointed out before, has been deliberately chosen by the poet. But its use also helps us in dating the present *Ramayana*.

Equally interesting is the reference to the *chudamani* which Sita gives to Hanuman as a mark of identification. This ornament was worn in the centre of the head, just above the forehead and in the parting of the hair. It had a history. It was obtained by Dasaratha from Indra and was given to Sita at the time of her marriage, as a gift from her father-in-law. Thus, as Sita had rightly predicted, when Hanuman produced it before Rama, all those past incidents came before his eyes. What we cannot understand is how Hanuman could even try to wear this *mani* on his finger (V. xxxvi. 52). It was not an ordinary ring.

From the consideration of these few material objects, we now pass on to a discussion of the personalities of Sita, Hanuman,

² See above pp. 24 and 30.

³ See above, p. 57.

Ravana and Vibhisana, and one or two Rakshasis.

It must be said right at the outset that Sita proves her worth magnificently. She spurns the various kinds of inducements which Ravana offers one after another, remains unmoved by the various threats and brandishments, and even has to face an attempted assault from Ravana. Ravana is held back by one of the Rakshasis or his wife Mandodari. But Sita remembers that this is but a temporary respite. She is allowed just two months, at the end of which she either yields to Ravana, or prepares herself for death. Nevertheless she withstands all the subsequent threats by the Rakshasis who were instructed by Ravana to bring round Sita by any means.

All this Hanuman witnesses, remaining disguised in a tree in the Ashokavatika. Naturally he is all admiration for her character, and had no hesitation in regarding her as a *sati* (V. xxxvi. 59).

Hanuman's appearance in the Ashokavatika was a great surprise for Sita. In fact, at first she was not prepared to believe that it was not one of the tricks of the Rakshasis. For both the Vanaras and the Rakshasas were capable of changing their form at will. And this is one of the most important miraculous elements in this epic.

From the poetic point of view this scene is a great relief surcharged with pathos and tender feelings; it again highlights another aspect of Sita's character. She was no doubt pleased to hear that Rama was alive and very anxious to meet her and rescue her. She was also very eager to escape from Lanka. But she wanted Rama to invade Lanka, punish Ravana and rescue her. Therefore, she was prepared to wait, in spite of all the threats from Ravana and the Rakshasis, and not run away with Hanuman. First, it was risky. Secondly, it would be befitting for Rama to rescue her by killing Ravana (V. xxxv. 64). Thirdly, and this was the most important reason, she would not willingly allow her body to be touched by another man. When Ravana kidnapped her she was helpless (V. xxxv. 62-3).

भर्तुर्भक्तिं पुरस्कृत्य रामादन्यस्य वानर ।

नाहं स्प्रष्टुं पदा गात्रमिच्छेयं वानरोत्तम ॥

यदि रामो.....सराक्षसम् ।

मामितो गृह्य गच्छेत् तत्तस्य सदृशं भवेत् ॥

(V. xxxv. 62-4)

Hanuman rightly appreciated all the three reasons and particularly the last. For this particular feeling—fear of another man's touch—has marked the behaviour of a Hindu woman throughout the ages. For them Sita is the ideal. In fact Hanuman recognizes her *satitva*, and later even experiences it. To this is attributed the reason for his not feeling the heat when his tail was set ablaze by the Rakshasas (V. li. 29). He was convinced of the *anrsamsya* (want of wickedness) of Sita (V. li. 33).

युक्तरूपं त्वया देवि भाषितं शुभदर्शने ।
सदृशं स्त्रीस्वभावस्य साध्वीनां विनयस्य च ॥

.....

रामादन्यस्य नाहमि संस्पर्शमिति जानकि ॥

.....

का ह्यन्या त्वामृते देवि ब्रूयाद्वचनमीदृशम् ॥

(V.xxxvi.2-5)

From our point of view this particular statement by Hanuman is important, because we can definitely say that the final scene when Sita comes out unhurt, unscathed from the fire ordeal, and is declared as Lakshmi herself, was the natural outcome of Sita's personality. And this was evident when Sita was in Ashokavatika.

It is worth noting that Sita expected Rama to invade Lanka with a large army—one *aksauhini* in strength (V. xxxiv. 23). This is one of the few references to this army unit, and the only one in this *kanda*.

Two other aspects require a little consideration. The first, as the late Professor Jhala mentioned is that as far as the *Sundarakanda* is concerned there is good internal consistency, and he cited the statements of Hanuman, first before the Vanaras, and then before Rama.⁴

However, there is a very important and interesting inconsistency in the two statements of Hanuman. In the first account we are told that one of the Rakshasis, Dhanyamalini, approached Ravana, and told him, 'Why do you hanker after Sita? Why don't you play with me? I will satisfy all your wishes' (V. xx. 37-8). And then her subsequent utterance that 'when a person under the influence of love approaches another who does

⁴ Jhala, cf. p. xxxiii.

not respond then the body of the lover gets heated, instead of being cooled down.'

This seems to be axiomatic and might have been taken down from the *Kamasutra*.

However, in Hanuman's report to the Vanaras, the woman who stopped Ravana from attacking Sita and further made him give up his madness for Sita was his wife Mandodari (V. lvi. 66). Even in the *Yuddhakanda*, while taking up the head of her husband, Mandodari gave expression to a similar feeling, viz., that she was in no way inferior to Sita, in beauty, tact or knowledge, still Ravana behaved differently and had to pay for his lust.⁵ While on this point, I cannot help noting the Sanskrit poet's weakness for invariably describing a young woman's breast as *pina* (full and rounded). And he makes no exception in the case of Sita while she was in the Ashokavatika. He tells us over and over again that she had become lean (*kr̥sa*), appeared pale (*malina*), and tied her hair in one knot or braid (*ekavāṇī*), because she had to live on forest produce only, sleep on the ground, and she was so distressed (V.xvii.19). Still, when Ravana came to meet her, she raised her hand and covered both her plump breasts with her hand ! (V. lvi. 57).

The question is, 'How is it that such a long fast, and such a morbid, distressful condition had no effect at all on Sita's body ? Why do our ancient poets continue to be so untrue to the changes in human anatomy and physique, according to the varying mental and physical condition of the person ? Not that the poet is not aware of the fact that youth—and particularly that of a woman—is short-lived (V.xxii.29).

Another question which has vexed the mind of scholars and laymen alike is 'What did Ravana look like ? Was he really ten-headed and twenty-armed, or a normal human being with one head and two arms ?'

Let Hanuman give the answer. Hanuman saw him asleep in his harem, embracing his wife or wives with both his arms (V.viii. 13-20).

We have the second description of Ravana when he went to the Ashokavana. Here we are told that he was decked with *kundalas* in both his ears which shone like the rising sun (V.xx.27).

⁵ See below under *Yuddhakanda*.

Both these descriptions definitely prove that Ravana was just a normal human being.

However, when Hanuman is led before Ravana after the first rampage, the poet gives a description of Ravana's physical features as well as his mental qualities (V.xlvii.1-20). Here not only is Ravana described as ten-headed and twenty-armed, but he is also described as a handsome man and a paragon of virtue, so much so that Hanuman is compelled to say that but for one weakness—or wrong action (*adharmā*)—he could have or was fit to become the master of the world of the gods, including Indra (V.xlvii. 17-18). Shorn of exaggeration and a poet's weakness for hyperbole, one may conclude that even an enemy was forced to concede the good points of Ravana. Of course, it can also be argued that this is not a true, faithful description of Ravana's physical and mental qualities.

We get two instances of Ravana's desire to act according to the code of administration then prevalent in India, called *rajasastra* (V.lvi.126). Ravana gets very angry on seeing the destruction caused by Hanuman, and orders his generals to catch him and kill him. No one in Ravana's court except Vibhisana has the courage to oppose this order, because it was manifestly so unjust.

Hanuman was a messenger (*duta*) sent by Rama to plead before Ravana to return Sita and thus conclude an honourable peace pact. A *duta* may be disfigured but he can on no account be killed. And Vibhisana mentioned three or four instances of disfiguring such a *duta*. In fact, this also appears crude and barbaric compared to the *Mahabharata*, where Duryodhana wanted to arrest Krishna who had gone to plead before the Kauravas.

It would appear from Kane's review of the *duta*,⁶ (he translates the word as ambassador or messenger), that from as early as the *Rigvedic* times, a *duta's* duty was twofold: to act as a messenger, and also as a spy. And Hanuman plays this double role.

However, the punishment suggested by Vibhisana seems to be a unique example. For Kane, in what appears to be an exhaustive or fairly comprehensive review, does not cite any other parallel.

Ravana accepted this immediately, and advised Hanuman's

⁶ *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. III, pp. 127-31.

tail to be destroyed, because in the case of a monkey, this is the most important part of the body.

Later, in the *Yuddhakanda*, he twice or thrice consulted his generals, when he found Lanka completely besieged by Rama's vast Vanara army, because consultation (*mantrana*) with ministers and generals was a 'must' for a good ruler.

We have to see when the term *rajasastra*, 'the science of administration or politics' and such an attitude towards a *duta* became normal or was first used.

It would appear from a reference to Kane's *History of Dharmasastra* that this is comparatively a late term.⁷ For though we have the *Arthasastra* of Kautilya which includes *Rajanitisastra*, the term *rajasastra* seems to have been first coined by Janamejaya, the author of *Nitiprakasa*. If this inference is right, and it seems to be right, then the section which appears in the *Ramayana* should be fairly late, not earlier than the sixth century.

While we are on this topic, we would like to draw attention to the word *charana*, twice mentioned by Hanuman. When he set the whole of Lanka on fire, and was then afraid of the safety of Sita, he heard the voice of the town messenger whose duty it was to go round the village or city and inform people about the important happenings—*bhatas* and *charanas* were the two necessary limbs of the ancient Indian administrative system—and served the purpose which our Department of Information and Broadcasting does today. Centuries of hereditary profession had turned both of them into sub-castes. These had survived with varying fortunes until the states merged with the Indian Union.

As far as the treatment of envoys (*dutas*) was concerned Kautilya says, 'Messengers are the mouthpieces of kings, not only of thyself, but of all; hence messengers who, in the face of weapons raised against them have to behave their mission as exactly as they are entrusted with, do not, though outcasts, deserve death.'⁸

Hanuman in a sense was not an envoy. He first acted as a spy, then as an envoy, and then he openly revolted.

So we might regard Ravana's treatment of Hanuman as humane, and Vibhisana's attitude extremely considerate. However,

⁷ Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. I, p. 226.

⁸ R. Shamasastri, *Kautilya's Arthasastra*. Bangalore, 1915, p. 135.

the steps he suggested for an envoy's disfigurement require further consideration.

All these topics, though important in themselves for enlightening us about the times in which the *Ramayana* was composed, are not so important from our point of view as the detailed description of the night life in Ravana's harem.

Nothing like this is to be found in any classical work, like the *Raghuvamsa*, *Kumarasambhava*, *Vikramorvasiya*, *Shakuntala*, Dandin's *Dasakumaracharita*, or Harsa's *Kadambari* or *Harsacharita*. Even the Yadava's revelry at Prabhas described in the *Bhagavata* and the *Mahabharata* and *Harivamsa* does not come up to the description in the *Ramayana*. No less than seven *sargas*, each with 37, 24, 42, 17, 69, 50, 44 stanzas respectively, are devoted to this and allied topics.

It would certainly appear strange that though Hanuman entered Lanka in the form of a cat at night, he saw broad roads, royal paths, garrisons—some armed with mechanical weapons (*yantras*)—women dancing and singing while some were engaged in their studies; he also saw houses bedecked with jewels and bearing *swastika* and lotus motifs (V. iii. 22).

Among the various kinds of soldiers, there were some with shaven heads and others with all kinds of weapons. And then entering the inner apartment he saw men and women, enjoying themselves (V. iv. 10-16).

Hanuman then entered Ravana's residence. This was surrounded by a wall. Once inside, he walked into the *prasadas* of various generals and ultimately reached the palace of Ravana himself. This was guarded by armed soldiers. Among other things he saw various kinds of palanquins, bowers, a *chitrasala* (picture gallery), and a *kridagriha* (stadium). He also saw seats, beds and a mansion filled with *madhu* and *asava* in cans studded with gems (V. v. 40).

Hanuman further espied beautiful houses, and a bedecked *vimana* (V. vi. 7-8). Then there was a *mahavimana*, called Pushpa (V. vi. 11.14). On this there were paintings of which one deserves notice—it was of Lakshmi, holding lotuses in her hands, and bathed by elephants from either side (V. vi. 14).

However, in this palace complex (*prasada samkulam*) extending half a *yojana*, Hanuman did not see Sita. So he climbed over the *Pushpakavimana* (V. vii. 15). Then he once again saw the harem

of Ravana with the women lying in various postures, their clothes dishevelled and ornaments scattered here and there after a night of revelry (V. vii. 41-59). They were drunk with wine made from sugar (*sarkarasava*).

Thus fatigued they lay embracing one another with various parts of their bodies (V. vii. 54-60). They all lay intertwined like creepers that the poet describes the whole as 'a forest of women' (*strivana*) (V. vii. 62).

Among these women he saw Ravana, sleeping on an ornamental bed. His two arms and hands are described in detail (V. viii. 13-30).

ददर्श स कपिस्तस्य बाहू शयनसंस्थितौ ।

(V.viii. 19)

All around him lay women musicians, one with her *vina* in her hand, another with a *pataha*, a third with a flute (*vamsa*), another with a *mridanga* or *dindima* (V. viii. 34-45). Finally Hanuman saw an exceedingly beautiful woman. She was Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, but for a moment Hanuman thought it was Sita and felt pleased (V. viii. 50). But soon he realized that she could not be Sita. Then he walked into the drinking chamber (*panabhumi*). Here he saw the remains of a grand feast—meat of many kinds of animals and birds. There were all kinds of drink—made from sugar, flowers and fruits, scented with *churnas* (V. ix. 19).

All around were scattered silver and golden pitchers with cups filled and half-filled (V. ix. 21-5) and nearby lay the drinkers, mainly women, in various positions.

Naturally, after having such an intimate and close view of these scenes of revelry, Hanuman thought, as we all would think, that fortunately he was not tempted to drink and enjoy with women; that his mind had remained steady (*svyavasthitam*). 'It alone is the cause of good or the auspicious and bad or the inauspicious' (V. ix 39).

मनो हि हेतुः सर्वेषामिन्द्रियाणां प्रवर्तने ।

शुभाशुभास्ववस्थासु तच्च मे सुव्यवस्थितम् ॥

(V.ix.39)

Few people who have read the *Ramayana* through these centuries have ever thought of the propriety of including these

scenes of revelry in the description of Lanka. And that too, not once, but thrice.

One reason might be to show that Ravana was very licentious and to affirm that Sita was too virtuous to be tempted by such purely physical enjoyment. Another reason could be that the good character of Hanuman had to be established by saying that he remained untouched by what he saw (V. ix. 39).

It is possible that these scenes were nothing but a reflection of a certain way of life which had become fashionable at a certain period in India's history. The question is, when? Though from the Vedic times wine in some form was being drunk or used in all walks of life, still it appears that it was used sparingly and on certain occasions only. Such scenes as are described in the *Ramayana* are never met with in earlier works, and are absent even in the *Mahabharata*.

However, we know that in about the first century B.C., Roman wine and women began to enter India in increasing quantities and almost on a regular basis, because of a flourishing foreign trade. On this, we have excellent descriptions in the early Tamil literary works and also brief references in Graeco-Roman literature by geographers like Strabo, Pliny and the author of the *Periplus of the Erythrean Sea*.⁹ One part of this evidence is very well documented by the occurrence of the wine amphoras in numerous sites all over India, even from the Buddhist monasteries at Nagarjunakonda and Devnimori in Gujarat and from towns or cities like Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda,¹⁰ and several others on the eastern coast and Ter and Bhokardhan in Maharashtra.

The stadium or amphitheatre at Nagarjunakonda can be described as a *kridagriha*. Our literature—Buddhist as well as non-Buddhist—contains very few references to games and sports that students at all levels and people in all strata of society could enjoy. For Kshatriyas the suitable sport consisted of horse-riding, archery and wrestling and indoor games similar to chess and playing with dice.

If we examine our present history, we shall find that sports stadia are of very recent growth. Under the circumstances, reference to a *kridagriha* in Lanka is very significant. And I am

⁹ See above p. 48.

¹⁰ See *Indian Archaeology 1957-58—A Review*, ed. A. Ghosh, New Delhi, 1958, p. 9.

quite sure that if a fairly large house complex is excavated in any of the old sites like Nasik, Kolhapur, Ter, Bhokardhan, Paithan or Amaravati and others in Andhra (Nagarjunakonda having disappeared completely under the reservoir), with all the objects in their contextual position, then we shall have some idea of the luxury which the citizens enjoyed at that time. We might find, as we did at Kolhapur, a small red polished jug, possibly containing wine, cups of the same ware, and the amphora in one corner. Of course the Roman women can no longer be retrieved.

However, if we study the sculptures at Amaravati, Nagarjunakonda and other monuments of the first century very carefully, then we might be able to identify certain scenes which would remind us of life in Lanka as described here.

Ample evidence was cited earlier to show that this *kanda* was composed in its present form after the second century B.C. The most definitive evidence for this is the description of the Gajalakshmi motif on the *Pushpakavimana*. As I have already pointed out earlier, the motif occurs for the first time at Bharhut, then at Sanchi, Kausambi and elsewhere.¹¹ (See Figs. 1 and 3).

Then there are descriptions of *ihamrigas* (imaginary fish-tailed animals). Attention was drawn to them by Sivaramamurti¹² as far back as 1940. These occur in the second century caves at Nasik and earlier at Bharhut and Amaravati.

To the same period belongs the signet-ring, whereas the *chudamani* which Sita gave to Hanuman is only a century or two earlier worn at Bharhut and Sanchi, and probably by the Yaksi of Mathura.

There is little doubt that Valmiki's Lanka as well as Kiskindha and Ayodhya had for their models the then existing monuments: the *stupas* with their towering domes and the *toranas* beautifully decorated with all kinds of men, animals and geometric figures.

However, none of these monuments gives any idea of the night life and the scenes of drinking and feasting of all kinds of meat. These were presumably common in the Graeco-Roman cities which had come into existence in the wake of the Roman trade. These cities, as we know from the examples of Sirkap and Taxila, were well laid-out in chess-board fashion, and had arterial

¹¹ A fine figure of Gajalakshmi from Kausambi has been reproduced here from *Indian Archaeology 1956-57—A Review*, pl. xxxviii, B.

¹² Sivaramamurti, *Sculptures Inspired by Kalidasa*, Madras, 1942.

roads, with a moat and an encircling wall. Though they cannot be documented so well, some evidence exists at Kausambi, Ahichchhatra and possibly at Ayodhya, and certainly in the prehistoric sites like Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro, Kalibangan and Surkotada.

But the best evidence comes from Nagarjunakonda where two many-pillared halls have been unearthed—one, with a sitting arrangement and another containing storage jars.¹³ And halls like these might have inspired the poet to imagine a hundred thousand-pillared hall at Lanka. Exploration also revealed that the valley had four fortifications. The first built of rubble was at the entrance of the valley on the eastern side. The second, archaeologically the most important, enclosed the citadel of the Ikshvakus.

The third fortification, built of rubble, ran on the summit of the Siddhaldari hill. The last, a medieval construction was divided into three zones by partition-walls and had six gates that could be approached by ramps and steps running through well guarded outworks.

About multi-storeyed houses at Ayodhya, Kiskindha and Lanka we have no evidence. That there were two- or three-storeyed houses is undoubtedly true, as we have some idea from the extant scenes on the *toranas* at Sanchi. But to logically jump to the conclusion that these were seven or eight storeys high does not appear to be reasonable.

There might be a tall building like a *stupa* but it was not for habitation. For there was no need as there was always plenty of space to expand horizontally, even when populations increased. Also, the question of construction techniques should be considered. Had we developed so much civil engineering skill, as to construct such tall, habitational structures ?

Thus we are prepared to concede the existence of a fairly prosperous city with arterial roads, having a few two- or three-storeyed houses, all beautifully decorated ; many made of wood, but some of stone using stucco, an art which had been developed in the North West Frontier Provinces and had been adopted at Nalanda much later.¹⁴

That, in many of these newly sprung-up cities, or old cities like

¹³ *Indian Archaeology, 1958-59—A Review*, ed. A Ghosh, Delhi, 1959, p. 8.

¹⁴ H.D. Sankalia, *The University of Nalanda*, Delhi, 1972.



1.



2.



3a.



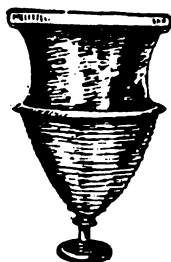
6.



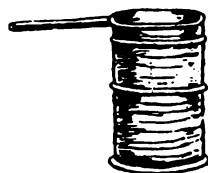
3.



4.



5.



7.



8.



9.



10.



11.

Fig. 16. Amphoras: two-handed vessels with conical base and narrow, tubular mouth (Gandhara)

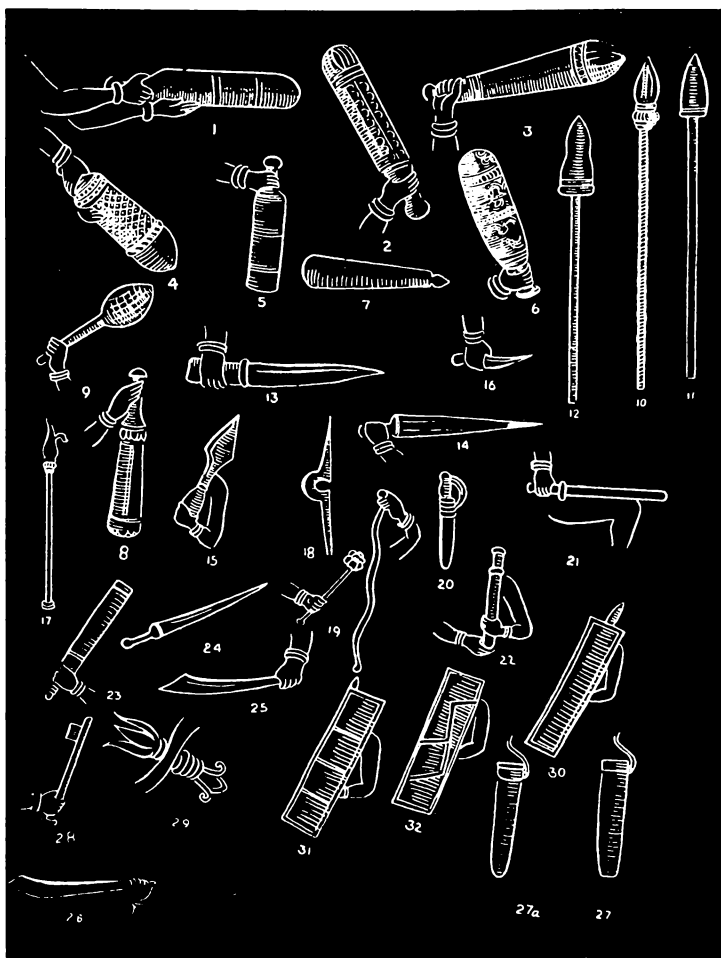


Fig. 17. Weapons (Nagarjunakonda)

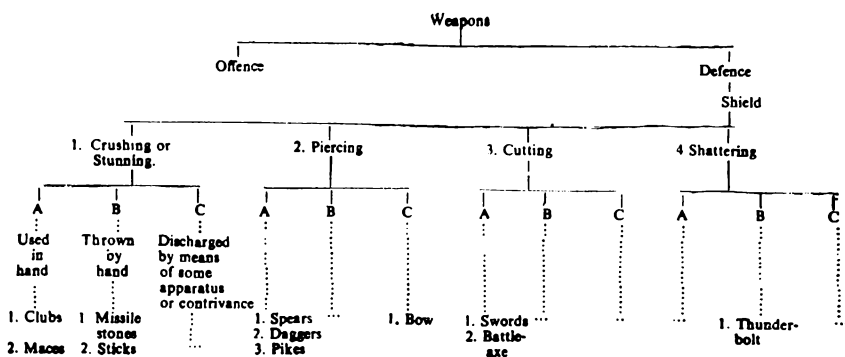


Fig. 18. Classification of weapons of offence and defence as depicted in Nagarjunakonda sculptures

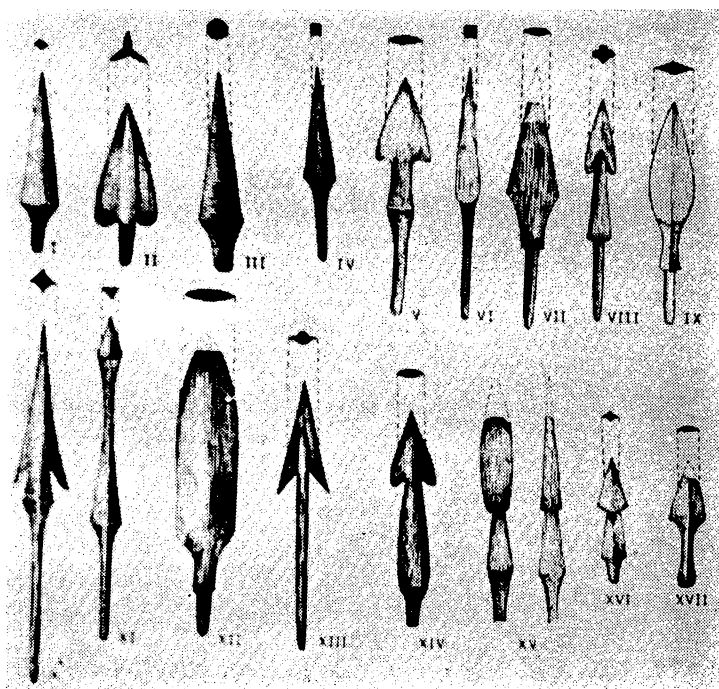


Fig. 19. Two-, three-, and four-edged arrowheads (Excavation at Taxila). Similar arrowheads found from Saka-Kushana levels at Kausambi and Sisupalgarh

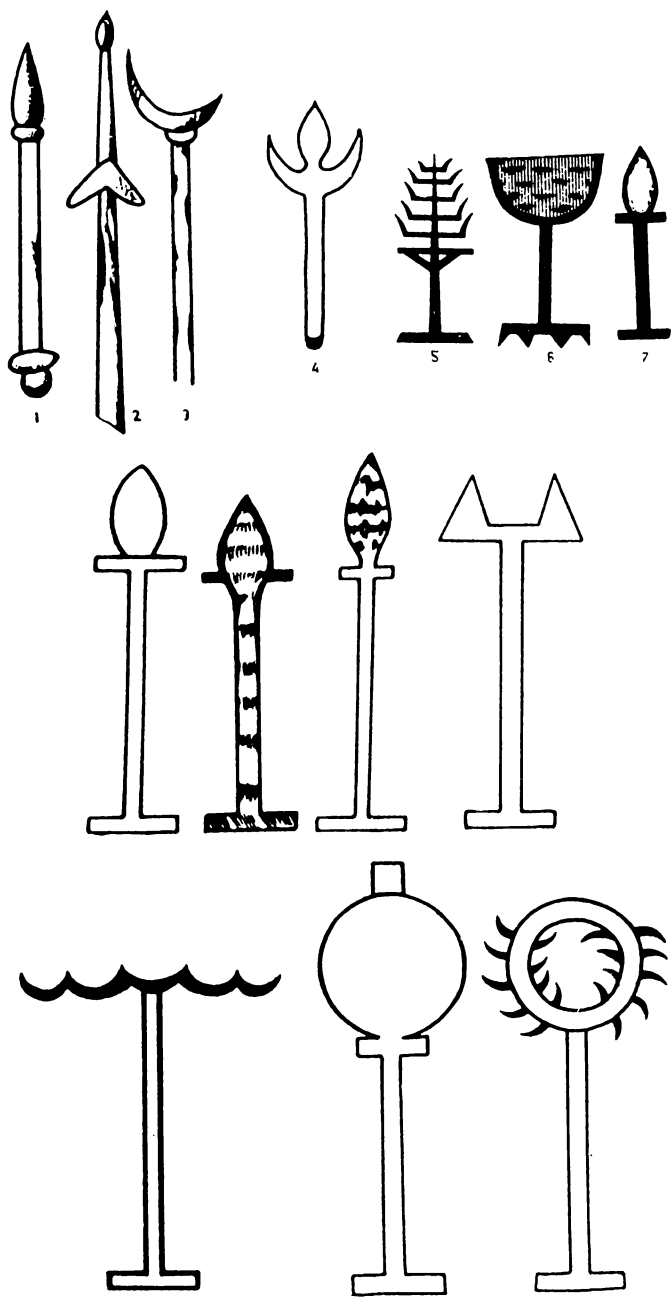


Fig. 20. Arrowheads from a manuscript of *Dhanurveda*

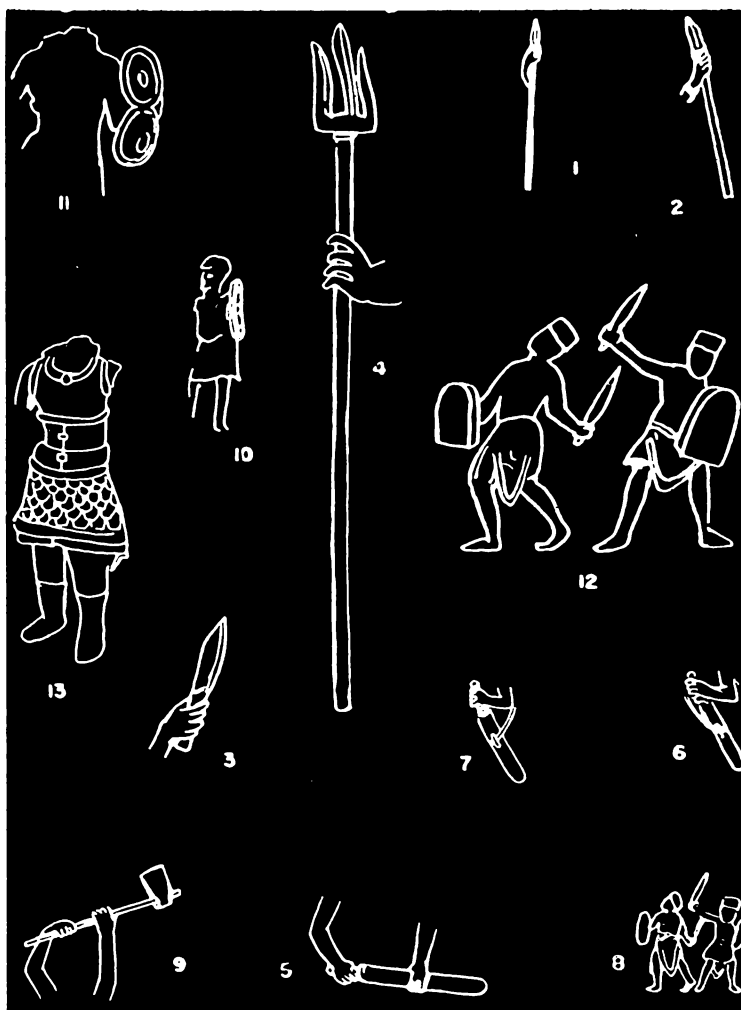


Fig. 21. Weapons (Gandhara)

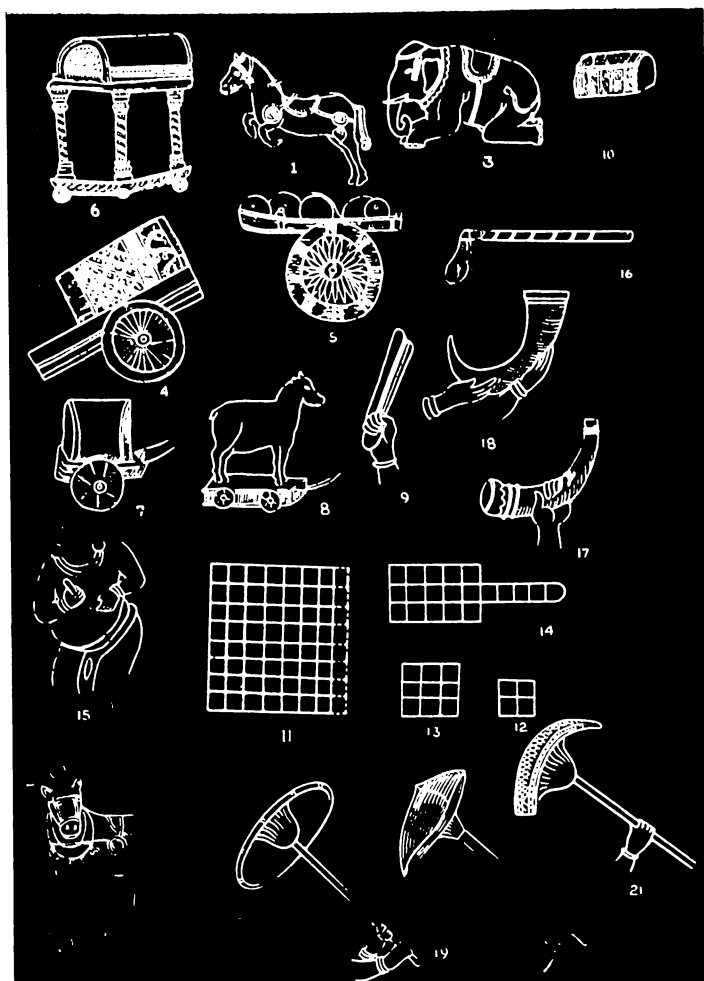


Fig. 22. Conveyances and parasols (Nagarjunakonda)

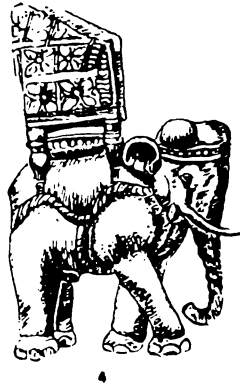
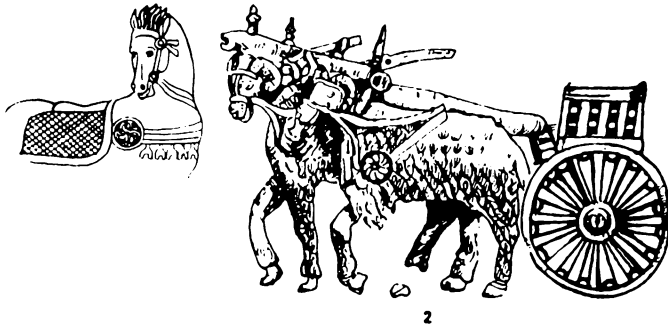


Fig. 23. Conveyances: 2 chariot with large spoked wheel and single seat (Gandhara)



Fig. 24. Gandharvas (Durga Temple, Aihole, seventh century A.D.)



Fig. 25. From a sarcophagus (Thermae Museum, Rome)

Gandharva women twirl a flying scarf exactly as on Roman sarcophagus reliefs



Fig. 26. Dresses from ancient India: 18 Scythian soldier with a long spear, in pointed skull-cap, knee long coat, light trousers and boots (Nagarjunakonda)

Nasik, Paithan, Kausambi and Ujjain which also experienced the impact of the Roman trade, wine-drinking and meat eating were fairly common, and existed certainly among the rulers, can now be accepted on archaeological evidence.

However, none of these cities could ever be compared with the Lanka described in glorious terms by Valmiki, or whoever redacted the earlier epic. Such a Lanka can only exist in the imagination of the poet.

The poet used a number of models for his vision of Lanka. The following list gives an idea of what lay behind the poet's composite vision.

1. A woman lying in the lap of a man, which recalls the *ankagata Sita*, that is Sita lying on the lap of Rama in Panchavati and then carried in that way by Ravana. This was referred to several times by Rama including the concluding episode at the end of *Yuddhakanda*.
2. Stadium or sports arena (*kridagriha*) from Nagarjunakonda.
3. Many-pillared hall as at Nagarjunakonda.
4. Roman soldiers with their characteristic headdress.
5. A Scythian with his long toga, skull cap, and a long spear.
6. Roman amphora.
7. Gajalakshmi from Bharhut, Kausambi and other sites.
8. Signet-ring from Taxila.
9. *Ihamriga* from Sanchi, Bharhut, Nasik.
10. One-storeyed houses (caves) from Junnar and Nasik.
11. Multi-storeyed buildings from Nalanda.
12. Earliest *gopuram*.
13. Earliest *sikhara* temples.
14. Weapons, as known from Taxila and other sites.
15. Conveyances—carts, chariots, palanquins.

This is the historical and archaeological background against which the ideas, concepts, objects described or referred to in the *Ramayana* have been viewed. Though one realized that the *Ramayana* is a poetical composition, still this poem must have had a locale, and the time or times during which it was composed may be discerned, as has been attempted. That is our plea for undertaking this research.

It is said that the burning of Lanka (*Lanka-dahana*) has been added afterwards.¹⁵

¹⁵ Jhala, op. cit., p. xxxiv.

I have not seen the original discussion initiated by Jacobi¹⁶ in the last century but his main conclusion and argument as given by Jhala seems reasonable. For if Lanka was thus burnt, practically destroyed, what was there for Rama to do ? Only to kill Ravana and his generals and relatives ?

Whether this scene was there in the earlier *Ramayana* or not, Lanka's *dahana* aroused in Hanuman the thought that this action was prompted by his *rajasika* nature (V.liii.12), and he felt sorry about it. He then said that this want of poise and excess of activity (as *kapitva* can be explained) was characteristic of *kapis* (monkeys), who are creatures of a lower order than man. This is perhaps an interesting and important temperamental or psychological distinction between man and other creatures. As the *Gita* has so well explained, it is man alone who can distinguish between *sattvika*, *rajasika* and *tamasika* and strive for the first. Probably in the statement attributed to Hanuman we have a hint of this philosophical stage.

Professor Jhala¹⁷ has briefly discussed the Surasa and the Simhika episode. The first one occurs in all the versions but not in the same section of the story.

There is little doubt that these and other episodes are integral to the *Sundarakanda*, but few scholars have recognized the fact that in the name 'Simhika' (V.i.166) we have the first definite suggestion that by the time these episodes were included in the *Ramayana*, Simhala, or the island of Ceylon or Sri Lanka, had come to be regarded as Ravana's Lanka. For in inscriptions, travellers' accounts and literature, the name for the island is Simhala and not Lanka. It is indeed strange that in the *Ramayana* only the name Lanka appears, and not Simhala. Hence this one reference to Simhika is very suggestive.

Again the fact that Simhika was called a Rakshasi also shows that the author had no idea that it was a friendly country, with which India had had excellent relations, for a long time. But by the time this episode was introduced, Lanka's or Simhala's guardian deity was regarded as a demon (Rakshasi) !

Sundarakanda occupies, indeed, a unique position in the present *Ramayana*. Not that it has excellent pieces of poetry, but it abounds in flights of imagination, and scenes which provide all

¹⁶ *Das Ramayana*, pp. 31 ff.

¹⁷ Jhala, op. cit., p. xxxii.

the *rasas* known to Sanskrit literature—tender as well as terrible and revolting.

The question now is, 'Could it have been so in the original *Ramayana*?' Here we have to remember that in some versions we have the reading that Hanuman had actually swum across the ocean, and did not fly over it. And this is most natural. This sounds plausible and implies that in the earlier version the poet was probably referring to a shallow patch of water which Hanuman had to cross to reach Lanka.

However, once the interpolations started, the poet gave a free rein to his imagination, and the present *Sundarakanda* emerged. We have seen how in its essential details, in the description of the city, its night life, its weapons, and its various ideas, and concepts—there are definite indications of later interpolations. While no exact date for any of these can be given, on the whole the period would range between the second century B.C. and the sixth century A.D., the major portion having been composed after the second century A.D., when Roman contact with India was at its peak.

When Hanuman during his flight to Lanka has to alight on a hill in the midst of the sea (V.i.97-108), he is told that a guest always deserves respect, even in ordinary or daily life. And much more so in his case because he has undertaken this onerous work for Rama.

This of course is a characteristic feature of Indian life, and practised even today, in spite of economic stresses. And it was this which was the cause of Sita's undoing. For she received Ravana, who suddenly appeared in the forest, in the form of a Brahmin mendicant, and gave him the respect due to a guest.

One of the first scholars to take note of the description of a magnificent city, with fortification of towers, gateways and arches and the vivid decorations on them was Sivaramamurti. He simply observed that archaeology helps us to visualize these architectural passages in our epics. Later he followed it up by his classic monograph *Sculpture Inspired by Kalidasa*. While in the former two papers he drew no inference about the priority of the monuments to literature, his subsequent treatise definitely shows his

¹⁸ Published by the Sanskrit Academy, Madras, 1942. The author firmly believed that Kalidasa lived in the first century B.C. But now a majority of scholars place him in the fifth century A.D.

bent of mind. He seems to hold that all these literary descriptions had inspired the architects and sculptors and not vice versa. While this point is difficult to decide as to who borrowed from whom, on the general ground that artists and sculptors are rarely students of literature and there is definite evidence to show that the available architectural motifs are earlier than their descriptions in the epics and also in other literature, we must admit that many of the descriptions in the *Sundarakanda* are based on the monuments that existed at the time.

In the chapter on *Ayodhyakanda* we have discussed at length the development of the city in India, in literature as well as in archaeology. Hence in this chapter, I shall confine my discussion only to the Gajalakshmi motif and *ihamrigas*, a brief reference to which has already been made by Sivaramamurti.

Gajalakshmi is definitely an Indian motif. It appears first at Bharhut, and its building is attributed to the Sungas, that is in the second century B.C. (See Figs. 1 and 3).

The motif also appears at Sanchi. Parts of this monument are definitely Mauryan, that is, a century earlier, but whether the Gajalakshmi motif is so early is doubtful. It is the same story at Bodhgaya, and Kausambi, whereas at Amaravati, it might be a century or two later.

We shall not enter into the origin or significance of this motif. According to one view, it signifies the birth of the Buddha. Whatever be the original significance, this Gajalakshmi seems to have become very popular. And hence it appears in the description of the *Pushpakavimana* in Lanka.

Of the other motifs, that of the *ihamriga* is distinctly foreign in origin. Figures with heads of several animals and one body, may no doubt be seen in a few seals of the Indus Valley civilization. But then there is a big gap. Animals sitting or standing back to back are first seen on the capitals of the Asokan pillars. Not only are these very realistic in their depiction but seem in our present knowledge to have their prototype in the immediately preceding Iranian sculpture.

However, within a century or two these became fanciful depictions of animals, with the heads of animals like the bull, horse, lion, and the tail of a fish (See Figs. 7 and 10).

The exact causes of this peculiar transformation are not known. Some foreign influence, Indo-Greek or Roman definitely

seems to be at work. This was not at first apparent when Smith¹⁹, Coomaraswamy²⁰ and others wrote on early Indian architecture. Later however Goetz²¹ has pointed out how the various elements of the early Gupta temples such as rectangular door-posts with groups of figures, shrine entrance, the scroll frieze in which *ganas*, i.e., erotes are playing intertwined among creepers, etc. In particular, Goetz cites a Buddha head from Vijaiadarpuram near Nagarjunakonda.

Though we have no detailed knowledge of the decoration of the pillars in the palaces at Lanka, except that they were of gold, and encrusted with jewels, still a study of such creeper decorations on early Gupta temples has given some idea of their origin.

We have already shown how two or three very characteristic features of the *Sundarkanda*, viz., the ring, drinking houses (*panagriha*) and sports stadia (*kridagriha*) were Indo-Greek in origin. In fact, a fuller contextual study of the remains at Nagarjunakonda should be enlightening.

It is against this background, or in the total context, that we have to view the time of the composition of the *Sundarakanda*.

Earlier writers like Sivaramamurti had neither the Critical Edition of the epics, nor the stratified archaeological evidence before them, and hence they were inclined to date everything that appeared in the epics to the Epic Age. This was generally dated before Kautilya and the Smritis. Even a very recent writer, Dr A.K. Majumdar²² has dated the Epic Age between 1500 B.C.-500 B.C. though he admits 'that it would be extremely hazardous to answer the question precisely'. This, in fact, as we have very briefly shown²³ is quite outside the real range arrived at by the new evidence. The Epic Age indeed falls between 500-300 B.C. and A.D. 500-700, with considerable additions in or after the second century.

¹⁹ Vincent A. Smith, *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, 3rd ed., Bombay, 1969, p. 63.

²⁰ Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, New Delhi, 1972, p. 11.

²¹ Hermann Goetz, 'Imperial Rome and the Genesis of Classic Indian Art', *East and West*, New Series, Vol. X, 1959, pp. 153-83 ; see particularly pages 159 and 180.

²² *Economic Background of the Epic Society*, Calcutta, 1977, p. 23.

²³ H.D. Sankalia, *Bhavan's Journal*, March 1978, p. 77.

7. Yuddhakanda

A hypercritical study of the *Yuddhakanda*¹ should include questions such as :

1. To what extent are its contents historical ?
2. Can their study help in understanding the nature and development of warfare ?
3. Was it feasible to construct a bridge at Ramesvaram ?
4. How far is it true or proper to support the view that originally the *Ramayana* consisted of three *kandas* only, namely *Ayodhyakanda*, *Aranyakanda*, *Yuddhakanda* and that the *Kiskindhakanda* and *Sundarakanda* were added later ?

The most important point which should strike any critical reader is the fact that as in the *Balakanda* and *Ayodhyakanda*, Rama and even Lakshmana have been regarded as partial manifestations of Vishnu. And this point of view reaches its logical culmination when Rama is considered to be Vishnu himself, as Krishna and Purushottama (VI.xlvii. 104), though Rama very

भवान्नारायणो देवः श्रीमांश्चक्रायुधो विभुः (VI.cv.12):

modestly says that he regards himself as a normal human being and no more (VI.cv.10). Sita is further declared to be the reincarnation of Lakshmi. Thus Rama's identification with Vishnu is complete (VI.cv.12,25). Slightly earlier even Malyavan, a Rakshasa had said the same thing to Ravana (VI.xxvi. 31) as Vishnu.

विष्णुं मन्यामहे रामं मानुषं देहमास्थितम् ।
नहि मानुषमात्रोऽसौ राघवो हठविक्रमः ॥ (VI.xxvi.31):

आत्मानं मानुषं मन्ये रामं दशरथात्मजम् ।
योऽहं यस्य यतश्चाहं भगवांस्तद्ब्रवीतु मे ॥ (VI.cv.10)

Hints to this effect are given in the *Balakanda* (I.xiv.15) and

¹ P. N. Vaidya, *The Valmiki-Ramayana*, Vol. VI, *Yuddhakanda*, Baroda, 1967-71.

Ayodhyakanda (II.xxviii.12-14) and having this end in view, Visvamitra instructs Rama and Lakshmana in the use of divine weapons (*astras*). All these weapons were to materialize on the repetition of a *mantra* (I.xxvii. 12-13). And this is exactly what happened when Rama was advised to use the *brahmastra* to kill Ravana. Rama did so after repeating a Vedic *mantra* (VI.xcvii.14). Again, for discharging this divine arrow, Rama employed the bow given by Agastya in the Dandakaranya (VI.xcvii.4). After accomplishing its task, that is, striking Ravana in the heart and killing him, the arrow returns to the quiver (VI.xcvii.14). Earlier, Indrajit too had 'called' for the *brahmastra* (VI.lx.26).

Thus, the thread of this particular miraculous element runs through all the *kandas*, from the beginning to the end, and seems to be the work of one person.

However, in the evolution of this concept of Rama as a god-head the verses which compare Rama with Krishna and Purushottama must have been the very latest. For amongst these various deities mentioned by Brahma and Indra there is no trace of any Vedic deity. Only Vishnu as Purushottama is extolled by them (VI.cv.1-28).

And in the evolution of Vishnu as the supreme deity, this particular concept—that he was the highest—was comparatively late, not before the fifth century A.D., when under the patronage of the early Guptas Vaishnavism flourished.² It was at this time that the earliest temples dedicated to Rama might have been built, though none has yet been found, even in Madhya Pradesh or Uttar Pradesh. At this time we only find panels depicting scenes from the *Ramayana* at Nachna and other places in Madhya Pradesh.

So much for the composition of the *Yuddhakanda*. Coming to the details, the impression it leaves on the readers is that of the element of the miraculous. This is much more so than in any other *kanda*.

The miraculous element is evident in the well-known episodes when first Lakshmana and then Rama became unconscious, and Hanuman flew north to the Himalayas, and lifting up the hill which grows the healing herb, brought it to Lanka (VI.lxxxix.14-25). Indrajit became invisible twice with the help

² See for instance, Jitendranath Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta, 1956, pp. 385-442.

of *maya* (VI.xxiv.6-25 ; lx.44) and let loose death and destruction in the Vanara camp (VI.lx.30). The next time he attempted this, he was stopped, on Vibhisana's advice, by Lakshmana (VI.lxxi.13 ; lxxii.10,27).

The miraculous is also presented in the use of various *astras* (missiles) by both sides, though when these fail, the Rakshasas have to resort to normal weapons. In the final battle with Ravana, a chariot is sent by Indra for Rama, fully equipped with all kinds of weapons, bows, arrows and quivers, *sakti*, *kavaca*, and bearing a flag. The chariot was indeed an arsenal. That the miraculous element was added later is evident from the fact that all the wives of Ravana, while lamenting his death, and embracing the various limbs of his body, wondered how Ravana could be killed by a mere man who was but a foot-soldier (*padatika*) (VI.xcviii.15). Thus, in the original account, Rama must have fought with Ravana while standing on the ground and not riding in a chariot.

In the entire *kanda*, only once is it mentioned that Ravana had ten heads and twenty arms, but just before his death when Rama cut off one head another appeared in its place, and ultimately Rama had to fire the *brahmastra* which hit Ravana in the heart. However, Ravana's description after he was killed, when his wives are said to have embraced his face, or clung to his two arms and two legs, leaves little doubt that he was a normal human being (VI.xcviii 8-9).

One of the more spectacular miracles took place when all those dead on Rama's side were revived by the boon of Brahma and Indra (VI.i.5-8). Though Ravana lost one general after another and his sons, not one Vanara leader died in battle.

The battles were principally duels with the Rakshasas. It was admitted that all of them, including Rama and Lakshmana, were more than once worsted in these duels. At one place, Khara's son, Makaraksas, challenged Rama to a duel.

रक्षसां रावणं चापि वानराणां च राघवम्।

पश्यतां विस्मिताज्ञानां सैन्यं चित्रमिवाबभौ ॥

(VI.xcv.5)

Finally a duel took place between Rama and Ravana. The entire armies on both sides stood still watching the duels that took place (VI.xcv.5 ; xcvi.1,36). In these duels, the Vanaras fought with rocks, stones and trees, and the Rakshasas first

employed various conventional weapons, like the bow and the arrow, *gada*, *parasu*, *parigha*, *sakti* and *bhalla*. But when these were destroyed or broken both the sides fought with their fists. Indeed boxing or hand-to-hand fights seem to be the final resort of the common Vanaras and Rakshasas, not of the principal heroes, of course.

This was the age of aerial travel. For not only did all the gods, including Brahma and Indra return by air (VI.cvii.17), but Rama returned to Ayodhya with the entire Vanara army by air (VI.cx.21). Thus, the *Pushpaka* could have been the first jumbo jet. However, it could have been a helicopter as well, for it was a short distance between Bharadvaja's *asrama* and Nandigram, about a mile from Ayodhya.³

While we may not accept all this hyperbole about the use and effect of various missiles, the use of herbs for curing wounds and reviving the unconscious, and finally the use of the *Pushpaka* for transporting Rama with the entire army to Ayodhya, still we should credit the bard for his imagination. For what was not conceived of by poets and writers, elsewhere—in Greece or Rome or in the much earlier Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations—had been foreseen by the *Ramayana* poet! He may be regarded as the H.G. Wells of that age and compared with modern science fiction writers.

Not only were the *Balakanda* and the *Uttarakanda* likely to have been composed later, but also portions of the *Yuddhakanda* where there are hyperbolic descriptions of everything. For example, all gifts were given 'in thousands' and Rama and his brother ruled for thousands of years.

Now this conception is not found in early inscriptions, but having entered, it goes on increasing after the early Christian era.⁴ Hence it is to this period, during the fifth century A.D., that we should date this portion (dealing with gifts) of the *Yuddhakanda*.

³ Flying chariots are said to have existed in all mythology, but what the *Ramayana* seems to have in view is a jumbo. This needs to be emphasized.

⁴ Almost all inscriptions from Mathura, Bharhut, Sanchi and early Buddhist caves from western India record a gift of this or that structure, but never the grants of an entire village. Such grants begin to appear in the fifth-sixth century. See D.R. Bhandarkar, *Epi. Ind.*, Vol. XXIII, p. 161, inscription nos. 1209-18. For earlier instances see Nasik Cave Inscriptions, nos. 1125-30, *Epi. Ind.*, Vol. X., 1909-10, appendix, pp. 123-5.

For some idea of the antiquity of this *kanda*, we have principally the references of the various conventional weapons. Whenever a duel took place between two warriors, or a general battle ensued, these weapons alone were employed. No doubt, some additions to the list were made from time to time. And we have an interesting reference to the contributions by Sakas and Yavanas to the stock of conventional weapons in the fight between Vasishttha and Visvamitra in the *Balakanda* (I.liii; liv).

A critical study also shows how these conventional weapons were used. We thus get some idea of their shape and make and the material they were made of.

Ravana's army was well equipped with: *parigha*, *sakti*, *sula*, *patta* (VI.vii.2) and *parasu*, *capa*, *bana*, *khadga*, *prasa* (VI.ix.4).

This list is repeated in VI.xxii.20, where these weapons are said to be of *mahayasa* (the great or powerful iron). Then there were: *danda*, *mudgara*, *yasti*, *tomara*, *cakra*, *musala*. In this list probably the first three were made of wood, as the word *yasti* suggests (though it is also used for a stick-like, vertical slab in a first century inscription from Kutch). Such a list appears in VI.xxviii.11.

The list given in VI.xii.17-27 is interesting because it shows the different ways in which the Vanara army suffered because of the various kinds of weapons used by Dhumraksha. Those struck with *prasa* were *pramathita*, with *parigha* were *mathita*, with *mudgara* were *ahata*; and with *bhindipala* and *trisula* were *vidarita*.

In these various shades of meaning, of the physical effects caused by various weapons, we might discern the differences in the make and shape of weapons. Some weapons like the *mudgara* had the effect of stunning the opponents, while the *bhindipala* had a shattering effect.

In VI.xlvi.8, it is said that many Vanaras were *vichhinna* (cut up) by the *parasu* of Prahasta. The few books on the subject of warfare in ancient India, by Chakravarti,⁵ Date,⁶ Dikshitar,⁷ and the latest by Sarva Daman Singh⁸ do not treat the subject very

⁵ P. C. Chakravarti, *The Art of War in Ancient India*, Dacca, 1941.

⁶ G.T. Date, *The Art of War in Ancient India*, Oxford, 1929.

⁷ V.R. Dikshitar, *War in Ancient India*, London, 1944.

⁸ Sarva Daman Singh, *Ancient Indian Warfare with Special Reference to the Vedic Period*, Leiden, 1965.

objectively. Thus, it is very difficult to get an idea of the chronological development. Even Singh uses considerable material from both the epics, fully knowing that in their present form, they are not so old as is generally believed. From this point of view, the long article by Hopkins,⁹ published as far back as 1889, is the best.

One instance is cited of this uncritical approach. Dikshitar has collected considerable material from various literary sources in his *War in Ancient India*. Unfortunately this is discussed neither chronologically nor with any sense of realism. Thus, the *parigha* which is so often mentioned in the *Ramayana* has been described by citing the *Raghuvamsa* (XVI.lxxxiv), and *Nitiprakasa* of Vaisampayana.¹⁰ It is said to be 'a wooden beam for locking or shutting a gate, and was a battering ram. According to Vaisampayana it was made of wood and circular in shape. It was so heavy that a whole army of soldiers would be required to handle it.'

Vaisampayana seems to be partly right when he tells us that it was circular in shape since we are repeatedly told that this or that Rakshasa turned the weapon round and hurled it against his opponent. But its further description that a large army was necessary to handle it is indeed a product of the imagination.

The reason why the few books on this subject are not so useful is because all these writers were armchair historians or scholars of Sanskrit, who had no occasion to handle the few weapons found by archaeologists. However, for any critical study of weapons and warfare in ancient India, these weapons are most useful. And they indicate in no uncertain way how backward we were right up to the arrival of the Indo-Greeks and the Sakas.¹¹

Some other weapons, probably various forms of arrows, are mentioned in VI. xxxv. 23. for example, the *naraca*, *ardhanaraca*, *bhalla*, *vatsadanta* and the *simhadanta*.

After this was written, an important book by G. N. Pant¹² has appeared. This to some extent improves upon his earlier work.¹³ Though written by an archaeologist who had considerable

⁹ E.W. Hopkins, 'The Social and Political Position of the Ruling Caste in Ancient India', *Journal of American Oriental Society*, Vol. XIII, 1889, pp. 57-372.

¹⁰ Dikshitar, op. cit., p. 115.

¹¹ See pp. 108-9.

¹² *Indian Archery*, Delhi, 1978.

¹³ *Studies in Indian Weapons and Warfare*, New Delhi, 1970.

experience of handling weapons in museums, and also studying some literature on this subject, this work is not critical enough. Fortunately all his illustrations (some taken from my book on *Stone Age Tools*), and now arranged and discussed chronologically, confirm what I have said. First, his illustrations, nos. 98-114 clearly show that these arrowheads from the Graeco-Kushana levels at Taxila are considerable improvements on the earlier, indigenous arrowheads from the Mauryan levels at the same site. It is this fact which I have sought to corroborate from the *Ramayana* by citing the battle between Vasishtha and Vishvamitra, in which the former's Sakas and Palhavas produced newer and more powerful weapons. (See Figs. 19 and 20).

Pant also supports my conjecture that the bows used by Rama, Arjuna and Krishna must have been composite bows. And these, as his illustration no. 172 shows, are depicted on Indo-Parthian coins and later on post-Gupta sculpture, were composite bows.

Surprisingly after citing and illustrating all this evidence, Pant reproduces several types of arrows such as the *aramukha*, *gopuchchha*, etc., from an illustrated manuscript of the *Dhanurveda*. Anyone who sees these illustrations will wonder how these arrowheads can do any harm at all to the enemy!

His own illustrations, right from the Stone Age, show these arrowheads to have been either triangular, or leaf-shaped, but both must have had sharp points. This alone can pierce the armour or body of the enemy. One may call them arrows by names such as *guchi*, or *gopuchcha*, or by any other name.

Pant himself had regarded these drawings from the *Dhanurveda* in his earlier book as conjectural though the serpent-headed arrows mentioned in the *Ramayana* he does regard as poetic fancy or decorative pieces (p. 154).

Pant also says that Rama, Arjuna and others were experts as horse-archers. No proof of this is available, and Pant himself says (p. 271) that horse archery has not been mentioned by the historians of Alexander. In fact, this aspect of warfare became popular in India only after the Parthian invasions.

Curious again are Pant's observations on forts and fortification mentioned in the epics. Citing the example of Lanka from the *Ramayana* he says,¹⁴ 'It presents a picture of highly developed

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 217.

fort architecture. The many-storeyed buildings and fortifications prove the constructive genius of the people.'

As we have shown, there is no evidence of such tall buildings in Indian cities, nor is there any possibility of such fortification on an island in the sea. Hence we wish that scholars like Pant should be more critical, for they alone will be able to throw full light on these subjects.

It appears that Pant has not consulted any of the foreign authors mentioned, who are so well used by Dr U. P. Thapliyal in his article 'The Art of War in Ancient India—A Survey of Foreign Impact'.

All the evidence cited by Thapliyal supports my view.¹⁵ A bhalla could possibly be a spear. Ravana also employs a bhalla in his final battle with Rama (VI. lxxxvii. 20-1). The arrows he uses have various kinds of heads: of the ihamriga, ass, boar, dog and hen and all sorts of stars, and the moon and the planets (VI. lxxxvii. 43-5). In this fanciful description the mention of the ihamriga is useful for dating purposes. This word also occurs in the *Sundarakanda* when Hanuman describes the various sections and structures in Lanka. Many of these weapons were made of iron (ayasa or mahayasa), that is, the weapons had iron-heads or blades or some were probably made wholly of iron. For instance, the sula used by Kumbhakarna was all of iron (sarvakalayasa) (VI. liii. 12). So also was the mudgara (VI. lv. 104). Angada had also used an iron parigha against Mahaparsva (VI. lxxxvi. 6). We are told how this was held in his hands, turned round the head, and then hurled against the enemy (VI. lxxxvi. 13-14). It is perhaps very significant that the vessels which Indrajit used in his sacrifices were of iron (VI. lx. 22). So there is little doubt that all these weapons, most of them imaginary, had found a place in the *Yuddhakanda* when iron had come into normal or full use. The time when this had happened is significantly indicated by the expression ihamriga. This is the name of one of the arrowheads which Ravana had used against Rama.

Now this word or term had come into use in the first century, when under the Saka-Kushana and Graeco-Roman influence, such curious animals, with heads of fish, crocodile, etc., began to be sculptured on the capitals of pillars in the *chaitya* caves

¹⁵ *JOI*, Vol. XXII, Baroda, 1977, pp. 407-19.

of the Deccan and elsewhere. Though we have found such composite animals engraved on the so-called seals in the Harappa culture or the Indus Valley civilization, the practice seems to have disappeared in the intervening period.

It reappeared with the Mauryas, whose pillar capitals have animals sculptured back to back. However these figures were very realistic. But later, under another foreign influence, these fanciful *ihamrigas* became fashionable once again.

In the *Mahabharata*, the unit of measuring the strength of the army was the *aksauhini*. But in the *Ramayana*, it was measured in *sahasra*, *koti*, *dasakoti*, *sahasrakoti*, *ayuta*, *niyuta*, *prayuta*, *arbuda* (VI. iii. 23,26), in multiples of ten.

The expression *aksauhini* occurs only once. This use helps us to say that the *Ramayana* poet here followed the earlier Vedic usage, while the *Mahabharata* employs terms which came into use only after the third century B.C. For as Dr Ghatghe affirmed, the word *aksauhini* was unknown to Panini, but occurs in Katyayana's *Varttika*, that is, it seems to have come into common usage in only about the fourth century B.C. This is understandable, indeed significant, because this was the time when, for the first time, empires with large, regular armies were becoming a feature in India. Likewise, the names of all the weapons mentioned above are post-Vedic. Their lower limit is well indicated by *parasu*, *sara*, *sanku*, *sakti*, *prasa*, *asi*, *tomara*, *bhindipala*, *naraca* and *vaitaslika* which are mentioned in the Allahabad inscription of Samudragupta.¹⁶ These are translated respectively as battle-axe, arrow, spear, pike, barred darts, sword, lance, javelin, iron arrows and a longish weapon.

Another significant pointer to the later composition of the *Yuddhakanda* is the reference to *amavasya* (the new moon day) as an auspicious day for going to battle.

When almost all his generals and his brave son Indrajit were killed in battle, Ravana became very desperate. In a fit of anger and despair he thought of killing Sita (VI. lxxx. 32). Sita was naturally frightened on seeing him come with a raised sword. She wept and bemoaned her lot. However, Suparsva came to her help. He dissuaded Ravana from committing this *adharma* (VI. lxxx. 52) in a fit of anger and then advised him to go and

¹⁶ J.F. Fleet, *Inscriptions of the Early Gupta Kings and Their Times*, Delhi, 1970, p. 12, line 17 of the inscription.

fight because the following day was *amavasya*, that day being *krishnapaksa chaturdasi* (VI. lxxx. 55), the fourteenth day of the dark half of the moon.

For at least a thousand years or so, *amavasya* has been regarded as inauspicious (*ashubha*) by the Hindus. This day is particularly feared when someone is seriously ill in the family. The one reason that is usually given for this widespread belief is that on this day, the moon's effect on man and vegetation is almost nil. It is now admitted even in the medical world, that the moon does wield a powerful influence on our environment.

This being our general belief, one is surprised to read in the *Yuddhakanda* the advice given to Ravana by one of his ministers, Suparsva. Had this day been regarded so inauspicious then, as it is held now, Suparsva could never have given such a piece of advice. It was tantamount to sending Ravana to his death. But Ravana had no such fear, because this belief or superstition probably did not exist when this part of the *Ramayana* was composed.

A study of the history of the *amavasya* as given by Kane,¹⁷ shows that though the word *tithi* does not occur in the *Rigveda*, the idea was certainly there. Thus, it is clear that right from the *Rigveda* up to about the fourth century B.C., *amavasya* was not regarded as *asubha* (inauspicious). Briefly the story is as follows :

'*Amavasya* is explained in later works as being of two kinds, viz., *Sinivali* (that is the day on which *amavasya* is mixed with the fourteenth *tithi*), and *Kuhu* (when *amavasya* is mixed with the first *tithi*) of the next fortnight.

'Similarly, *paurnamasi* is of two kinds, *Anumati* (mixed with the fourteenth *tithi*) and *Raka* (mixed with the *pratipada* of the next *paksa*).'

In the *Rigveda* *Sinivali* is raised to the position of a divinity, and is described as the sister of the gods; further offerings are made to her and she is implored to bestow the worshippers with progeny.

Raka and *Anumati* are also similarly treated in the *Rigveda*. All the four were regarded as deities even during the late Vedic period.

Kane is uncertain as to the origin of these names. And when we find an echo of this in the *Ramayana*, we have to regard it as a survival of a very ancient belief.

¹⁷ Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. V, Poona, 1974, pp. 62-4.

Ravana's death on *amavasya* probably gave rise to the belief that is current today. It was some such belief which prompted *Gautama Dharmasutra* (XV.1-2) to define *sraddha* as a sacrifice performed for the *pitra* (fathers) on *amavasya*. This association with the dead, might have accelerated the fear of *amavasya* when a person is ill in the family.

However (as the inscriptions testify), for making *dana* and having ritual baths, particularly on the confluence of rivers, the *amavasya* continued to be held in high esteem. And hence the largest concourse of pilgrims, even in the Kumbha Mela at Prayaga, is on the *mauni amavasya*. ✓

With regard to the organization of the army on either side, two things may be noted. The first is of a very general nature. The principal fighter, whether he is Rama or Ravana, generally remains in the centre, in accordance with his importance, and he is supposed to be protected by various other generals. Such practice is found in the *Mahabharata* as well as in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*.

What is striking is the almost complete absence of the conception of the *vyuha*—various army formations or arrays in the *Ramayana*, named after the objects, such as needle (*suchi*), snake, circle, etc. So far only one reference is met with where we are told that Rama had arranged his Vanara army in the *garuda-vyuha* (VI.xxi.12). This *vyuha* figures among Bhishma's many *vyuhas* but does not occur in Kautilya.¹⁸ I think a maximum number of these *vyuhas* are found in the *Bhishmaparva*, and also in Kautilya. To us many of these appear fantastic. But one *vyuha* that has become very famous and popular is the *chakravyuha*, arranged by Drona. Arjuna's son Abhimanyu knew how to pierce it, but did not know how to come out of it. And when no one from the Pandava army could help, the young boy was killed.

The near absence of this conception in the *Ramayana* would suggest the continuation of an earlier Vedic tradition. The *vyuha* concept seems to belong to the late epic phase with its elaboration in the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*.

We should also note the absence of the mention of cavalry (*asvaroha* or *hayaroha*) and elephant fights in the *Ramayana*, though there is the mention of cavalry in Ravana's army.

¹⁸ Shamasastri, op. cit., p. 450.

As far as the strength of the army and its various formations are concerned, there should be no doubt if we are to believe the account of Megasthenes that, as far back as the fourth century B.C., Chandragupta Maurya could maintain a large regular army. But it is indeed doubtful if such a large, fourfold army could be maintained by smaller states around 1000 B.C.

The use of cavalry in the epics has not been critically appraised, even by recent writers like Sarva Daman Singh and G.N. Pant. A young student, Ramesh Sinha, has written a thesis on the *Prachin Bharatiya Yuddha Vyavastha*, with special reference to the epics. No doubt, in the *Mahabharata*, there are occasional references to the learning of cavalry fighting, and the infrequent use of it, but there are very few actual descriptions of cavalry warfare.

In the *Ramayana* Rama is said to be an expert horse-rider,¹⁹ and Bharata is said to have been accompanied by an army of one lakh horse-riders. Even Ravana had an army of 20,000 horses. But the wonder is that such a large army never participated in the actual war! More important, where on the island of Lanka was this cavalry force accommodated or stationed? Also, when Sarva Daman Singh cites a cavalry battle in the *Bhismaparva*, he is careful enough to say, 'The cavalry in the epic does not make any significant contribution to victory or defeat.'

We have, therefore, to conclude that the cavalry in the epics, particularly in the *Ramayana*, was either non-existent or ineffective; and its use in the *Mahabharata* either belongs to a period or stage when horse-riders had no proper equipment, such as the saddle, stirrup, or that it had been introduced in both the epics at a later stage when foreigners like the Greeks, the Sakas, the Parthians and finally the Hunas had shown the Indians what a really good cavalry force could do. A proper *parva* by *parva* study of the *Mahabharata* would very probably corroborate my inference. We have shown elsewhere how the *Adiparva* and the *Sabhaparva* of the *Mahabharata* bear ample evidence of having been expanded after the first century A.D.²⁰

¹⁹ This is said to be in *Ayodhyakanda*, i. 28, according to Sarva Daman Singh, op. cit., p. 68, footnote 2. However, I do not find it in the Critical Edition.

²⁰ H.D. Sankalia, 'The *Adiparva* of the *Mahabharata* in Historical Perspective', *Indica*, Vol. XVI, 1979, pp. 161-4.

While lamenting the death of Ravana Mandodari said that what had been decreed by fate (*daivagati*) could not be averted by wealth (*artha*), passion (*kama*), valour (*vikrama*) or order (*ajnya*) (VI.xcviii.23-5). Thus she concluded, after saying that Ravana had not heeded anybody's advice, even that of his brother Vibhisana, and had unnecessarily brought this calamity upon himself and the entire Rakshasa fold.

When viewed historically, from the data given by Kane,²¹ we find that right up to the composition of the epics, fate alone was never held responsible for a person's or nation's fortune or misfortune. The *Mahabharata* does not express a categorical view. Both *purushartha* (personal action) as well as *daiva* (fate or divine help), are believed to be factors responsible for the consequence of any act.

This is so in *Kautilya* and *Manusmriti*, and also in later works on the *Dharmasastra*. It is only in the very late works that fate alone was held completely responsible for our good or bad fortunes.

Thus Mandodari's lament that nothing else helps or is responsible for one's good or bad fortune except fate might be regarded as an indication of the comparative lateness of this portion of the *Yuddhakanda*.

Regarding death ceremonies, we do not know how the various Rakshasa leaders were disposed of after they were killed. Only about Ravana is there a passing reference. Rama asked Vibhisana to perform the *samaskaras*—ceremonies after death. However, the latter was not inclined to do so, because Ravana was so wicked. Thereupon Rama said that after death all enmity should be forgotten and ordered him to do what was necessary. And then Ravana was cremated. No other details are given (VI.xcix.42).

Even this small detail is important because though Ravana was supposed to be a Rakshasa, he was entitled to the same kind of *samaskaras* which his opponents were entitled to.

And as far as we know today, cremation became an accepted practice all over India and Ceylon in the early centuries of the Christian era and later.

Though Ravana was cremated, we are not told about what happened to Mandodari and his other wives though, as noted

²¹ Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. III, pp. 168-70, Poona, 1973.

elsewhere, they came immediately to the battlefield and clasped parts of Ravana's body. But none of these wives became *satis*. ✓

Vibhisana's coronation was a modest affair; Lakshmana sprinkled water from a golden pot (VI.c.11-12). The citizens brought gifts of rice (*akshata*), sweet (*modaka*), *laja* (a kind of parched grain) and 'divine' flowers (VI.c.16).

It is significant that no other grains figure among these gifts. Though rice is unknown to the *Rigveda* and occurs, at times in the later Vedic literature, it subsequently became the most precious or sacred grain, used in all ceremonies and has retained its position till today.

This, of course, was the second coronation of Vibhisana, for earlier, he had been crowned a king with just sea-water by Lakshmana at the behest of Rama (VI.xiii.7-8).

When Hanuman narrates to Bharata Rama's adventures since Bharata's return to Ayodhya, he refers to the identification jewel (*abhijnanamani*) (VI.cxiv.37), and not to the signet-ring (*namankita anguliyaka*), though a reading with the signet-ring does occur, and this is given as a footnote in the Critical Edition. It is also mentioned in the edition translated by Dutt.²² It is thus possible that the readings mentioning a single *mani* (jewel) are earlier.

That Rama and Lakshmana were cured by the medicinal herbs brought by Hanuman is well known. This was a nasal remedy, merely the aroma of the herb was to be inhaled. As soon as Lakshmana inhaled this herb he was rid of the injury caused by the weapon, and was without pain, fever, etc. (VI.lxxviii.13-14, 16). And then at the order of Rama, all the Vanara chiefs like Vibhisana were similarly medicinally treated (VI.lxxix.15-16).

Even some of the Rakshasas besides Vibhisana thought that *dharma* was on the side of gods, and *adharma* on the side of the *asuras*. Thus Malyavan, great-grandfather on the mother's side (*matupitamaha*) spoke of the virtues of *dharma* (VI.xxvi.10) and then described how the Rakshasas in various countries were harassing the *dvijas* when they were performing their sacrifices, etc. (VI.xxvi.10-20).

As a result of these misdeeds of the Rakshasas, he could foresee, with the help of the ill omens, the destruction of the Rakshasas (VI.xxvi. 21-30). He said that not only would there be

²² M.N. Dutt, *The Ramayana, Yuddhakanda*, Calcutta, 1893, p. 1536.

varnasamakarata among men, but among animals as well. Among all these evil signs there is one which may help in dating this section of the *Yuddhakanda*.

Malyavan said that at night dark-hued women (*kalika*) would be seen in dreams in front of dwellings speaking inauspiciously, and laughing, displaying their sable teeth (VI.xxvi.25).²³

This particular description of a demoness reminds us of terrible looking *pisachis* and *dakinis* or even of a form of goddess Kali herself. But iconographically such figures appear both in the Hindu and the Buddhist pantheon fairly late, not before the seventh century.

This particular inauspicious sign (*nimitta*) would show that though from as early as the Rigvedic times, society in India is known to have believed in good as well as bad signs, still a very careful, analytical study would help to show the growth in these signs, each stage of growth reflecting certain social, religious, even economic and political reasons behind them.

In the first place, as Kane has observed²⁴ there were two kinds of calamities or bad events: *utpata* and *nimitta*. The latter means, according to the *Amarakosha* cited by Kane, 'cause or prognostic sign'. These may be auspicious or inauspicious, whereas *utpatas* signify the reverse of the usual natural order, and denote occurrences which portend evil to all.

Both these words are post-Vedic, whereas the word *adbhuta* is an ancient word, and occurs in the *Rigveda*, in the sense of 'wonderful', 'future' and 'portentous'.²⁵

Examples of several unfavourable or inauspicious happenings have been cited by Kane from the *Mahabharata* as well as from the *Ramayana*. These do not help us much at the moment, for all these should be analysed, and put in some sort of historical context.

When Bharata heard the news of Rama's return from Hanuman, he was overwhelmed with joy. So he bestowed upon him 100,000 cows, 100 villages, and 16 young virgins as wives. It is perhaps a characteristic of the whole of the *Ramayana*, that a woman's limbs are never described in great detail, as in later literature. Hence all the virgins are simply said to have worn

²³ Dutt, op. cit., p. 1203.

²⁴ Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. V, p. 743.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 740.

kundalas and other ornaments and to have golden coloured faces like the moon (VI.cxiii.41-2).

From a historical point of view, all the gifts need a critical survey. Here, as Kane tells us,²⁶ right from the early Vedic times, cows, camels, horses, chariots and *vadhus* (brides) were occasionally given as gifts. However, he thinks that the word *vadhu* cannot mean that the young maidens were brides, since the number is always large. They were likely to be maidservants.

So here too, one may argue that when Bharata offered sixteen young girls to Hanuman as *bharyas*, they were meant to be 'maidservants'. But what is important from our point of view is the apparent and not the literal meaning. Both the words *vadhu* and *bharya* stand for a wife. So when the poet either in the *Rigveda* or in the epic used such a word, there must be some social sanction behind it. It is the prevalence of such a custom which saw nothing wrong in Krishna's marrying 16,000 girls who were formerly kept in bondage by Narakasura.

Again in the Vedic period, only at times were entire villages given away as gifts.²⁷ In early inscriptions, only a piece of land was given normally. Only later, after the fifth century, were whole villages gifted. So while the grant of a hundred villages by Bharata to Hanuman is certainly an exaggeration, still it should be regarded as a reflection of the times when entire villages were given away, and when the donor was the ruler of a large empire and not a small state.²⁸

After discussing all these aspects, we may take up the major problem of Rama's invasion of Lanka.

Here there are three aspects of the main problem. Did Rama really invade Lanka which was said to be in the sea and is identified with Ceylon?

Does the itinerary of Rama help our understanding of this problem, as also the description of Lanka given several times

²⁶ Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. II, p. 838.

²⁷ Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 840.

²⁸ Almost all inscriptions from Mathura, Bharhut, Sanchi, and early Buddhist caves from western India record a gift of this or that structure, but never the grant of an entire village. Such grants begin to appear in the fifth-sixth century. See D.R. Bhandarkar, *Epi. Ind.*, Vol. XXIII, p. 161, inscription nos. 1209-18. For earlier instances see Nasik Cave Inscriptions, nos. 1125-30, *Epi. Ind.*, Vol. X, 1909-10, appendix, pp. 123-5.

in the *Yuddhakanda*, and incidentally in the *Sundarakanda*, and elsewhere ?

Are there points which, when examined critically, might help us to decide the historicity of the various things mentioned in the *Yuddhakanda*, and understand the main problem ?

Lanka was situated on the other side (shore) of the ocean (VI. iii. 20). Further it was located or built (*rachita*) on the top of a hill (*sailagre*). However, it was completely isolated and hence unapproachable. There was not even a sea passage (*naupatha*) (VI. iii. 20).

स्थिता पारे समुद्रस्य दूरपारस्य राघव ।

नौपथश्चापि नास्त्यत्र निरादेशश्च सर्वतः ॥

(VI.iii.20)

Though so isolated it was extremely well protected from within and without. There was the golden encircling wall (*suvarna prakara*), studded with diamonds, pearls and other precious jewels (VI. iii. 13). Around this there was a moat (*parikha*), unfathomable, and filled with alligators (VI. iii. 14). Near these were installed *yantras*, mechanical contrivances (perhaps like rockets?) which went into action on the approach of the enemy's army (VI. iii. 16). There were also hundreds of *sataghni*²⁹ made of iron or steel, and manned by a host of Rakshasas. One was adorned with numerous golden pillars with the *vedika* design (VI. iii. 17).

This hill-top city was stocked with horses and elephants and all kinds of weapons such as the *parigha* and the *sataghni*. In the west, it was protected by an army of Rakshasas of *ayuta* strength, in the east, of *prayuta* strength, in the south, of *niyuta* strength and in the north, of *arbuda* strength.

The gate-keepers in the east were armed with swords of leather (*charmakhadgadghara*), whereas those in the north had charioteers and cavalry (VI. iii. 28).

And in the midst of the hundred thousand soldiers there was a *gulma* (VI. iii. 25-7).

Hanuman related his idea of the fortification of Lanka, the strength of the army, and some idea of the spy system (*gupti-karma*) (VI. iii. 3-4).

²⁹ The exact meaning of this word is not known. It is said to be a weapon or machine which kills a hundred soldiers. G.N. Pant, *Studies in Indian Weapons and Warfare*, New Delhi, 1970, p. 285.

It is interesting to compare this account of the defence of Lanka with the ways and means by which the generals and Ravana had thought of defending Lanka when Rama would invade it. Each general boasted of how he would kill his enemies, how he would take a *parigha*, and kill the entire Vanara force, and Rama and Lakshmana. Later they all armed themselves with *parigha*, *prasa*, *pattisa*, *sakti*, *sula*, *parasu*, bow and arrow and swords (VI. ix. 4), and were about to march to kill Rama and his allies. From this foolish adventure they were stopped by Vibhisana (VI. ix. 5-7).

And it is with these weapons that Ravana's generals are supposed to have killed Rama and his Vanara army at night as Ravana told Sita (VI. xxii. 19-25). To this list, we find the addition of *bhindipala* (VI. xxxii. 30).

After a consultation with his ministers and violent protest and plea for returning Sita from Malyavan, Ravana strengthened Lanka's *gupti* (protection) and placed Prahasta at the eastern gate, Mahaparsva and Mahodara at the southern gate, Indrajit at the western gate and the north was guarded by Sukra, Sarana and Ravana himself (VI. xxvii. 16-20).

Virupaksa was appointed at the centre of the *gulma* (VI. xxvii. 20; xxvii. 14).

This defence strategy was confirmed by Vibhisana in the next section. Further we are told how various weapons were kept ready for defence (VI. xxviii. 10-11).

At the auspicious moment (*muhurta*), when the Uttaraphalguni joined the Hasta *nakshatra*, the entire Vanara army headed by Rama, who remained in the centre, and followed by Lakshmana, Sugriva and other Vanara chiefs marched southward. The omens (*nimittani*) were also good (*dhanya*) (VI. iv. 3-20, 40-7).

The strength of the Vanaras was almost immeasurable, consisting as it did of ten million (*koti*) Vanaras. All of them subsisted on leaves, flowers and sweet fruits on their journey to Lanka. Marching southwards, they saw the Sahya mountain, covered with vegetation (VI. iv. 34) and then Malaya with its wonderful forests, streams and rivers (VI. iv. 56). They saw a large number of trees, such as *champaka*, *ashoka*, *tilaka*, *chuta*. The Vanaras enjoyed the fruits and flowers of all of them. They reached the Mahendra mountain. Rama climbed this and saw its covering of trees, and a large body of water full of tortoise

(*kurma*) and fish (*mina*). Then crossing the Sahya, and Malaya, they arrived at the seashore. There the entire army camped on the northern bank (*tira*) of the ocean (*sagara*), covered with trees (*druma-ayuta*) (VI. iv. 73; v.1).

And then Rama was at a loss to know how to cross this unfathomable sea.

Meanwhile Ravana (as mentioned elsewhere in this section) consulted his generals on how to meet the invasion. While all the others bragged about their exploits and how they would individually fight and destroy the enemy, Vibhisana alone advised Ravana to seek peace by returning Sita. When Ravana spurned this advice and rebuked him as a traitor, Vibhisana with four of his followers went over to Rama, where he was cautiously received, and then crowned as the future king of Lanka (VI.xi.14; xiii. 2, 8).

When Rama asked him how they should cross the ocean with the entire army, Vibhisana advised him to build a bridge. Without such a bridge, it was impossible to invade Lanka. It was not easy to build a bridge. The sea had to be quiet or subdued so that a bridge could be built. Rama appealed to the sea but without any effect (VI. xiv. 4). Then he got enraged, and discharged burning arrows from his powerful bows (VI. xiv. 15-26). These caused such fright and consternation amongst the denizens of the sea and the underworld that the sea himself came up in a human form, wearing a red garland and decorated with all kinds of jewels, consisting of emeralds and with folded hands promised that he would help to build the bridge, and not destroy it once it was ready (VI. xv. 9).

And with feverish zeal the Vanaras began to fill up the ocean with all sorts of trees without roots: *sal*, *asvaparna*, *kutaju*, *arjuna*, *tada*, *tiloaka*, *timita*, *bilvaka*, *saptaparna*, *karnikara*, *chuta ashoka* (VI. xv. 16-18). Later huge slabs of stone were thrown. Thus, a long bridge (*mahasetu*), ten *yojanas* broad (*vistarna*), and a hundred *yojanas* long (*ayata*) was built by Nala. The gods, Gandharvas and Siddhas gathered together in the sky to behold this wonderful sight (VI. xv. 23).

So struck were they all by this superhuman feat, that they all worshipped Rama in various ways (VI.xv.33). So the entire Vanara army crossed the sea, running hither and thither and some even falling into the water, while a few swam like birds (VI.xv.29).

This is a matter-of-fact account of Rama's march to the south on his way to Lanka, and the building of the unique bridge.

When we examine this account critically a few questions naturally arise. These do not seem to have been raised by any previous writers on this subject.

Even if we place Kiskindha in Karanataka, as some scholars have done after Pargiter (though as shown by us, this is now unacceptable, and Kiskindha must be a natural cavern in eastern Madhya Pradesh), still from the Bellary district to either Kanyakumari or Ramesvaram is a long distance, not less than a thousand miles. It is surprising that while marching southwards by the western route, Rama and his generals did not come across any landmark except the Sahya, Malaya and Mahendra mountains. No doubt these are the most prominent features, still the land was not completely bereft of any other natural feature such as rivers like the Kaveri or human habitation which we now know, existed in the south from the earliest period of human existence in India, and particularly from about 3000 B.C. Numerous neolithic sites have been discovered in Andhra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and a few have been excavated. The neolithic age was followed by the megalithic, in about 1000 B.C. From then onwards numerous huge stone tombs, some overground and some underground, but all covered by fairly large heaps of stones were made. These became a characteristic feature of the entire country south of the Krishna.

So, whatever be the time of Rama's popularly believed march to the south—5000 B.C. or 1000 B.C. or later—still a few characteristic landmarks, neolithic and megalithic habitations, and particularly the numerous burial fields or cemeteries should have found an echo in the poet's description. Since nothing but the three hills are mentioned, it would appear that the poet did not know southern India.

Further, we can say that he had no idea at all of the country around Ramesvaram or Kanyakumari. Those who have been to these places know that geologically these are some of the most ancient lands in India. Prolonged weathering has made the land surface look copper-red and for want of adequate water, vegetation is scarce.

At Ramesvaram there is nothing but sand dunes known as *teris*. These are again of three types—copper-red, brown and

grey or white—the first being the oldest and indicate in no uncertain terms what the nature of the country, say 5000 to 10,000 years ago, was.

In such an environment, thick vegetation, particularly so many kinds of trees mentioned in the *Ramayana* and which were uprooted and thrown into the sea to help fill the seabed are impossible to find.

Except a few palm trees and one or two others, nothing else grows there even today and nothing could have grown there in the past.

Secondly, no stone is available there, unless one goes several miles inland, and brings slabs after breaking the rocky hills.

To both these objections, the reply might be that the Vanaras had superhuman strength, they could have run to all sorts of places, uprooted trees and broken down rocks, and thus brought the ballast which helped to construct the bridge.

Of course, this could have happened. An archaeologist can only point out the improbability of the happening.

This view is further strengthened when we take into account the actual distance between Ramesvaram and the island of Sri Lanka. Whatever be the exact connotation of the length (1000 *yojanas*) and breadth (10 *yojanas*) of the bridge given in the epic, anyone who has actually visited the spot, or knows the present distance between the two points, will have to say that this bridge was the longest ever to have been built anywhere in the world, just with tree trunks and stone slabs!

Indeed, the whole thing is one of the grandest feats of imagination, and so is the description of Lanka which follows.

We have summarized the main features of Lanka, occurring at various places, in the *Yuddhakanda*, and also in the *Sundara-kanda*. Anyone who studies these critically will be struck by the fact that though Lanka was built or situated on a hill lying in the midst of a sea, still it is said to have a moat (*parikha*).

Further it was fortified all round, and had iron gates, etc. Then follows a description of the city, with a highway in the centre of the town and parks, etc.

Now when we examine this description of Lanka, and the precaution taken by Ravana to defend it, and compare it with what we know from literature, such as Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, and what we can gather from the accounts of several excavations

in India, we shall have to say without any hesitation that the whole thing is imaginary. No doubt, cities in ancient and even prehistoric India had fortifications as we witness at Mohenjo-Daro and Kalibangan, and Kot Diji in Sindh and Surkotada in Kutch. But the fortifications of the former two cities were all of mud, the latter two were of stone, because this was easily available. In addition to this thick mud or stone wall, there were bastions as well. No doubt, there were gates and these could not have been of anything other than wood. At the most, they might have been covered with copper or bronze sheets. But these gates could never have been made of iron as the *Ramayana* tells us.

And this more or less was the case right up to and during the early Iron Age, as we have some idea from the seventy-five small excavations during the last thirty years.

We reach the same conclusion about Lanka's description when we examine the arrangement of the defence forces, both by Rama and Ravana respectively. For instance, both stationed themselves in the centre, as their position deserved. However, both had secured their rear as well as their sides. One really wonders how Ravana expected any attack from the rear because Lanka was on a hill, and there was sea all round. However, this was the conventional strategy described in works like Kautilya and our poet has reproduced it without any thought of whether it was suitable to the situation he was describing.

The army consisted of thousand elephants, an *ayuta* of charioteers and two *ayuta* of cavalry and a crore of Rakshasas (VI. xxviii. 16).

When Rama with Lakshmana climbed the Suvela hill on the southern coast, opposite Lanka, he saw Lanka with its beautiful parks and forests with all sorts of trees (VI. xxx. 1-5) and animals (VI. xxx. 17). Lanka, situated on the crest of the Trikuta, looked like heaven. It was a hundred *yojanas* in extent. It had high *prasadas* and *vimanas* with tall *gopuras* and in the midst of these was the *prasada* with a thousand pillars. It was tall like the Kailasa peak, it had huge engines and gates (VI. xxx. 18-26; xxxii. 11). All this is beautifully summarized in the one verse (VI. xxxi. 21).

In Lanka there were all sorts of gardens (*upavana*) and forests full of several kinds of trees and flowers (VI. xxx. 1-11).

पताकामालिनी रम्यामुद्यानवनशोभिताम् ।

चित्रवप्रा सुदुष्प्रापामुच्च प्राकारतोरणाम् ॥

(VI. xxxi.21)

There were also bears, lions, boars and buffaloes and deer who got frightened with the noise caused by the Vanaras (VI.xxx. 17). And then all the chiefs and Rama and Lakshmana occupied appointed places in the north, south, east, west and the centre (VI. xxxi. 25-31).

Thus was Lanka besieged from all sides. Even the air could not pass through (VI. xxxi. 43); it seemed as if the *prakara* was made of Vanaras (VI. xxxi. 85).

Those who think that the *Ramayana* is nothing but a poem, an *adikavya*, may well ask, 'Was it necessary to undertake all this study, to arrive at this conclusion? We knew it before, at the outset, that being a poem, there is nothing historical in it.' Our reply would be, 'Granted that this is a poem but a poem must and does reflect some conditions of the time when it was written.' That is why a Critical Edition was prepared. Critical editions imply that the editor would like to place the work under question in the context of some time and place. As soon as one does that, one enters the domain of history. Ours is one step further, in the same direction. Besides, even though the account of Lanka, and the fight between Rama and Ravana are mythical, or artificially concocted by putting together conventional descriptions of places, persons and events, still the very mention of each of these, when examined historically, helps us to define more precisely the time of the composition or the redaction of the *Yuddhakanda*.

Our views on this may now be summarized. There is no doubt that the *Yuddhakanda* as well as the preceding *kandas* were composed when Lanka was supposed to be in the south, in the Indian ocean, and situated on a hill. The poet conceived a magnificent, but an altogether imaginary account of the march to Lanka, the building of the *setu*, and the invasion of Lanka, and the subsequent battles that were fought there. Each one of these sections might be regarded from this point of view as a masterpiece. Again each one of these sections helps the poet to delineate the characters of the main actors in the story. Here, as Bulcke³⁰

³⁰ K. Bulcke, *Journal of Oriental Research*, Madras 1949, Vol. XVII, pp. 1-32, particularly page 2.

has said and possibly others also, the main story or the character of the persons concerned does not suffer. Even when Rama is equated with Vishnu, Krishna and Narayana, and Sita with Lakshmi, still neither of them loses his or her modesty or flinches from what each one thinks to be his or her duty. It is this portrayal of a consistent character, regarded so far as noble and worthy of emulation, as the ideal for all times to come, that has given the poem a unity. Otherwise the various accounts or descriptions are full of contradictions.

Unfortunately, a large number of people, educated or otherwise, literally believe in all that is described in the *Ramayana* as well as the other *Puranas* and the *Mahabharata*. After the preparation of the Critical Edition of the two epics this belief has been strengthened, particularly among the educated. To show how misplaced is this belief is one of the objectives of the present study.

Thus when we take into consideration all these facts—the absence of any detailed knowledge of south India, during the invasion of Lanka, the topography of Ramesvaram, the long distance between Ramesvaram and the island of Sri Lanka, the conventional description of Lanka and its defences, and miraculous events that took place during the war, and the final scene when all the gods came by air, and Rama left with the entire Vanara army in the *pushpaka* for Ayodhya, then we have to conclude, rather regretfully, that what the epic describes is indeed unreal. And hence we may justly characterize it, as did Hopkins nearly a hundred years ago, as an 'Artificial Age'.³¹

Rama did not invade Lanka nor kill Ravana on Dassera or Vijayadasami. Just as a critical study of the *Ramayana* from a historical perspective showed that *amavasya* was not regarded inauspicious right up to fourth century B.C., and possibly a reflection of this ancient belief and practice is found in the *Ramayana*, in the same way such a study shows that Rama did not kill Ravana on Dassera, nor did he start his search for Sita on this day or during this period of ten days. Dassera, as is well known, is celebrated all over India, as the tenth day of the bright half (*sukla paksha*) of the month of Asvina. This generally falls in September-October.

³¹ Edward W. Hopkins, 'The Social and Military Position of the Ruling Caste in Ancient India', *Journal of American Oriental Society*, New Haven, 1889, Vol. XIII, pp. 57-372.

In the Critical Edition of the original *Ramayana* of Valmiki, we are told in the *Kiskindhakanda* that Rama and Lakshmana arrived in the Pampa region in *vasanta* (spring).³² According to the commentaries—*Ramayana Siromani* and *Bhusana*—this would be the month of Chaitra or Vaisakha, as the late Mankad had observed.³³

We are then told about the killing of Vali and the coronation of Sugriva. The coronation, according to the twenty-fifth *sarga*, is said to have taken place in Sravana (July-August). There is no doubt about this month, as it is found in all the manuscripts of the *Ramayana*.

It was decided mutually by Rama and Sugriva to undertake the search for Sita after the four months of the monsoon. If we calculate this period from the period of Sugriva's coronation, then the four months of the monsoon would be over in *marga-sirsa*, that is, December. But Rama feels very agitated and tries to convince Sugriva that the month for *udyoga* (activity), that is, Kartika, was already at hand, the four months of monsoon having ended.

This detailed discussion of the time-sequence given in the *Ramayana*, however, makes one thing clear. According to the original story (as Mankad had already noted) 'Rama did not begin his march against Ravana on Vijayadasami (that is tenth of the month of Ashvina) nor did he kill Ravana on that day.'³⁴

There is evidence that Rama marched to Lanka after the middle of Pausha (December-January), in the fourteenth year of his exile, and Ravana was killed on *amavasya*. Then when did the belief that Rama killed Ravana on Vijayadasami come into existence?

As the evidence gathered by Kane³⁵ in his *History of Dharma-sastra* indicates, the various *vratas* (performance of religious rites) were elaborately laid down only after the tenth century. Some of the important works of this period are Hemadri's *Chaturvargachintamani* and *Nirnayasindhu*, *Purusarthachintamani*

³² D.R. Mankad, *The Valmiki-Ramayana*, Vol. IV, *Kiskindhakanda*, Baroda, 1965, p. xxxi.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Mankad, *op. cit.*, p. xxxii.

³⁵ Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. V, 1974, pp. 22-61.

and *Vrataraja Dharmasindhu*. It is Hemadri who, relying on an earlier author Kasyapa, said 'that *tithi* is called Vijayadasami when Rama started on his invasion (against Ravana) on Sravana *nakshatra*'.³⁶ Hence men should celebrate the crossing of the limits of their village on that day and *nakshatra*. Thus started the custom or practice of *simollanghana* (crossing the border).

In a sense, this is but a natural thing to do in a country like India, where the rains are heavy during the monsoon, and travel is difficult. Hence September-October during which Vijayadasami falls would be naturally preferred. But as our study shows, its association with the invasion of Lanka or the killing of Ravana, as now popularly accepted is based on a very late and erroneous belief. The original *Ramayana* tells us quite a different story.

We must also note here the fact that in Tamil Nadu, *amavasya* is regarded as auspicious, though in the rest of the Dravidian country, Andhra, Karnataka and Kerala, the belief and practices are as in the north.

This might mean, as far as the present occurrence of *amavasya* in the *Yuddhakanda* is concerned, that this particular passage has been added much later, after the northern and southern recensions had been well established. As far as this *kanda* is concerned, its editor, Dr P.L. Vaidya³⁷ had adopted the southern recension as his principal text, provided its contents were supported by the northwestern, northeastern and western recensions.

Since the western scholars began to take interest in the Indian epics, a number of questions have been raised regarding the propriety, or the historicity of several incidents and episodes. One of these incidents is the 'fire-ordeal' or *agnipravesa* scene at the end of the *Yuddhakanda* in the *Ramayana*. It is almost the last or the final scene in the original epic. Anyone who reads it in the original cannot but shed tears at the plight of Sita, who after spending a year in solitary confinement at Lanka is brought to Rama by Vibhisana. At this time when we expect Rama to receive her back with open arms, we find him using the words,

³⁶ Ibid., p. 189. Kane only cites this author in footnote 483. For other references see footnote 484.

³⁷ Vaidya, op. cit., p. 29.

'You have spent so many months in Ravana's household. I cannot take back such a woman. I have nothing to do with you. You can go wherever you like' (VI. ciii. 18).

तद्गच्छ ह्यभ्यनुज्ञाता यथेष्टं जनकात्मजे ।

एता दश दिशो भद्रे कार्यमस्मि न मे त्वया ॥ (VI.ciii.18)

तदर्थं निर्जिता मे त्वं यशः प्रत्याहूतं मया ।

नास्ति मे त्वय्यभिवृद्धो यथेष्टं गम्यतामितः ॥ (VI.ciii.21)

Rama seems happy that he has done his duty by killing Ravana, and rescuing Sita. Beyond that he has no other responsibility. Hearing these words Sita tells him, 'You have forgotten everything—my lineage, my intense love and my *satitva*, and put forward only the hackneyed view about a woman' (VI.civ.14-16).

किं मामसदृशं वाक्यमीदृशं श्रोत्रदारुणम् ।

रूक्षं श्रावयसे वीर प्राकृतः प्राकृतमिव ॥ (VI.civ.5)

त्वया तु नरशार्दूल क्रोधमेवानुवर्तता ।

लघुनेव मनुष्येण स्त्रीत्वमेव पुरस्कृतम् ॥ (VI.civ.14)

न प्रमाणीकृतः पाणिर्बालिये बालेन पीडितः ।

मम भक्तिश्च शीलं च सर्वं ते पृष्ठतः कृतम् ॥ (VI.civ.16)

So saying she faints. On recovering she decides to enter the fire to prove that she is chaste. Lakshmana then lights a fire, and as soon as she enters it, out comes the God of Fire himself carrying Sita on his lap, and he declares that she was absolutely pure. So do the other gods, Brahma, Indra, Vayu and even the spirit of the dead Dasaratha. All of them advise Rama to accept Sita, and he does so willingly, saying that he behaved this way only to allay the doubts of those who did not believe in Sita's chastity (VI. civ. 22-7; cv. 1-28).

However, in his introduction Dr Vaidya said that in the original story, which he thought was preserved in the *Ramopakhyana*, a subsidiary episode in the *Vanaparva* of the *Mahabharata*, it is not Agni, but Vayu, the Wind God who declared Sita chaste. He also said that Valmiki had improved upon this source, and among many other miraculous events, added the 'fire-ordeal' scene.³⁸

³⁸ P.L. Vaidya, *The Valmiki-Ramayana*, Vol. VI, *Yuddhakanda*, Baroda, 1971, p. xxxv.

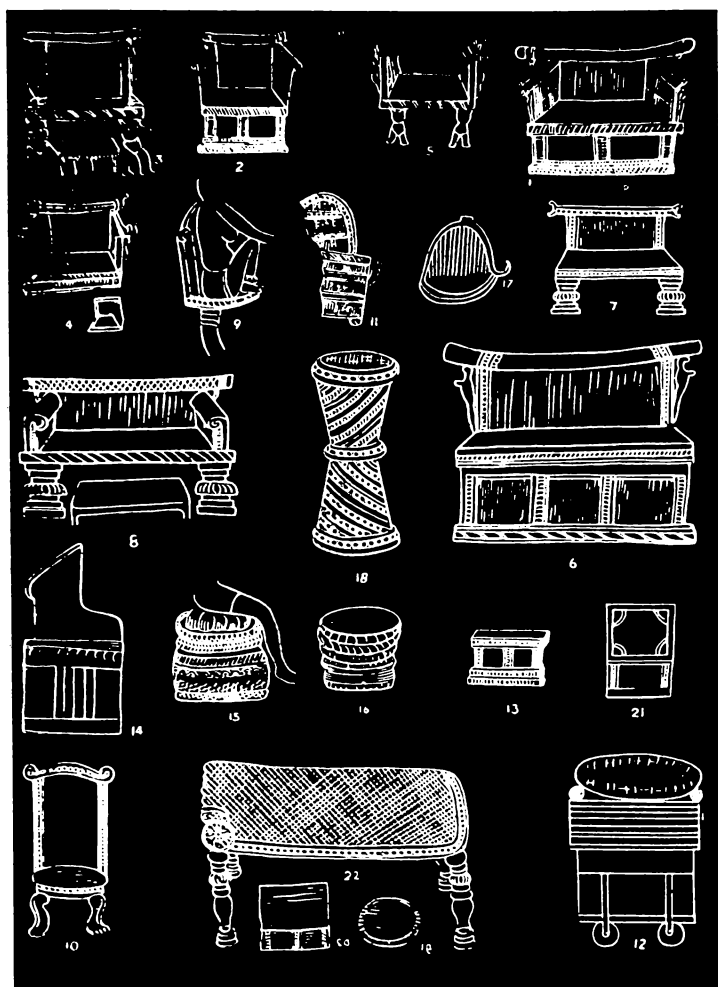


Fig. 27. Furniture in a royal residence (Nagarjunakonda)



Fig. 28. Wrestlers (Nagarjunakonda)

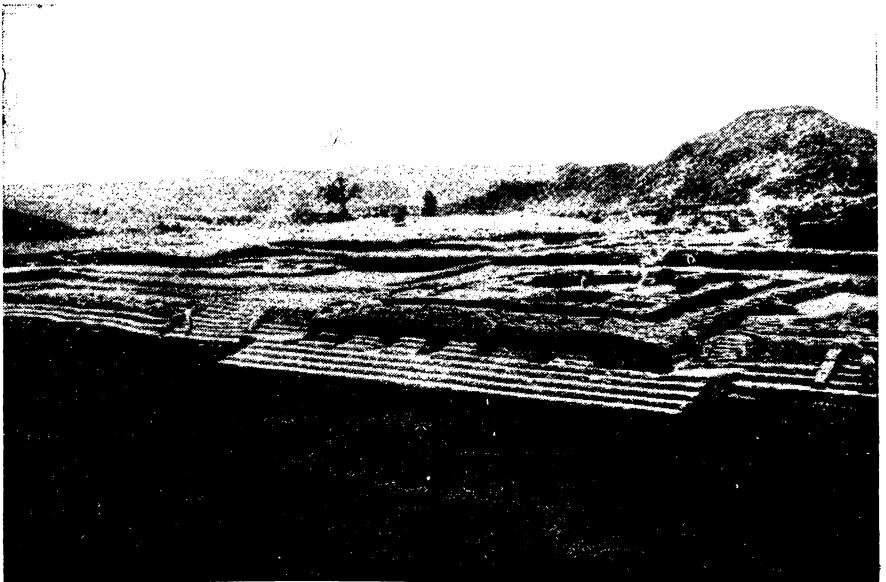


Fig. 29. Stadium or amphitheatre (Nagarjunakonda)



Fig. 30. The Indo-Greek and Saka-Parthian city of Sirkap (Taxila)



Fig. 31. Apsidal Temple (Taxila)

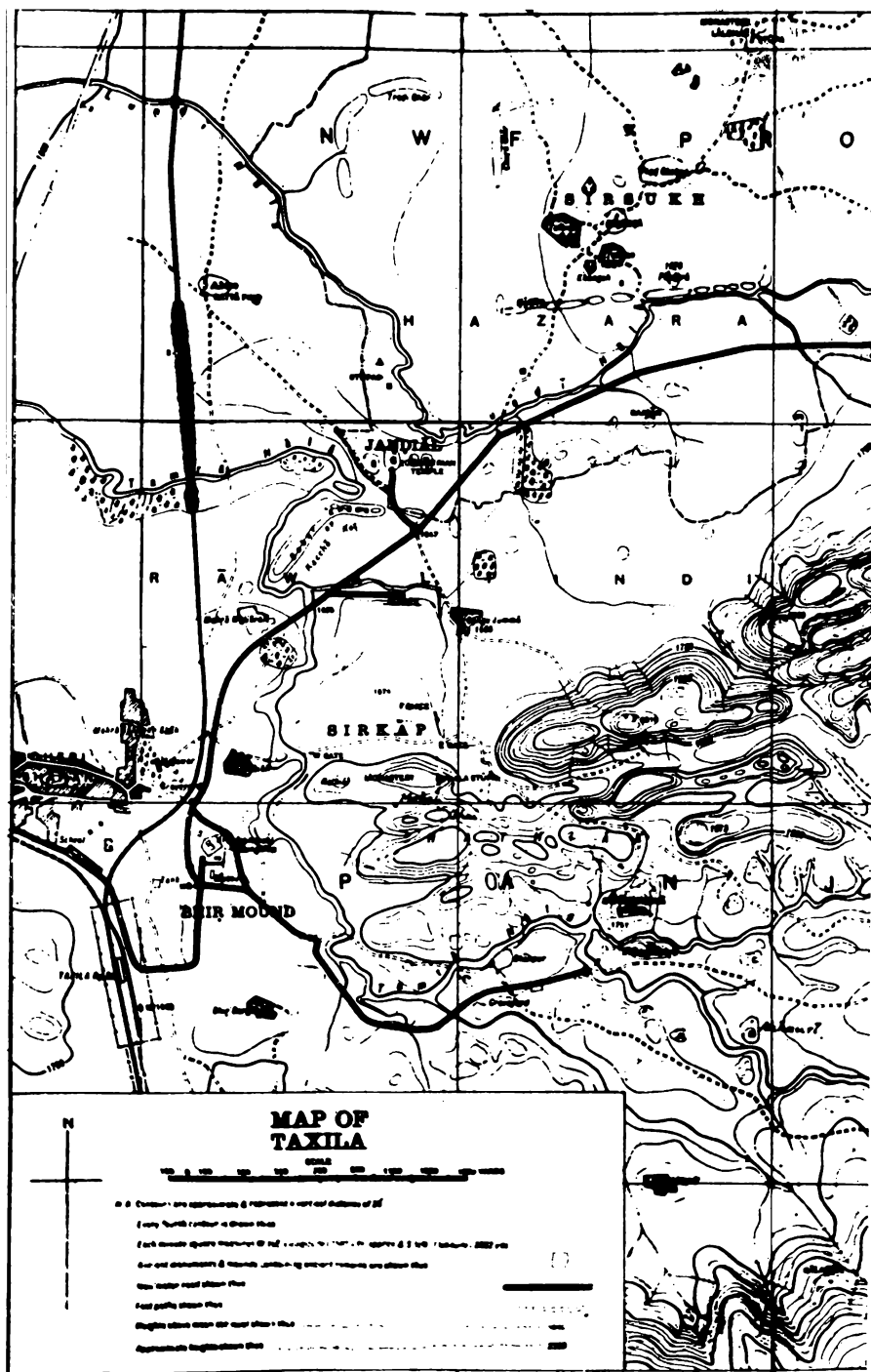


Fig. 32. Map of Taxila

Dr Sen has pointed out that even this scene is a much later interpolation in the Valmiki *Ramayana*. For it does not occur in Hanuman's account of *Sita-harana* to the Vanaras and to Bharadvaja. Sen and other scholars like Jacobi and Sukthankar think that the *Ramopakhyana* itself is a poor summary of the *Ramayana*.³⁹

There is one important reason to say that this episode is a later interpolation. This is the personification of the various deities who appear on the scene. Such a development is perfectly in keeping with Rama and Sita's being given divine status.

Thus, we can confidently say from the internal evidence in the *Ramayana*, as well as from the several kinds of external evidence that the *agnipravesa* scene in the *Yuddhakanda* of the *Ramayana* is a very late addition.

³⁹ Ibid., p. xxxii.

8. Uttarakanda

The *Uttarakanda*¹ is regarded unanimously by all scholars—Indian as well as Western—and even by laymen who know anything about the *Ramayana*, as a later addition to the main text of Valmiki.

How much later could it be ? A definite but partial answer to this question was given by Kalidasa and Bhavabhuti. Kalidasa used in the *Raghuvamsa* almost the same words which Sita used for Rama in the *Uttarakanda* (xiv. 66).

वाच्यस्त्वया मद्वचनात्स राजा
वह् नौ विशुद्धामपि यत्समक्षम् ।
मां लोकवादश्रवणादहासी :
श्रुतस्य किं तत्सदृशं कुलस्य ॥

(रघुवंश, xiv. 61)

Bhavabhuti made some important changes. Instead of taking Lava and Kusa to the court of Rama with Valmiki, he brought Rama to the latter's *asrama*. Here Rama, on seeing the boys, was filled with filial emotion, and we have a memorable verse.

व्यतिषजति पदार्थानान्तरः कोऽपि हेतुः ।
न खलु बहिरुपाधीन्प्रीतयः संश्रयन्ते ॥

(उत्तररामचरितं, vi. 12)

This reconciliation and recognition is certainly more dramatic, and hence Bhavabhuti's fame as a great dramatist.

Thus by the fourth to seventh centuries or even before, *Uttarakanda* had definitely become a part of the *Ramayana*.

Naturally we have to go beyond this general dating and be more precise.

Before we attempt this, a few words must be said about the

¹ U.P. Shah, *The Valmiki-Ramayana*, Vol. VII, *Uttarakanda*, Baroda, 1972-75.

general nature of the *Uttarakanda*. Anyone who reads this, will at once feel that it was composed to justify or explain all that had happened in the main story. Hence several *sargas* are devoted to Ravana: how he became so powerful, and how he could not have been killed by anyone except Rama; how he could not physically assault Sita because of a curse by Vedavati. For this naturally has perplexed readers and the audience in India, 'how could Sita have been allowed to remain unmolested "pure".' Further Ravana was cursed that a woman would be the cause of his death.

We are also told how Indrajit acquired the knowledge of becoming invisible and of the *brahmastra*.

Then follow explanations about the killing of Lavana-sura, and the conquest of Madhupuri or Mathura. Lastly, the description of the founding of Taksasila and Puskaravati in Gandharavisaya and the establishment of the kingdoms in Karapatha and Malladesa for the sons of Shatrughna.

In the end we learn how both Rama and Lakshmana returned to heaven, on the banks of the Sarayu, and Sita entered the earth from where she had come.

Thus, whoever composed the *Uttarakanda* has tried to give satisfactory explanations for all the miraculous, semi-miraculous and possibly historical incidents.

It is the latter aspect that we shall take up. In fact, this feature shows more than anything else that the *Ramayana* is a north Indian document, or more precisely, a piece of literature which deals with mid-northeastern India and with the northwestern region, the two regions which play the most important part in the story.

Of the various towns and cities mentioned, historically and archaeologically, the most important are Taksasila and Puskalavati. Both have been mentioned in Sanskrit as well as in Pali and other literature, and in the accounts of foreign travellers,² Taksasila again has been excavated for several seasons by Sir John Marshall, and the result published in three voluminous works. It was later excavated by Dr Wheeler,³ with a view to

² Sir John Marshall, *Taxila*, 1951 and 1975, Vol. I, p. 1. Puskalavati is also spelt in Sanskrit as Puskaravati (*Ramayana*, VII. xci. 9) for *l* and *r* are interchangeable.

³ *Ancient India*, no. 4 (1947-48), pp. 41-84.

providing training to the new recruits in the Archaeological Survey and the universities.

Wheeler later also excavated Puskalavati known as Charsada.⁴ He said in his summary, 'The story of Puskalavati is essentially the story of Taxila. In affirming that the two cities were founded at the same time, the *Ramayana* has more semblance of historical authority than is commonly credited in detail to the Indian epics.'

This statement needs critical examination. In the first place, we have to inquire whether the statement in the *Uttarakanda* refers to the first or the earliest foundation of Taksasila and Puskaravati, in what the epic calls Gandharavisaya in Gandharvadesa. Or is it possible to say that the statements might refer to the subsequent cities as well? What was the nature or description of these new cities? Also 'Is it possible for a ruler in mid-eastern India to go all the way to Gandhara, with a large army, defeat the enemy there and establish new cities, and place his sons as their rulers?'

In fact the whole episode is curious, so is Dasaratha's marriage to Kaikeyi, a daughter of Kekaya, king of Gandhara.

The epic gives only a general description of the country. Though it does not give the names of the local rivers, its statement that the country on either bank of Sindhu is fertile and beautiful is true even today (VII. xc. 10).

This country was ruled by the Gandharvas, sons of Sailusa (VII. xc. 11). Obviously these are the names of some of the foreigners like the Persians, Greeks, Indo-Greeks, Scythians, Parthians, Sakas and Kushanas, who had ruled for some time between 500 B.C.-A.D. 100.

The author of the *Balakanda* is familiar with Sakas, Yavanas and Yavana-misrita (Indo-Greeks or Indo-Romans), so it is a little surprising that the composer of the *Uttarakanda* is satisfied with a non-committal general name, Gandharva.

However, the subsequent statement of King Yudhajit of Kekaya is significant. It says, 'Please conquer these Gandharvas, and establish two cities here' (VII. xc. 12).

This means that the 'cities' or some settlements were already there, but these had to be conquered and colonized by Rama. This meaning is also suggested by VII.xci. 9 where we are told

⁴ Sir Mortimer Wheeler, *Charsada*, 1962, p. 15 and facing p. 1.

that these brave people were killed and Taksa in Taksasila and Puskara in Puskaravati were installed.

Rama sent Bharata with his two sons Taksa and Puskala. For these three were more familiar with the country—the latter two being grandsons of a king of the North West Frontier Province. As expected, Bharata goes with a large army, defeats the Gandharvas with an *astra* called *samvarta*, and his two sons were duly made rulers of Taksasila and Puskaravati respectively.

Both these cities were well laid out (*suviḥhaktantara*) with gardens, markets, houses, *vimanas* and *devayatanas* (VII. xci. 11-14). Bharata lived here for a period of five years and then returned to Ayodhya.

When we examine this epic account against the historical and archaeological background, it would seem that the reference to the foundation of new cities is not a reference to the foundation of the earliest cities in the Mauryan or pre-Mauryan period, but most probably to the cities founded by the Indo-Greeks and Parthians.

In the Lavanasura episode, we are told how Shatrughna killed this demon, who was a cannibal, and established his son Subahu at Madhupuri or Mathura.

The archaeological history of Mathura is not as well known as that of Taxila but this conquest of Mathura could also have taken place at this time—when an army from Ayodhya had gone as far as the Punjab.

As the physiographical map given by Wheeler shows Charsada, the ancient Puskalavati, is situated in the vast Peshawar plain, beside the multiple courses of the Swat river, three miles from its present junction with the Kabul river, and twenty miles north-east of Peshawar in West Pakistan.

The country was under Persian domination in the sixth century B.C. The earliest foundation of Taxila and Charsada might have been at this time. Both could be nothing but small villages, as Marshall said, though he does not rule out the possibility of still earlier settlements founded there during the Stone Age or the Copper-Bronze Ages. And this has been proved by the discovery of neolithic and chalcolithic settlements by Pakistani archaeologists. Wheeler's excavation at Charsada in 1958 had somehow missed this spot.

What is certain from this review of the archaeological activities

in the region for the last hundred and seventeen years is that the Taksasila region, because of its fertility and being at the head of three trans-continental roads—one from central Asia, another from Kashmir, and the third from eastern India, across the Gangetic valley—has been the home of civilized man from the dawn of history and remained so with several vicissitudes.

However, Marshall's repeated probings below the Bhir mound and extensive excavations at Sirkap and Sirsukh, showed evidence of regular town-planning in the Indo-Greek and Parthian cities, but not in the Mauryan or later Kushana sites.

This evidence from Taxila was confirmed at Charsada by Wheeler's excavation and Pakistan's Air Force air-photograph of the ruins of Shaikhan, six hundred yards to the north-north-east of Bala Hisar at Charsada. It revealed a series of parallel streets, forty yards apart, dividing the site into blocks in which coherent house-plans can be isolated. One street interval includes the precinct of a massive circular structure which can only have been a stupa or a Buddhist shrine.⁵

Excavations at Sirkap (Taxila) had exposed a similar grid-plan. From each flank of the main street, approximately at intervals of forty yards, side streets branch at right angles, producing a rigid grid-plan. One of the blocks, slightly broader than the rest, contains a large temple precinct enclosing the outline of a stupa. The foundation of Sirkap was ascribed to the Parthians and dated to the first century B.C.

Wheeler is inclined to accept both these ascriptions, and concludes, "The picture of the Shaikhan city as equivalent of Taxila-Sirkap holds together convincingly."⁶

In plain language, these are not Taxila I and Charsada I, but Taxila II and Charsada II.

Most probably it is to the foundation of this Taksasila and this Puskalavati (Puskaravati) that *Ramayana's* description of well laid-out (*svyavisthita*) cities with temples and other houses refers to.

In fact what Bharata is said to have done would apply *mutatis mutandis* to what to what Wheeler says about Charsada and Taxila.

The earliest historical reference to Gandhara is by Herodotus.

⁵ Wheeler, op. cit., p. 16.

⁶ Ibid., p. 17.

He included the Gandharas in the sixth province or satrapy of the Persian empire. Darius counted Gadara (or Gandhara) among his eastern satrapies on the Behistan inscription of c. 518 B.C. India, or the territory bordering upon the Indus, is mentioned in the inscriptions at Persipolis and Naqsh-i-Rustam (c. 486 B.C.). Herodotus further records that this last or twentieth satrapy was also the richest. Thus, the country on either side of the Indus as the epic describes it was the Gandharva country.

What we cannot easily explain is the total absence of any reference to Buddhism, through the mention of stupas, etc., unless these are included in the expression *devayatana* (house of gods).

More difficult is the problem of finding a ruler at Ayodhya who was capable of sending a powerful army to the North West Frontier Province at this time, unless we think of Agnimitra. Still earlier would be Chandragupta and Asoka.

But this Mauryan city at Taxila, at least, as repeatedly remarked by Marshall, was not well laid-out. Even though the Mauryan penetration into this corner of India is proved by the presence of the northern black polished ware and lotus bowls in the excavation at Bala Hisar,⁷ nothing can be said about the plan of this city.

While nothing more can be said about the *Ramayana* references, can we say anything about the name Taksasila and its earliest founder? As is well known, Taksaka was the name of a Naga chief. There is little doubt that the Nagas had once settled in the Punjab, Haryana and parts of Madhya Pradesh. From here they were hounded out in various ways by Aryans, so much so that by the fourth century only a few Naga chiefs remained in northern and central India, who could oppose the formation of the Gupta empire.

The *Mahabharata* tells us that Janamejaya performed the snake sacrifice at Taksasila, after defeating the Nagas.⁸ And it was here that the entire *Mahabharata* was first recited. This proves that a city named Taksasila was already there. Probably it was named after the Naga chief. Thus the *Mahabharata* seems to give,

⁷ Wheeler, op. cit., p. 36.

⁸ V.S. Sukthankar (ed.), *The Adiparvan, Mahabharata*, Book I, Poona, 1933 (I.iii.18 ; xlvii. 1-25).

in our present knowledge, a more natural explanation and earlier origin of Taxila.

The question may now be asked, 'Why does the *Ramayana* refer to Taksasila at all?' The only answer, which would also be sufficient for the remaining cities of Mathura, Vidisa, Sravati, Mallapuri and Kusavati, is that the *Uttarakanda* has tried to explain the existence of the settlements in the wake of the eastern migration of the Aryans. Though of the five cities three are well identified respectively with Mathura, Vidisa and Sravasti, still none of them is properly excavated. Though the antiquity of all these cities may be traced back at least to 800 B.C., if we accept the earlier dating of the painted grey ware,⁹ still none of these had probably developed into a full-fledged city at so early a date. Hence we might say that the *Ramayana* has probably the later development in view rather than their earliest foundation.

If this interpretation is correct, then the *Uttarakanda* might be said to have been composed earliest by the first century A.D., while additions might have taken place later, particularly the last *sargas* where Rama is requested by Kala to return to heaven, because he was a partial manifestation of Vishnu and this had served its purpose.

This is the tenor of the entire *Uttarakanda*, and agrees very well with the introductory verses in the *Balakanda*, where the four brothers are introduced as partial *avatars* of Vishnu. So one can say confidently that the *Balakanda* and the *Uttarakanda* were composed at the same time, probably by the same author. The *avatara* theory was well established by the fourth century. So this would be the lower limit of the composition of the *Uttarakanda*. By this time, as we shall see, scenes from the *Ramayana* and *Bhagavata* were depicted in sculptures on the walls of temples in Madhya Pradesh, but probably—because no temple dedicated to Rama alone has been found—Rama was not actually worshipped as a god. This is also evident from the *Raghuvamsa* which cannot be dated earlier than this period.

The division of the main Kosala kingdom between Lava and Kusa might have been necessitated by the fact that they were twins. Hence there was no question of primogeniture, as was the custom in the Ikshvaku family. So Lava was offered North

⁹ Vibha Tripathi, *The Painted Grey Ware*, 1976, pp. 124-31, gives the list of sites and on p. 135 are mentioned the C-14 dates.

Kosala with its capital at Sravati. This must be Sravasti identified as Sahet-Mahet.¹⁰ This city was already in ruins in the seventh century, as Hiuen-tsang tells us. It is situated between Akaona and Balrampur.

From all accounts—Puranic as well as archaeological—this appears to be a very ancient place. However, the question we have to decide is, 'How old would Sravasti be? Was it founded by Lava, or was it founded, as the *Vishnu Purana* tells us, by king Sravasta, the son of Yuvanasha, the tenth in descent from Surya himself?'

Historically, it was the capital of Prasenajit, the king of Mahakosala and a contemporary of the Buddha. Excavations as well as explorations have shown that this city could be at least as old as the painted grey ware (c. 800 B.C. to 400 B.C.). However, this is too broad a bracket. The two sons of Lakshmana, Angada and Chandraketu were installed as rulers in Karapatha and Malladesa respectively (VII. xcii. 5-9). The capitals of the kingdoms were known after the rulers as Angadiya and Chandrakanta.

With regard to these kingdoms, it may be remarked that it was necessary to provide a separate kingdom to each son of Bharata or Lakshmana, because they were not twins. But probably, to avoid any quarrel between the brothers as Rama's experience had taught a lesson, we find that a neat arrangement was made and each son was provided with a new kingdom. Thus six new kingdoms or small states came into existence; two in the North West Frontier Province, two in the mid-Gangetic valley, and two in the eastern region.

About Angadiya in Karapatha and Mallabhumī (VII. xcii. 9) we do not have much information.

Malladesa or Mallabhumī refers to the Mallas of the district of Kusinagara, identified with Kasia in the Gorakhpur district.¹¹

Kusavati has not been satisfactorily identified, though at times it is confused with a river called Saravati.¹²

With regard to warfare there is nothing new to note, as far

¹⁰ D.C. Sircar, *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Mediaeval India*, Delhi, 1971, p. 254.

¹¹ Sircar, op. cit., p. 29.

¹² Ibid., p. 270.

as the names of weapons are concerned. The list of names which we have cited before is repeated. The missile (*astra*) which Bharata uses in subduing or defeating the Gandharvas is called *samvarta*.

It is notable that though Shatrughna goes with a large army to conquer Lavana, he is advised to approach him alone, and defeat him in a duel (*dvandvayuddha*). This alone was the kind of warfare in which Rama had killed Ravana and other Rakshasas, as we are told specifically (VII. i. 18-19). This once again underlines the fact that most of the wars during the epic period were between individuals. It was truly the Age of Heroes.

It is interesting to observe that actors and dancers accompanied the army. This is specifically mentioned when Rama sends an army with Shatrughna to conquer Lavana (VII. lvi. 3).

Whatever epithets we are used to hearing about Vishnu-Krishna in the *Mahabharata*, such as Purusottama, Narayana and his special emblems such as *panchajanya*, and *saranga* bow we find the same epithets and emblems mentioned in relation to Rama, when he is identified with Vishnu (VII. vii. 9-24). Only Rama was one-half an incarnation of Vishnu, the other half being shared by his three brothers. Naturally when the purpose for which their incarnations took place was achieved, Vishnu had to return to his abode. That is what they do.

There is an interesting confirmation about the preservation of the body after death by keeping it in oil. Dasaratha's body was so kept. Now we are told that when a Brahmin complained to Rama about the loss of his only child, the latter advised him to keep the child's body immersed in a *drona* filled with oil and other scents (VII. lxvi. 2-3). This was done, and as soon as Rama cut off the head of the erring Sambuka, the child revived. The whole incident is worth narrating before any comment is made.

Since it was *Ramarajya* it was believed that no son would die during his father's lifetime, and that too of a Brahmin. But this strangely happens. And the Brahmin complains to Rama (VII. lx. 15). Rama is at a loss to know the cause of this unfortunate incident. But then Narada comes to his help. Narada tells Rama that because a Sudra practised penance, this happened. Rama orders to preserve the dead body in oil (VII. lxvi. 2) and leaves in search of the Sudra in the *Pushpaka-*

vimana, which he mentally recalls (VII. lxvi. 5).

He searched in all the directions. In the north and east, he did not find any trace of evil, but in the south, he saw a huge lake, near Saivala. In it a person was practising penance, standing on his head (VII. lxv. 12-13). Rama politely asked him who he was—a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya or Sudra, and why he was practising this difficult penance. The latter replied that he was a Sudra, Sambuka by name but he wanted to acquire godhood (*devatya*) with this very body (*sasharira*) (VII. lxvii. 1-3). As he said this, Rama took out his sword, and with it cut off the head of Sambuka. And at that very moment, the Brahmin's son revived (VII. lxvii. 4-5).

Strange as it may seem to our ears, this is a clear instance of the increasing popularity of the *varnasramadharma*, as preached by the Smritis and Puranas, and a blot on Hinduism, which we are trying to remove.¹³

This incident has been known to the Hindu society, all these two thousand years, reported as it was by Bhavabhuti and other writers. But no one had felt the complete lack of humanity in Hindu society, and it accepted the guilt of the Sudra in doing a thing—practising penance which was a prerogative of the two higher castes only !

Possibly this custom was meekly accepted by society when the writers on *Dharmasastra* and Smritis had become more rigid in their attitude to what they call *varnasramadharma*.

Right from the beginning, from the *Balakanda* and *Ayodhyakanda* to the end, that is, the *Uttarakanda*, the people's assembly (*parishad*) plays an important role in the *Ramayana*. It is rarely heard of in the other epic. Rama says that he heard the *apavada* (criticism) in the *parishad* (VII. xlvi. 11). So, much against his conscience (*antaratma*), Sita had to be sent away to live in Valmiki's *asrama* (VII. xlv. 9-16).

Fortunately for Sita, Valmiki had come to know about all these happenings by his 'inner vision' *dharma samadhi* (VII. xlviii. 9) and hence he had no difficulty in welcoming Sita to his *asrama*. Still he, the poet, had to assure his inmates (and the readers) about the correctness of his action

¹³ Even Rev. Father Kamil Bulcke had said that the worship of Rama began very late, and then Rama was regarded as an *avatara* of Vishnu.. *Rama-katha* (in Hindi), Hindi Parishad, Allahabad, 1950, p. 479.

in welcoming a woman, ostracized by society !

By the time the *Uttarakanda* was composed, a daughter was definitely considered a liability. She was always believed to be a source of misery to her parents, and supposed to be responsible for creating doubt about the character of all the three families (VII. ix. 6-7 ; xii. 11).

कन्यापितृत्वं दुःखं हि सर्वेषां मानकाङ्क्षणाम् ।
 न ज्ञायते च कः कन्यां वरयेदिति पुत्रिके ॥
 मातुः कुलं पितृकुलं यत्र चैव प्रदीयते ।
 कुलत्रयं सदा कन्या संशये स्थाप्य तिष्ठति ॥ (VII. ix. 6-7)
 कन्यापितृत्वं दुःखं हि नराणां मानकाङ्क्षणाम् ।
 कन्या हि द्वे कुले नित्यं संशये स्थाप्य तिष्ठति ॥ (VII. xii. 11)

To illustrate the truth of this belief the poet cites the examples of Kaikasi, a Rakshasi and Hema an Apsara.

When Maya and Hema's daughter Mandodari was offered to Ravana, the latter readily accepted her hand by lighting a fire (VII. xii. 17). That is, fire was invoked as the witness. This is an ancient Hindu custom.

It would thus appear that lighting a fire was the common custom of regularizing the marriage relationship amongst the so-called Daityas and Rakshasas (who are said to be non-Aryans) as it was among the Aryans (VII. xvii. 6).

Though earlier we have no evidence of the practice of committing *sati*, what Vedavati's mother did is clear. When her husband was killed by Sambhu Daitya she burnt herself in fire by embracing the dead body of her husband (VII. xvii. 12-13).

ततो मे जननी दीना तच्छरीरं पितुर्मम ।
 परिष्वज्य महाभागा प्रविष्टा दहनं सह ॥ (VII. xvii. 13)

It was this same Vedavati who, when she was defiled by Ravana, had burnt herself and died cursing Ravana that she would be born again to cause his death. Thus was Sita born, not in the natural way, but from the earth. By marrying Rama who was an *avatara* of Vishnu-Narayana, she thus fulfilled her ambition of the previous birth.

Thus, in one way or another the *Uttarakanda* has tried to provide explanations for the happenings in the main *Ramayana*.

9. Location of Lanka

Many readers and orthodox scholars have objected to my inference that Lanka was situated somewhere in eastern Madhya Pradesh and that many of the important incidents in the *Ramayana* were not only later interpolations but highly imaginary.

The chief amongst these critics so far is Dr V.V. Mirashi. He has publicly expressed his disagreement in a recent article that has appeared in a research journal.¹ So we shall take note of this criticism.

Mirashi's arguments against locating Lanka in Madhya Pradesh are of three kinds:

1. Traditional.
2. General.
3. Literal.

Mirashi says that since the time of Kalidasa (fourth century A.D.), Lanka has always been believed to be the island of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).

This is not correct. For though Kalidasa and others might have thought that way, Varahamihira (sixth century), who was not a poet, did not locate Lanka in the Indian ocean, whereas the three well-known Chinese travellers spoke of Ceylon as Simhala and not Lanka.

However, as I have repeatedly said, Kalidasa and others only portrayed or narrated the current view. They did not critically enquire whether what they were narrating was right or wrong. Thus Kalidasa, like the poet of the *Ramayana*, did not mention any place in between Lanka and the Godavari; in fact, he blindly followed the *Uttarakanda*.

What we have attempted to show is that by this time—even earlier—the *Ramayana* story had become current in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, and was gradually becoming popular in India and abroad.

¹ V.V. Mirashi, 'Location of Ravana's Lanka', *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, Baroda, Vol. XXIV, 1974-75, pp. 356-68.

The question is, 'Was Lanka in the original story, located in Madhya Pradesh or in Ceylon?' Or let us take the larger question, 'Was Rama regarded an incarnation of Vishnu (even partial) right from the beginning?'²

Here Kalidasa and also Bhavabhuti give a reply. Both tell us that in the fourth century and even later, Rama was not regarded as an incarnation of Vishnu. Hence Sita dares call him 'a raja'—'a mere king', when Lakshmana is sent to leave her alone in a forest, because Rama's subjects are suspicious of her chastity, and Lava and Kusa too question Rama's powers in killing a woman, Tataka and Vali, and then Prithivi (as Sita's mother) reprimands him for not caring for the testimony of Fire, nor for herself. Thus, up to the seventh century, Rama's deeds did not go unchallenged.

When we turn from these 'traditional' objections by indologists to Mirashi's other objections, we do not know whether Mirashi regards the present *Ramayana* (and the *Mahabharata*) as 'fact' or 'fiction' or 'as partly fact and partly fiction'. For he repeatedly tells us that the *Ramayana*, as the first *mahakavya*, is filled with the poet's fantasy and we should not expect to find realistic descriptions or measurements of the accurate distance of Rama's journey from Chitrakuta to Panchavati as Hiralal, Kibe and Iyer have tried to do during the last fifty years. In that case why does Mirashi cite a verse from the *Aranyakanda*, and then say that since the poet mentioned *mahodadhi* (large ocean), he must mean the Indian ocean, or when he mentions *lavana-ambhasa* (salty body of water) he must mean again a sea and not a freshwater lake?

Again Mirashi says that since *Agasti-asrama* is mentioned, along with *Vindhya* and *Mahendra*, these must all be in the south.

In the first place, if the *Ramayana* is nothing but a poet's fantasy, the poet does not mind if he substitutes a *mahodadhi* or *lavana-ambhasa* for a shallow, freshwater lake.³

² As explained earlier while discussing this problem of Rama's divinity, it is inherently connected with his supposed march to Lanka.

³ This is perfectly logical, if the reader cares to go through the rest of the matter that follows. How this has happened in the hands of the later commentators of the *Ramayana* has been very well explained by Rai Krishnadas in his articles on 'Rama-Vanavasa ka Bhugol', *Nagaripracharini Patrika*, Year 54, no. II-III, pp. 110-19.

Secondly, to come to the real geographical or topographical question, where is it mentioned that Vindhya is located in the south ?

Thirdly, all the countries and rivers mentioned in the *Kiskin-dhakanda* (IV.xlv.1) by Sugriva obviously occur in *sargas* interpolated after the third or even the fifth century.

Fortunately, this information is so topsy-turvy, and that too in all the recensions of the *Ramayana* as culled by Guruge, that no reliance can be placed on this ill-digested information.

Still more astounding are Mirashi's other statements such as 'though Ravana drove in a chariot and flew in the air, he also walked'. Such statements not only show the utter absurdity of the whole argument, but also show that Mirashi is not able to grasp the 'legal' implications of the statement of Sampati's son Suparsva who said that when he was sitting at the mouth of the Mahendra-dvara in the Vindhya, a black man carrying a very fair woman in his arms approached him and begged him for passage! The request was so courteously made that he allowed the man to pass. He later learnt that the black man was Ravana. Now the significance of this one *sloka* and the incident has not been realized by any scholar so far, not even by Iyer who does cite it,⁴ and also Ramadas.⁵ Even in a court of law evidence like this will be most readily admitted, because it is so naturally given.

This one verse tells us that Ravana was a normal human being, but black or dark in colour, and how he kidnapped Sita. In fact, looking back to the time when this incident took place, and the country—the hilly, forested country of Madhya Pradesh, or even Karnataka for that matter—this was the only natural way by which Sita could have been carried away. Hence, this verse may be regarded as extremely important, because it gives us, quite incidentally, an insight into the original incident, how Sita was kidnapped by Ravana, and the true personality of this man.

Likewise, Mirashi has again failed to grasp the true significance of the offer of a hundred pots of wine by Sita to the Kalindi or the scene of revelry in Bharadvaja's *asrama*.

Wine (*sura*) was certainly known from the time of the *Rigveda*,

⁴ P. Paramasiva Iyer, *Ramayana and Lanka*, Bangalore City, 1940, pp. 48-73.

⁵ G. Ramadas, 'Ravana's Lanka', *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. IV, pp. 339-46.

but can Mirashi cite a single instance when it was offered the way Sita offered it? Why did not Sita offer milk or *madhuparka* or something else? The reason is that at that time—first century A.D.—Roman wine, even though scarce, was becoming fashionable in Indian society. Hence, the offer of something scarce or precious was made by Sita. It is in this way alone that we can explain the revelry scene in Bharadvaja's *asrama*.

Mirashi has also failed to realize the significance of the sal trees which I have cited for the first time to fix the locale of Lanka and Dandakaranya. He says very glibly, 'Sala trees may grow anywhere.'⁶ Only a traditional Sanskritist can say this! For botanists have indeed appreciated my argument and said further that true sal (*Shorea robusta*) grows only in eastern Madhya Pradesh, south Bihar (Chhota Nagpur plateau) and western Orissa. They do grow in the Himalayan foothills and Assam but that is not contrary to our argument. Their distribution supports our claim.

Mirashi's conclusion⁷ that nothing archaeological about Rama has been found so far and nothing is likely to be found shows that he is completely oblivious of the discoveries made in India during the last twenty-five years—of the protohistoric cultures in Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Mirashi has tried to explain away the Gond's tracing their descent from Ravana by saying that this happens to be one of those common features in our dynastic history, where many foreign tribes such as Gurjaras have traced their descent from Manu, Ikshvaku and other Puranic figures.

Now there is a vital difference between the two analogies. In the case of the Gurjaras, Manu was held in high esteem. Whereas, as far as we know, except for the Gonds and other allied tribes, nobody has ever held Ravana in high esteem.

Secondly, all these tribes speak of Ravana's capital as 'Lanka' and several such 'Lankas' still exist. This is not the case with any of the dynasties that traced their descent from Puranic figures.

Thirdly, the Gonds have inhabited the region, where they are to be found today, at least from the beginning of the Christian era. The Buddhists and Brahmins have gradually tried to colonize

⁶ Mirashi, op. cit.

⁷ Ibid.

in these forested regions from the time of Asoka, followed by the Bharasivas and Vakatakas.

Mirashi ridicules the suggestion of Hiralal⁸ that a small stream near Chitrakuta, which disappears into the ground, was the original Godavari because (i) *Goda* was a non-Aryan Mundari word, meaning 'water'; and (ii) its location exactly fits the description of Rama's itinerary, while he was in the Chitrakuta region.

This is actually a part of a much larger problem, viz., the 'Sanskritization' of our place and proper names in inscriptions and literature.

A scientific and chronological study of our inscriptions, region by region—Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, parts of Bengal, and then Tamil Nadu at the Deccan College—has definitely established the fact that this process started about the first century A.D., when Sanskrit became the court language, first as far as we know with the Satraps of Malwa and Gujarat, then with the Gupta-Vakatakas and other dynasties. This process continued up to the seventh century when the regional languages were gradually given a place in the official records. At this time the 'grant' portion which was really important from the donee's point of view, began to be given in the regional language.

Mirashi knows this, and says so explicitly while editing the Vakataka inscriptions:⁹ 'As the Vakatakas adopted Sanskrit for writing their charters, the names of mountains, rivers, towns and villages are given in that classical language. It is interesting to note that the Satmala range in which the Ajanta caves are situated is called *Sahya-pada*. . . . Similarly the Madhunadi, on the bank of which the village Charmanka (modern Chammak) was situated, bears now the name of Chandrabhaga.' This is one name that like the Ganga and the Godavari, has been given to many other rivers.

It is in this way that the name of the Godavari was transferred to the river flowing past Nasik, when the Rama story spread southwards. It is more reasonable to have the Godavari near Chitrakuta. It is immaterial whether this river is small and

⁸ Hiralal, 'The Situation of Ravana's Lanka', *Jha Commemoration Volume*, Poona, 1963, pp. 151-63.

⁹ V.V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Vakatakas, CII*, Vol. V, p. xxxv.

appears underground. There are a number of small *kundas* and temples and grottos around it connected with Rama and Sita. It is quite natural to believe that these are the original sites connected with Rama's *vanavasa*, and not the ones near Nasik. Tradition or legends cannot start after those near Nasik, but vice versa.

The problem is identical in relation to the *Agasti-asrama* on the Godavari. This *asrama* was originally near Chitrakuta, as the *Ramayana* makes abundantly clear. It was when the name of Godavari was transferred that the sage's *asrama*, and even the Vindhya which he is supposed to have 'pierced', were transferred to a new location.

Even Chitrakuta has not escaped this fate. Perhaps the name was originally given to the hill south of Allahabad, for while all the hills around or in the region are of sandstone—the Vindhyan or Kaimur—this hill alone is of granite, with one huge boulder standing upon another. Hence it looks picturesque, and that is the literal meaning of Chitrakuta.

It appears that Mirashi is not aware of the publication of the final fascicule of the Critical Edition of the *Uttarakanda* by Dr U.P. Shah.¹⁰ Here, in the introduction, Shah has discussed fairly exhaustively the problem of Lanka, and has come to the conclusion that the original Lanka was in central India.

Some of his arguments are briefly summarized together with the important references here, for these convincingly answer the objections to locating Vindhya, Kiskindha, Dandaka, Godavari and Lanka in central India.

Regarding the close proximity of the Vindhya and the Mahendra, and both being in the north, it is not only I, on a critical study of the *Ramayana*, who had thought so, but B.C. Law¹¹ had pointed it out as far back as 1937. Mirashi should have certainly known this.

Vindhya and Mahendra are mentioned by the Gautami plates of Ganga Indravarman. This probably refers to the hills of the Ganjam district. A portion of the Eastern Ghats is still called Mahendra hill.

Likewise, Malaya, occurring in the *Ramayana*, need not always

¹⁰ *The Valmiki-Ramayana*, Vol. VII, Fascicule III, Baroda, 1975, pp. 31-50.

¹¹ B.C. Law, *Historical Geography of Ancient India*, p. 172. This had also been pointed out by Ramadas in 1928.

mean the hill in the extreme south. For as D.C. Sircar has suggested, 'Malaya' derived from the Dravidian *malai*, meaning 'hill', was often sanskritized and this gave rise to confusion.¹² Earlier, Ramadas had also mentioned that hills of this name are still to be found in Orissa.¹³

Secondly, Pargiter's¹⁴ suggestion that there was another Vindhya has so far not been corroborated by epigraphical or literary evidence.

If we examine its occurrence in Sanskrit literature, Kiskindha is mentioned in Patanjali's *Mahabhasya*, as *Kiskindha guha*.¹⁵

Kiskindha is called Vyadha Kiskindha, and placed near the lake Pampa, on a hill in the Vindhya, and not far from the temple of Vindhya-vasini, in the drama *Kaumudi-mahotsava*. Hence D.R. Bhandarkar had to say that these places are not far distant from Mount Chitrakuta in Banda district.¹⁶

Thus, such incontrovertible evidence is available to assert that up to about the sixth century A.D., Chitrakuta, Pampa, Kiskindha and Vindhya were thought to be closely associated, and all were placed in north or central India.

Even the *Puranas* like the *Vayu*, *Brahmanda*, *Markandeya* and *Matsya*, which had their written versions about this time, have grouped the *janapada* of Kiskindha along with that of Malada, Karusha, Mekala, Tosala, Kosala, Traipura, Vidisa, Anupa, as all situated on the Vindhya.¹⁷

Shah has usefully pointed out that the *Puranas* in the same context, mention separately the Nasikyas in Aparanta and Dandakas in Vidarbha.¹⁸

Neither the *Ramayana* nor the *Puranas* have identified Panchavati of Dandakaranya near Nasik, though it is on the Godavari. Nasik was known from at least the second century B.C. and was in existence from at least 1200 B.C., as proved by our excavations.

¹² D.C. Sircar, *Geography of Ancient and Medieval India*, p. 214.

¹³ Ramadas, op. cit., p. 343.

¹⁴ F.E. Pargiter, *JRAS*, 1894, pp. 231-64.

¹⁵ *Kielhorn's Edition*, p. 475.

¹⁶ D.R. Bhandarkar, 'Dandakaranya', *Jha Commemoration Volume*, Poona, 1937, p. 51.

¹⁷ Bhuvana Vinyasa portions. *Vayu*, xlv.131-4; *Brahmanda*, xvi.63-6; *Markandeya*, liv.53-5; *Matsya*, cxiv.51-4. These references have been after Shah, op. cit., p. 37.

¹⁸ Shah, op. cit., p. 38.

If the Panchavati near Nasik was the original site of Panchavati and had it been known to the composer or redactors of the *Ramayana*, they would not have failed to mention Nasik.

In the *Ramayana*, Agastya's *asrama* was not far from Chitrukuta. If Rama had to cross the Narmada to go to the Godavari, this famous river should have been mentioned. But neither the *Ramayana* nor even Kalidasa mention this river in Rama's journey to Lanka and back. In the return journey, there is no reference to the mountains Sahya, Malaya and Dardura. Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsha*, canto 13, closely follows the *Ramayana*, but he too makes no mention of the Narmada.

Further, the ethnographical and linguistic interpretations of names like Dandaka, Goda-(vari), Lanka, and Kantaka are no less significant, as also the antiquity of the word 'Gonda'. Since Mirashi has been used to deciphering and interpreting Sanskrit epigraphs, he has scarcely realized the contribution made to Indian culture by the aboriginal population—by their speech, dress, manners, house types, tools and weapons. Though much of this is lost due to the influence of Hinduism and modernization during the last fifty years, still words like Goda, Lanka, Dandaka and Gonda can be much more satisfactorily explained as pre-Aryan loan words in Sanskrit. The suffix 'kantaka' to which attention was first drawn by Ramadas is of great importance.

In the *Ramayana* (*Yuddhakanda*) Ravana is called 'Devakan-taka', and the Rakshasas 'Daiyakantaka' and that Lanka, originally built by Visvakarma, was occupied by the descendants of one Salakantaka. It is well known that the Amarkantaka plateau is one of the original habitats of the sal trees. And all the epithets of Ravana help us in locating Lanka on this plateau or near about.

Thus 'kantaka' seems to be a non-Aryan word, and as pointed out by Shah¹⁹ this word still survives as an independent place name 'Katangi', one mile south of Jabalpur and the other north of it, and once the headquarters of the Gond rajas. The place was known as 'Gadh Katangah' in Abul Fazal's *Ain-i-Akbari*. At this time (A.D. 1600) Gadh Katangah or Gondwana covered most of the present eastern Madhya Pradesh.

As for words like *sagara*, *samudra*, *lavana-ambhodadhi*, as has

¹⁹ For details see Shah, op. cit., pp. 44-7.

been pointed out by several writers before—Ramadas, Hiralal, Kibe, Iyer, Rai Krishnadas and U.P. Shah—they do not necessarily suggest the sea or the Indian ocean, as so popularly believed and even sought after by scholars from Pargiter to Mirashi during the last 100 years. For, as Shah has listed,²⁰ we have always had several lakes in the past in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, called *sagara*. And there are many more in the Bastar and the Raipur area.

Further Rai Krishnadas has drawn attention to a *lavana pargana*, situated in the Amarkantaka region.²¹

It was one of these *sagaras* which Hanuman swam across in *Ramayana* (I.i. 57 ; V.xxxv.5). This was the original legend or tradition which even Kalidasa echoes when he says *marutih sagaram tirnah*.²² Later, somehow, the idea of Hanuman flying over the ocean crept in and got ingrained in the Hindu mind.

प्रवृत्तावुपलब्धायां तस्याः संपातिदर्शनात् ।

मारुतिः सागरं तीर्थः संसारभिव निर्ममः ॥

(रघुवंश, xii.60)

Once we give up the idea of the ocean which Rama or Hanuman had to cross, the next suggestion is that there was in fact no bridge built by Nala, at Rama's request, but a *nala*, a small channel, which was bridged. In the *Balakanda*, as Rai Krishnadas has pointed out, the original reading was *nalasetu* and not *nalam setuma-karayata*, meaning that originally there was only a narrow pipe-like (*nala*) channel, and not a bridge (*setu*) made by Nala.

The question raised by Shah is also pertinent, but that also forms part of a larger question. How did the Rakshasas go in and out of Lanka if there was a formidable sea—not less than fourteen miles in width—between Lanka and India ?

In fact, none of the writers except Iyer, has ever enquired what kind of place Ramesvaram is, and whether there is any hill (be it called Mahendra or otherwise) near it.

For several miles there are nothing but low sandy mounds, with little vegetation and no stone at all. What one is shown in

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 44-9.

²¹ Rai Krishnadas, 'Ramavanavasa-ka Bhugol', *Nagaripracharini Patrika*, Year 54, No. II-III, p. 117.

²² Ibid., p. 48.

the sea while crossing from Mandapam to Ramesvaram are the remnants of a natural ridge.

However, there are passages in the *Ramayana*, for instance in the *Aranyakanda*, as well as the *Kiskindhakanda*, and the *Sundarakanda*, where the later interpolators had clearly Ceylon or Sri Lanka in view.

But this came much later. For as mentioned in detail elsewhere, in early Sanskrit literature Ceylon was known as Tamraparni or Simhala, but never as Lanka. Even in the sixth century and later, Simhala and Lanka are mentioned separately by Varahamihira (*Brihatsamhita*, XIV.xi. 16) ; the *Bhagavata* (v. 19), and even the northern version of the *Mahabharata*, *Vanaparvan*, (III.li. 23).²³

The *Ramayana* which Kalidasa had before him, had some vague idea about Lanka, and so we find a fanciful poetic description of the aerial travel by Rama from Lanka. Still, as pointed out before, Kalidasa, while relying upon such a *Ramayana*, has also indicated what the original *Ramayana* contained. Otherwise he would have mentioned the Narmada.

It is this distinction that we have to make between the original *Ramayana* with Lanka located in Madhya Pradesh, and definitely north or east of the Narmada, perhaps on a hill in or near Bastar and the other located in Ceylon or Sri Lanka.

Such a distinction between the original and real, and the later and largely mythical *Ramayana* has not been made by any scholar before, because all previous studies were partial, devoted to one particular aspect of the subject.

This study though fairly exhaustive and multi-pronged is still not complete. Much new knowledge is yet to be acquired with the help of excavations about Rama and his times.

Though there are comparatively few references to Lanka and Simhala in Indian inscriptions, these are very significant. As far as we know they definitely indicate that the island of Ceylon came to be called Lanka and associated with Rakshasas only after the fourth century.

It is also worth noting that early contact with Ceylon was mainly by sea and not overland, through the heart of south India. This is suggested by local traditions on the east and west coasts, as well as by place names like Simhaladvipa, Simhapura

²³ Ibid., p. 114.

(Sihor) in Goa and Saurashtra.

At Nagarjunakonda, remains of a Buddhist township were discovered, some forty years ago. Now this area has been submerged under the Nagarjuna Sagar. But before this submergence took place, extensive excavations were carried out. Later the things discovered were exhibited in a museum and some of the monuments were rebuilt on a nearby hill.

At Nagarjunakonda several monasteries had been built during the reign of the Ikshvaku kings who ruled in these parts from the second century to the end of the third century A.D. Many of these kings, particularly their wives and daughters, were Buddhists.

This region carried on a flourishing trade with Ceylon, islands in the Indian ocean as well as the Roman world. Naturally it attracted merchants and pilgrims from far and near.

Among the many Buddhist monasteries, there were some specially built for monks from Simhala or Tamraparni. A shrine had also been built for the Bodhi tree at Sihala Vihara. This was during the time of the King Mathariputra.

It is interesting that the inscription²⁴ which gives this information also mentions Kasmira, Gandhara, China, Kirata, Aparanta, Vanga (Bengal), Vanavasi, and the isle of Tamraparni. Thus we are assured that the island of Ceylon or Sri Lanka was called Simhala or Tamraparni. It also confirms that this was the island referred to, when Asoka first mentions 'Tamraparni'²⁵ in his second Girnar edict. This was also the case a century or two later as the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta also mentions the island as Simhaladvipa. This indigenous evidence is confirmed by Graeco-Roman geographers, and also finds reflection in literature of the period from Ceylon and India.

'Early Pali sources', says Professor P.V. Bapat, 'confirm this.' Further, there is no reference to the story of Rama or Ravana, in the early canonical literature of Ceylon.²⁶ What writers like Quintus Fernands²⁷ speak of are certainly very late folk tales and beliefs.

Three centuries later, in the year 588-89, one Mahanaman

²⁴ *Epi. Ind.*, Vol. XX, 1929-30, p. 23.

²⁵ Hultzsch, *Inscriptions of Asoka*, CII, Vol. I, p. 3.

²⁶ *All India Oriental Conference*, 27th Session, Kurukshetra.

²⁷ *The Times of India*, May 26, 1974.

built a magnificent temple of Buddha with an open *mandapa*, at Bodhimanda (Bodhgaya). He was an inhabitant of Amradvipa, and was born on the island of Lanka.²⁸

Thus we get two names : Amradvipa and Lanka. The first is after the supposed resemblance of the island of Ceylon to a mango (*amra*). At the same place, Bodhgaya, there is an inscription of another pilgrim, Sramana Prakhyata-Kirtti. He is said to be a scion of the royal family of Lanka.²⁹ Lastly, a Copper-plate inscription of King Bhojavarman, from Belava,³⁰ district Dacca, Bangladesh, says that this king was exhorted by one Purusottama to undertake an expedition against the Rakshasas and become overlord of Lanka.

Thus briefly but surely we see the three stages by which the island of Ceylon, (or Sri Lanka) was first called Simhala or Tamraparni, then came to be called Lanka, and later in the twelfth century, even associated with the Rakshasas.

As opposed to these records which place Lanka outside India, two records from eastern India and two from western India refer to Dandakaranya near Bastar,³¹ and 'a lord of western Lanka'³² near Sonpur on the Madhya Pradesh, Andhra-Orissa border.

Even now the people of Sonpur traditionally regard it as 'Paschima Lanka' (western Lanka), while the King of Goa is called 'the undoubted lord of Lanka or the proud possessor of Simhala'.³³ These references (dated respectively A.D. 704 and A.D. 1000) are not only useful, but also significant, as they point to the original meaning, or application of the word 'Lanka'. This is believed by linguists to be a Mundari word, meaning 'an island', a high, solitary place, hence an island. Even now it is used in this sense by the Korkus of Bastar and Chandrapur (both of which having village or sites with the name Lanka or Lakkai).

With regard to the linguistic origin of the word 'Lanka'.

²⁸ Fleet, J.F., *CII*, Vol. III (republished 1970), p. 278.

²⁹ Bloch, *ASIAR.*, 1908-09, p. 156 and H. Panday, *JBORS*, Vol. IV, p. 408 ; also *Epi. Ind.*, Vol. XX appendix, p. 246.

³⁰ *Epi. Ind.*, Vol. XII, p. 39, and N.S. Majumdar, *Inscriptions of Bengal*, Vol. III, p. 19, and *Epi. Ind.*, Vol. XX, appendix, p. 242.

³¹ Hiralal, *Epi. Ind.*, Vol. XII, p. 246.

³² B.C. Mazumdar, *Epi. Ind.*, Vol. XII, p. 238.

³³ *JBBRAS.*, Vol. IX, p. 216 and *Epi. Ind.*, Vol. III, p. 294, and *IHQ*, Vol. IV, p. 203.

Wust has proposed a Baltic-Slavic origin. For he thinks that meanings like 'gulf (bay), creek (inlet), the interior part of an enclosure, part marshy meadow' suits it much better than the Indo-Aryan or non-Aryan origin.³⁴

However, such a semantic explanation fits in much better with the present known distribution or occurrence of the word, in the non-Aryan or Mundari hypothesis. At present, besides the island in the Indian ocean named 'Sri Lanka', there are many places in the forested regions of Madhya Pradesh, and the present district of Chandrapur (former Chanda), which bear the name Lanka or Lakkai. Even now, small islands in the Godavari estuary are called Lanka.³⁵ This usage is unknown in northern India, or even in south India.

We can now turn to the actual location of the Dandakaranya, Lanka, Kiskindha, Rsyamuka, Pampasara, and such other sites. But before we undertake this task we should dispose of Ceylon or Sri Lanka's claim to Ravana's Lanka.

Two well-known Ceylonese scholars—Dr Ananda Guruge and Dr Godakumara—have said unhesitatingly that the *Ramayana* story is not very popular in Ceylon.³⁶ The latter scholar is even reported to have said that it was only after the Chola invasion that the *Ramayana* first penetrated the island.

1. Though the *Ramayana* is not very popular in Ceylon, still some names with Sita as the first part of the name, e.g., Sitavaka and Site-Eliya, *kuda* and *Maharavana-kotuva* suggest the influence of the story.
2. The narrow ridge of twenty-two miles between Ramesvaram and Talaimannar, from which a number of islands project, is regarded as the causeway built by Rama.
3. Vibhisana is still worshipped as a tutelary god, and in the *Mahamayuri*, Vibhisana is referred to as a Yaksha who was worshipped in Tamraparni. However, this is an excellent piece of evidence suggesting (i) that at the time of the *Mahamayuri*, that is the second or fourth century A.D.,

³⁴ Walter Wust, 'Zu Altindiar Lanka (f.n.Pr.) und Seiner Sippe', *Indian Linguistics*, Vol. XXV, 1964, pp. 59-60.

³⁵ Just as Sonpur in western Orissa is called 'Paschima Lanka', there is a place called 'Prakkilanka' (eastern Lanka) near the Godavari delta.

³⁶ Ananda Guruge, *The Society of the Ramayana*, Maharagan, Ceylon, 1960, p. 68.

Ceylon was not called Lanka, and (ii) that Vibhisana was originally a Yaksha, and not a Rakshasa, but somehow came to be associated with Ravana.

4. The *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa*, Pali works of about the third century A.D., mention a city called Lankapura in Ceylon, before the arrival of the Aryans. This island though a well-organized kingdom, was ruled by Yakshas and Nagas. Their king was killed by Vijaya with the aid of Kuvanna.³⁷
5. However, these Pali chronicles do not show any familiarity with the *Ramayana*, though Lanka as an independent kingdom might have truly existed.
6. It is the much later tradition as preserved in *Rajavaliya* which gives the date of the Rama-Ravana war, but further adds that Ravana's castle was swallowed up by the sea.
7. Tamil tradition speaks of an area in Ceylon called 'Ilankai', which was to the southeast of Trincomalee on the east coast of the island. It was washed off by the sea and its name extended to the whole island.³⁸

In brief, Ceylon or Sri Lanka was never known as Lanka in India. The island has been known as Simhala or Simhaladvipa or Tamraparni. It was by these names that this island was known to the early Graeco-Roman geographers and travellers, though in Ceylon proper, as the Pali works show, the name Lanka was used.

Whatever be the origin of the name Simhala (because the island was shaped like a *simha* (lion), or because it was invaded by some people under a chieftain named Simha, or Amradvipa (because the island resembles a mango in shape), Tamraparni is undoubtedly the most appropriate name. The land from Madras southwards, and particularly the land as it projects into the Indian ocean, looks copper-red.

Probably this would be the appearance of the land in Ceylon or Sri Lanka, because originally this island formed a part of India.

Hence all the early travellers and navigators—Indian and foreign—have described the land's end, Kanyakumari as well as the island as Tamraparni in Sanskrit and in Greek.

How and when did the name Lanka come to be applied to the island or a part of it?

We have no positive documentary proof. Though both the

³⁷ Guruge, op. cit., p. 68.

³⁸ Ibid.

local and the Tamil legends and traditions are said to have mentioned 'Ilankai' as the name of the island, or a part of it, still the exact date cannot be determined. We shall, however, accept it as the local name of the island or a part of it, for this is in no way contrary to our line of thinking.

Here what is important to remember is the fact that the name 'Lanka' or 'Ilankai' is probably not Dravidian, nor Sanskrit, but regarded by scholars of linguistics, at least for the last hundred years, as a word of the Mundari language. This language does not belong to the Indo-Aryan or Dravidian family, but is one of the aboriginal Austro-Nesian languages. In its original application, the word 'Lanka' had a twofold connotation: (i) an island in the sea or a lake; and (ii) a high, solitary place—hill, or plateau.

It is as a relic of this Mundari legacy, that Lanka occurs in the *Ramayana*, in Sanskrit literature and in a few Sanskrit inscriptions. The *Mahavamsa* does refer to Pulindas and Savaras besides Yaksas and Nagas, as some of the original inhabitants of the island. The former two, along with the Mundas, belong to the Indo-Nesian family.

In addition to the two records cited above from Bastar and western Orissa dated A.D. 1000 and A.D. 1700 respectively, there is a record from Goa. This tells us that the island in the Indian ocean was known as Simhala, and also as Lanka, and that later, at least by the tenth century A.D., it was known by both these names, is proved indirectly, in a very interesting way.

From about the fifth century, Konkan or the coastal strip on the west coast, from Goa in the south up to Daman, or at times Surat in the north, was ruled first by the Kadambas, then by the western Chalukyas and their feudatories like the Silaharas of north and south Konkan, the Kadambas and the Yadavas, until the Muslim and the Portuguese conquest of the region.

During the first ten centuries, there were frequent wars between the local rulers for the possession of Goa and the coastal strip, because whoever became the ruler would profit by the trade with the Arabs and the western world.

By about the tenth century, the Silaharas of south Konkan had conquered Goa. They were proud of this fact and boasted of it in their copperplate grants. The actual words of the grant are

³⁹ *Dive Agar Cp. of Mummuniraja. Saka Sam.* 975, ed. by V.V. Mirashi (see below) p. 156.

'*nihsanka lankesvara*'³⁹ meaning 'undoubted lord of Lanka'. In another record, it is said, the Silahara family (*vamsa*), were the proud possessors of the *Simhala-ksama* 'the best royal family of Simhala'.⁴⁰ Soon afterwards the Silahara Mummuni was defeated by the Kadamba king Shashtha-deva. While recording this victory Shastha-deva tells us that he has subdued the lord of Lanka, though he has not to his credit the building of a bridge nor the siege of a fortress, nor the Vanaras as leaders.⁴¹

Unfortunately, the full significance of these references to Simhala and Lanka was not grasped by Kielhorn⁴² who had edited the *Grant of Silahara Rattaraja* or Mirashi who recently republished these inscriptions in Marathi,⁴³ though Moraes,⁴⁴ who wrote some forty-five years ago, had discussed at some length these epigraphical references, without however realizing the bearing they would have on the problem of Lanka and Simhala.

The importance of these references in relation to our problem is briefly this. It is not that the Silaharas had come from Simhala or Lanka (Ceylon), as Kielhorn hesitatingly thinks or that the island of Goa was also formerly known as Simhala and Lanka as Mirashi suggests (though this admission would strengthen our case) but that by this time, that is, the tenth century, the island in the Indian ocean was known both as Simhala and Lanka and that these names were given to Goa and other islands, because their physiography was similar to that of Simhala or Lanka in the Indian ocean. One larger inference might also be drawn, that is, originally meaning an island or a solitary place, places answering to this description were given the name.

From our point of view, these Kadamba and Silahara records provide a definitely later date for the *Ramayana*. Since the western Chalukyas who were in possession of the Konkan from the sixth century onwards merely call themselves 'Lord of the western ocean', and not 'Lord of Lanka or Simhala', it can be

⁴⁰ *Bali Pattan Cp. of Rattaraja*. Saka 972, ed by H.C. Chakaldhar in *IHQ*, Vol. IV, pp. 203 ff. and Mirashi, p. 233.

⁴¹ Fleet, 'Inscriptions relating to the Kadamba kings of Goa', *JBBRAS*, p. 266.

⁴² *Epi. Ind.*, Vol. XIII, p. 369 ; Vol. III, p. 294.

⁴³ V.V. Mirashi, *Silahara Rajavamsa-ca Itihasa and Koriva Lekha*, Nagpur, 1974, p. 225.

⁴⁴ G.M. Moraes, *The Kadamba Kula*, Bombay, 1931, p. 175.

asserted that this change took place with the gradual diffusion of the *Ramayana* in the south. What the Silahara records prove is its acceptance by the tenth century.

Thus assured of the fact that : (i) places other than the island of Ceylon were known as Lanka, both on the western coast of India and in the heart of India and (ii) even the local tradition in Tamil Nadu, as well as in Ceylon, about the island being called 'Ilankai', is not older than the first century, or if we accept the *Dipavamsa* tradition, at least by the fifth century B.C., we can revert to the detailed consideration of the evidence in the *Ramayana* itself regarding the location of the 'original Lanka' and the probability of the existence of another Lanka in Ceylon.

Rama's itinerary has been discussed so far very ably and thoroughly by Hiralal, Iyer and Mankad. Earlier scholars like Pargiter, and after him, D.R. Bhandarkar and Guruge, and recently Mirashi, have uncritically followed the directions given by Sugriva, and hence tried to locate not only Lanka, but even the Godavari, Panchavati, Kiskindha, Vindhya, Mahendra and Malaya in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu and Ceylon or Sri Lanka. While doing so, all canons of logistics were either completely disregarded or overlooked. As Sri Aurobindo said quite some time ago, half humorously, half satirically, that the Indian mind believed that Rama had led an army of monkeys across India to Ceylon because the whole Rama saga has got imprinted in the Indian consciousness.

How could an Indian chief travel literally thousands of miles and invade an island in the Indian ocean ? History cites no such example. Much later in history the Cholas did this, and that too because they were the next-door neighbours of Ceylon, and possessed a powerful navy and an equally powerful army. On the other hand, the topographical study of Hiralal, and Paramasiva Iyer are reasonable, nay absolutely logical. Hence, these have been accepted by the editors of the Critical Edition, viz., the late Professor D.R. Mankad and Dr U.P. Shah. The latter has adduced some further arguments from his study of *Yuddhakanda* and *Uttarakanda*.

It is interesting to note that the *Dipavamsa* and *Mahavamsa*,⁴⁵ the earliest canonical works in Pali in Ceylon, while narrating how and when Buddhism was introduced and subsequently devel-

⁴⁵ Wilhelm Geiger, *The Mahavamsa*, London, 1912, p. 60, n. 5.

oped under various kings of Ceylon, definitely tell us that the name of the island was Lanka and that one of its parts was known as Tamraparni. The indigenous inhabitants were called Yakshas, though very rarely. Once a reference is made to the Pulindas who are said to be related to the Veddas and Savaras.⁴⁶ If it is a fact that the same region is known as Savaragam, then we get one more interesting link with the aboriginals of eastern Madhya Pradesh and Bihar-Orissa.

Before Buddhism was officially introduced by Mahindra, a son of Asoka, in the third century B.C., Aryans from the eastern and western coasts of India had already reached Ceylon under one Vijaya. This Vijaya is said to be an offspring of a lioness and a human male from eastern India. Hence the island came to be called Simhala. This is no doubt a fanciful derivation. The three well-known Chinese travellers, Fa-hien, Hiuen-tsang and I-tsing knew the island as Simhala. This confirms the early Indian tradition and usage.

We followed the Indian tradition in India up to about the eighth century.⁴⁷ Ceylon or Lanka followed its own tradition while recording the Indian tradition. Hence it is but natural that the country has now adopted its 2000 years old tradition, but suffixing the ancient name with 'Sri', making it Indo-Dravidian or Indo-Nesian, depending upon how we derive the word Lanka.

As far as the *Ramayana* is concerned, these Ceylonese chronicles show absolutely no knowledge of the epic. Neither Ravana or the Rakshasas are mentioned, nor Sita or Lakshmana. However, there is one reference to Rama. It is said that the place where Rama⁴⁸ settled is called Ramagona. However, this one solitary mention of Rama might not be referring to the Rama of the epic, and might be overlooked at the moment.

These works also tell us that the normal and the easier and shorter route between Lanka and Patna was from a port on the northern tip of the island to Tamralipti (Tamluk) and thence to

⁴⁶ It is said, *ibid.*, fn. 5, that the tract between Colombo, Kalutara, Galle and the mountains is now called Sabaragamuwa, that is, the Sanskrit *sabara* ; Pali *savara*, a synonym for Pulinda.

⁴⁷ Fa-hien's *Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms*, tr. by James Legge, 1886, p. 101, also mentions only Singala. So also Hiuen-tsang, C. Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, Vol. II, p. 236 and I-tsing, *A Record of Buddhist Religion*, p. 52.

⁴⁸ Geiger, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

Patna. How the people went to the cities on the western coast is not mentioned, though here again Sopara (Surparaka) is once mentioned, in connection with the visit of Vijaya. There must have been a regular contact between Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Lanka, as the few references to Madura, the Cholas and Damilas show.

The story of Pandukabhaya is very similar to that of Krishna Vasudeva—his birth in a prison, then his being taken in a basket to Gokul, and the resolve of Kamsa to kill all the children of Devaki, though the name of Krishna does not appear even once.

What the chroniclers—*Mahavamsa* and *Dipavamsa*—relate is confirmed by over 1000 early Brahmi inscriptions from the caves and rock-shelters of Ceylon. These date between the third century B.C. and the first century A.D.⁴⁹ Unfortunately there is not a single record which mentions Lanka, Simhala or Tamraparni, though there is one each for Nasik and Bharukaccha (Broach). One record mentions 'Ramadatta' and Dr Parnavitana thinks that here there is a reference to the god Rama.⁵⁰ As the author of the present treatise has shown⁵¹ over thirty years ago, and this is also now confirmed by these early Ceylonese Buddhist inscriptions that the personal names of the donors are connotative. They indicate the cult or the religion or the god whom the converts worshipped before they became Buddhists. So 'Ramadatta' would normally mean 'one given by Rama'. However, taking into consideration the popularity of names after Rama even in India itself at this early period, I think that this one Ceylonese name does not refer to the god Rama, particularly of the *Ramayana*. If at all, it might refer to Parasurama. We should await more evidence.

As far as other questions are concerned, there is a separate mention of names or people from Tamil Nadu as 'Damila'. A majority are from north India and regarded as 'Aryan' by Dr Parnavitana.

⁴⁹ S. Parnavitana, *Inscriptions of Ceylon*, Vol. I, 1970. The second volume which is said to be ready for the press includes records from 41 B.C.-A.D. 300.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 2 and p. cxxiii. The photographic reproduction of this inscription is absolutely illegible, so the reading cannot be checked, as one can for inscription no. 32, carved on the same stone.

⁵¹ H.D. Sankalia, 'Personal Names in the Early Inscriptions of the Deccan', *BDCRI*, Vol. III, p. 355.

It has been suggested in the past after Ramadas,⁵³ Hiralal⁵⁴ and Kibe,⁵⁴ that the original Lanka was in central India, and probably the Gonds and their king who is still called Ravana and regarded in high esteem, might have kidnapped Sita, and then fought with Rama, who took the help of other aboriginal tribes such as the Korkus and Savaras.

This theory, though very tempting, needs some examination. For while going through Russel and Hiralal's⁵⁵ *Tribes and Castes of India* in the central provinces of India, one finds statements to the effect that: (i) the Gonds were Dravidian; (ii) they had migrated to central India through Chanda and Bastar in comparatively recent times; (iii) they were called *Ravana-vamsis* by caste Hindus, because the former believed that it was their king Ravana who had abducted Sita; and (iv) originally the Gonds lived in the plains. Driven out by the Rajputs and Marathas, they retreated to the jungles and hill areas (which they still prefer) became forest-dwellers living on *kandamula*, leaves of trees, and flesh of all kinds of animals, and at times indulged in ritual cannibalism.⁵⁶

It is further said that the accounts of early writers like Major Forsyth about the Gonds, while true in many particulars, did not take into account the deculturizing effects of the Maratha raids and occupation of parts of central India.

If there is any truth in these statement, it would imply that the alleged location of Lanka in central India is based on a much later tradition, after the Gonds had migrated to Central India from the south.

Unfortunately we have no history or purely historical accounts of the Gonds or any primitive tribes. This has to be worked out from stray and very casual references in inscriptions. A brief review of the present Gond distribution and habitat, the Dravidian nature of their language, and the fact that Dravidians themselves are now believed to be not indigenous to south India, shows that the Gonds who form the largest number among the Adivasis, along with the Kolis of western India, are at present

⁵² *IHQ*, Vol. IV, 1928, pp. 339-46.

⁵³ *Jha Commemoration Volume*, Poona, 1937, pp. 157-63.

⁵⁴ *P.V. Kane Volume*, Poona, 1941, pp. 264-7.

⁵⁵ *Anthropological Publications*—the Netherlands, 1969.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 39-70, particularly pp. 45, 47, 63, 79, 91, 114 and 507.

settled in two big belts. These constitute the Gondwana, an appellation said to be used by the Muslims for the first time for a region which included the Satpura plateau, a section of the Nagpur plain and the Narbada valley to the south and the west. Roughly speaking, its boundaries were the Godavari in the south, the old Bombay Presidency in the south and the west, while central India up to the river Chambal lay to the north of it and the Eastern State Agency in the east.

These areas are even now heavily forested. Whatever towns and cities have come up, have been during the last few hundred years. Only parts of western central India, known as Malwa, had come under the spell of civilization since early historical times (and as we now know, from Chalcolithic times, about 2000 B.C.). Much of the present habitat of the Gonds and other primitive tribes is called 'Mahakantara' in the famous record of Samudragupta (c. A.D. 350).⁵⁶

It is about this time that we find the earliest mention of the Gonds in two Vakataka inscriptions.⁵⁷ A copperplate inscription from Chammak, ancient Charmanaka, mentions among the 1000 Brahmin donees, one Gondasarma and one Nagasarma. Both these Brahmins have no Vedic *gotras*, or the *sakha* of the Veda they followed.

The suffix 'Sarma' is applied to Brahmins. In this case it might mean: (i) that the bearer was a Gonda, or (ii) that he served as a priest (Brahmin) to the Gondas.

There is no other way to explain this unique name. The reading is not likely to be 'Gaudasarma', though according to Cunningham the Gonds had originally come from Gauda (Bengal). But this view is no longer held valid.

This same inscription mentions one Kondaraja, son of Shatrughnaraja; the letters *ka* and *ga* are interchangeable, and though the reading '*konda*' is palaeographically correct, still the name might be really for Gondaraja. Secondly, the name of the father also shows acquaintance with names like Shatrughna in the *Ramayana*. Though significant, this name is not found very often.

⁵⁶ Fleet, op. cit., p. 13.

⁵⁷ V. V. Mirashi, 'Inscriptions of the Vakatakas', *CII*, Vol. V, 1963, p. 26.

Again the Indore plates of Pravarasena II mention one Gondarya,⁵⁸ a Brahmin. Mirashi, who has edited these inscriptions, has merely translated these names. But the readings are clear, and the words stand for Gondas and no one else. Since the two districts, Amaravati and Balaghat, where the plates were found and where the places mentioned in the records are located, form the heart of the present Gond habitat, these two or three names establish the undoubted antiquity of the Gonds. Since the inscriptions are of about A.D. 400 we can reasonably say that Gonds were in this region from at least the Christian era.

These two records show that the Gonds are probably aboriginals of central India, whereas a later record from western India near Thana, tells us that the Kolis and Maharas lived in large numbers in that region, so much so that the entire district was named after them as 'Koli-Mahara-visaya'.⁵⁹

Our ancient records do contain stray ethnographical references like these, but our Indologists—barring Dr D.R. Bhandarkar and Dr Hiralal, have generally neglected this source.

If the Gonds were found in central India as early as the third century A.D., they must have been living there from much earlier times. Secondly, it is not true that the Hindus call the Dhur-Gonds 'Ravana-vamsis', but the Gonds themselves in one of the inscriptions call themselves as 'Paulastya-vamsa'. This, of course, is due to the Sanskritization of the Gonds in the medieval times. Some Gonds siezed power and ruled around Mandla in central India.

However, the Gond folk songs, as recorded by Grierson, show in what high esteem Ravana is still regarded by them.⁶⁰ This has certainly nothing to do with the Hindu taunt that Gonds, being Adivasis, are really the old Rakshasas and hence regard Ravana as their king. Moreover, this practice is not comparable to what the Gurjaras and others did in tracing their descent from Manu, or the sun and the moon. For this was a praiseworthy practice,

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 42.

⁵⁹ *Epi. Ind.*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 51. Dr D.C. Sircar who edited the grant was not sure whether the name of the visaya was after the Koli tribe. And he missed the significance of the *mahara* as well.

⁶⁰ For the actual song and its translation see 'Linguistic Survey of India: Gramophone Records of Languages and Dialects', Central Provinces and Berar Administration. Cited by Hiralal, 'Ravana's Lanka', *Jha Commemoration Volume*, 1937, p. 55, fn. 3.

whereas Ravana and his ancestry were held in contempt by Hindus or Aryans. Still the Gonds called themselves *Ravana-vamsi*, because they generally believed so.

Likewise, the reference, in two records from western Orissa near Sonpur, to the 'lord of western Lanka and Dandakaranya' clearly show that it is this area which has preserved the true, original tradition about Lanka and Ravana. Unfortunately no research has been carried out about these traditions. Had this been so, many more details would have been known by this time.

For instance, we are told that the land of the Gonds was called Gondwana by a Muslim ruler whereas in *Ain-i-Akbari*, there occur the names Garha-Kantaka or Garra-Kantaka.⁶¹ In the *Yuddhakanda* Ravana is called Salakantaka or Devakantaka.⁶² This immediately reminds us of special expressions, found amongst people living in eastern Madhya Pradesh and not anywhere else.

These facts singly and collectively point to the Gonds, and their present habitat in Madhya Pradesh as the place where Lanka was located.

Here again, as Ramadas pointed out long ago, live Korkus, Savaras and other tribes, who from their names, dress, etc., compare favourably with the various Vanara tribes. Earlier C. S. Venkatachari⁶³ in his 'Survey of Migrations of Castes and Tribes into Central India, and Their Distribution' even thought that the Gonds may be the pre-Dravidians of the south on whom the Dravidians had imposed their language, and due to some quarrels in the regions of northeast Madras, possibly a large scale displacement of the tribes took place, taking them into the interior of the central provinces. The late Dr D.N. Majumdar,⁶⁴ after his survey of the physical features of the Gonds and other tribes in Bastar, concluded that the Gonds were a mixed community in which the aboriginal character had been considerably moulded by intermixture with a strain very much related to the Mediterranean stock of Europe.

⁶¹ Elliot, tr. of *Tarikh-i-Salatin-i-Afghana*, p. 12 and Indrajit Singh, *The Gondwana and Gonds*, Lucknow, 1944.

⁶² According to Sardar M.V. Kibe, he is called 'Salakantaka', *Location of Lanka*, Poona, 1947, p.57, citing VII. iv. 24 and *Yuddhakanda* ed., U.P. Shah.

⁶³ *Census of India*, Vol. I, Part III (ethnographical), 1931, p. 6.

⁶⁴ 'Racial affiliation of the Gonds', *JRASB*, Vol. VII, 1941.

Hence the antiquity of the Gonds in the various parts of Madhya Pradesh and in the adjoining states of Orissa and Maharashtra is not easy to decide from a study of customs and manners, folk literature and physical features. Some light on the antiquity of these and other aboriginal tribes can only be thrown if excavations, even on a small scale, are carried out in the present tribal areas. These would show whether the various tribes are comparatively recent migrants in their present habitat or they have been staying there from as early as neolithic or chalcolithic times, if not from the earlier Stone Age. This is not an impossible task. First, we have to discover archaeological deposits⁶⁵ and then test their antiquity. Pending this enquiry, we shall conclude, on the evidence of three epigraphical references, which cover a period of about 1500 years, from the fifth century A.D. to the seventeenth century A.D., and the evidence of folklore and songs, that the Gonds have been the inhabitants of Madhya Pradesh at least from early historical times, and have been probably staying there from still earlier times. That is why their songs refer to Lanka as the residence of their chief, King Ravana.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ This was written before exploring parts of Madhya Pradesh in February 1976. First-hand inquiries in some of the Gond settlements showed that these tribes when they leave their earlier habitat, leave nothing behind, and if anything remains, it is burnt, so that no traces of earlier remains are likely to survive.

⁶⁶ After this was written, the writer had an opportunity to examine some of the sites identified around Jabalpur as Lanka, Kishkindha, Mahendradvara, etc. This on the spot study showed that though Iyer's topographical study was excellent, still from the archaeological and ethnographical point of view these identifications were not acceptable even though Iyer's brother Gunduraja who also visited this area just before the author went there in February 1976, wrote to say that he was satisfied with Iyer's identifications. With regard to the absence of any legend or tradition in the region, he argued that elsewhere these were all late, whereas this region being the true and the earliest Dandakaranya and Lanka, had been forgotten. This may be. But there is little archaeological evidence about the existence of man either on the Indrana hill, the supposed site of Lanka, or elsewhere in the region. Hence a further examination of the sites in eastern Madhya Pradesh, particularly in and around Bastar should be carried out.

10. The Ramayana Age

After an analytical study of the objects, concepts, persons and places of each *kanda*, we may now present a coherent picture of the *Ramayana Age*.

The story had its origin at Ayodhya, in mid-eastern India, as suggested by reliable references to a few other places in this region as well as in the northwest frontier. Principal towns in the Gangetic valley such as Mathura, Kosambi, Kanyakubja, Sravasti and Vaisali must have come into existence at this time.

The country south of the Ganga was forested, and very sparsely inhabited. The Vindhya were known, but not the Narbada and the country further south. This is proved by the river names in the *Balakanda* and *Ayodhyakanda*, the detailed descriptions of the Vindhya in the *Aranyakanda*, the interpolations in the *Kiskindhakanda*, the fanciful descriptions of Lanka in the *Sundarakanda* and *Yuddhakanda* and by the complete absence of any reference to places in the south in the *Uttarakanda*.

However, the interpolations in the *Kiskindhakanda* as well as descriptions in the *Sundarakanda* and *Yuddhakanda* do show that the poet who added these had a vague idea that Lanka was on a hill or on an island in the Indian ocean.

This island could be no other than Ceylon (now called Sri Lanka) which from the fourth century B.C., until the seventh century A.D. was known in inscriptions and literature as Simhala and Tamraparni.

It is indeed surprising that the *Ramayana* nowhere mentions this place, whereas the other epic, *Mahabharata*, several *Puranas*, and even a sixteenth century Sanskrit manuscript of the Muslim ruler, Mahmud Begada of Gujarat, mention both Lanka and Simhala. Late epigraphical evidence shows that Goa was known by both these names in the tenth century.

All the main participants or actors in the story—Rama, Lakshmana, Sita, Ravana, Sugriva and Hanuman—were human beings. They were endowed with divine, demoniac and super-

human powers when the various miraculous elements were added in the story. At least two stages in this development can be clearly seen. And it is possible that when the *Ramayana* was first composed, the poet had already decided to invest Rama with divine powers so that he could later accomplish the various feats single-handed.

However, in the final stage, Rama and Sita were elevated to a fully divine state, and with them everyone—the Rakshasas as well as the Vanaras—got a promotion, and were endowed with good or bad qualities as demanded by the occasion.

Because of these late 'promotions', it took some centuries before temples dedicated exclusively to Rama came up. Since all the characters are human beings they go through or observe the actions and activities, rites and ceremonies suitable to or required by their position.

Thus the marriages of Rama and Ravana were consecrated before a fire and so was the friendship between Rama and Hanuman. So also for a coronation, whether of Rama or of Sugriva, waters from the seven seas were brought, though poor Sugriva was not anointed by a Brahmin!

Likewise, whether it was Dasaratha, Vali or Ravana, cremation was the most acceptable method of disposal of the dead, though Viradha was buried as desired by him. It should be noted that at this time women accompanied the corpse to the cremation ground, which was on a river bank, and it was permissible to go in a vehicle—a palanquin or a chariot.

When cremation was not immediately possible, or it was necessary to preserve the body, it was immersed in a large vessel containing oil.

Only a few towns or cities are mentioned. Of these we have a fairly detailed description of Ayodhya, to some extent of Taksasila and Puskaravati, and only conventional descriptions of Kiskindha and Lanka, and a mere mention of the rest—Mathura, Vidisa and Angadiya.

If the reference to the two cities in Gandhara visaya, the present North-West Frontier Province, is to the cities founded by the Indo-Greeks or the Parthians, then it is more than probable that the description of Ayodhya is either based on these cities or the Ayodhya of this period, that is, the first century B.C.

For as Professor Lal¹ informed the author, so far he had not found any traces or remains of the Gupta period. This was also the impression of General Cunningham who had visited the site nearly a hundred years ago.²

Whatever be the exact period of this Ayodhya, it was ruled by a king who was helped by a *mantri parisad* (council of ministers), and the *purohits*. And in all important matters the people were consulted. Though their opinion was only recommendatory and not decisive or binding, still Rama regarded it as decisive, or important enough to be heard and acted upon.

It was this *pauravada* (the talk among the people) that forced Rama to exile Sita once again. *Ramarajya* really connoted the acceptance of the voice of the people, though we are normally apt to regard it as a Golden Age. For it was in this age that a Brahmin's son died, and Sita was exiled.

One such council of ministers is also supposed to have been there in Lanka as we are repeatedly told that Ravana consulted his ministers and others; so did Sugriva.

What all this suggests is that though the king was supreme, he did consult his advisers and others, though he was not bound to accept their advice.

What other organizations existed in these cities we cannot say, for none are mentioned. But from the fact that when Bharata thought of going to meet Rama in Chitrakuta he sent out in advance sappers, miners, road-makers and bridge builders, we may deduce that there must have been in existence at this time a loosely knit body or guild of architects, engineers, masons and carpenters. By this time all these had become hereditary professions. So also was that of the ferryman (*nisada* Guha) who carried first Rama and then Bharata's army across the Ganga.

While we definitely rule out the existence of aerial travel which occurs comparatively more frequently in the *Ramayana* than in any other *Purana* or the *Mahabharata*, we must give due credit to the author for imagining its use. Even in the *Uttarakanda* Rama goes out in search of the Sudra who is said to have been practising penance. So Rama had to recall the *Pushpaka* which

¹ Full reference has been given earlier. To this may be added, H.D. Sankalia, *Indian Archaeology Today*, Delhi, 1979, p. 196.

² This question has been discussed fully in the chapter on *Ayodhyakanda*.

he had returned to Kubera, as we are told in the *Yuddhakanda*. Among other normal means of conveyance there were palanquins, and chariots drawn by horses and also asses.

What the nature of these chariots was—whether they had solid wheels or spoked wheels—we can only imagine. One thing is however certain: these chariots could only be used on properly laid roads. Hence it was used by Rama and Bharata only on the northern bank of the Ganga or the Sarayu. The journey on the southern bank after crossing the river had to be on foot.

The normal material for making clothes was *ksauma* (linen). Sita alone wore an *uttariya* as well as an *adhovastra* of yellow silk *pitakausheya*.

Cotton clothes must have been in use, because *karpasa* (cotton) is mentioned as one of the threads of the rope used for tying Hanuman. There was also the use of *sana* (garments of hemp) and *una* (garments of wool). The latter was a speciality of the North-West Frontier Province, and always figured among the goods sent by Kekaya. However, what the exact type of dress was, we cannot say. Both men and women, particularly the common people, in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar wore a kind of *dhoti*, very often a *sakachha* or *akachha*, in which the cloth either passed between the legs, or was in the form of a sari. However, it was always short, almost touching the knee, or just below it.

Though many preparations of food are mentioned in the *Ayodhyakanda*, and the *Sundarakanda*, still the most common or abundant food was rice. Shops in Ayodhya are said to have been filled with this grain. Wheat or any other cereal are not even mentioned once. This is indeed surprising, for though rice is the staple diet even today of eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Bengal, still Ayodhya would seem to occupy a position almost in the centre of Uttar Pradesh and wheat should have been available there 2000 years ago. What is surprising³ is the frequent mention of meat and meat diet, both in Ayodhya and

³ Surprising from the common man's point of view. For the Hindus always think or believe that Rama and Sita were vegetarians. As Kane has well summarized the then prevailing views among Buddhists as well as non-Buddhists, *ahimsa* was generally preached, though there were exceptions. See P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. V, Poona, 1974, Part II, p. 944.

Lanka and even in the *asrama* of Bharadvaja. And Rama, Sita and Lakshmana lived on it, until Sita was abducted.

Among the drinks, sugarcane, *madhu* and *maireya* from mahua flowers occur frequently. Twice, *varuni* is mentioned, and the name is definitely said to be from Varuna, 'the lord of the western ocean'.

Sura and *surapana* were definitely forbidden, as Kane has so well shown. And it is wrong to think, as some scholars loosely hold, that *sura* was used both in society and religious practices. Hence their prominent mention in the *Ramayana* should be attributed to the impact of new socio-economic events.

This one name (*varuni*) for a kind of spirituous drink, along with the signet-ring, the mention of Marichipattanam, and the description of the scenes of revelry in the *asrama* of Bharadvaja and in the har em of Ravana help us to place one stage of the composition of the epic in the first century A.D., when trade with Rome and the western world had introduced Roman wine to large parts of India. This had been never suspected before by any previous scholar. We have to thank Sir Mortimer Wheeler who first drew the attention of Indian scholars to this source of influence on our culture. How deep and far-reaching it was, is being slowly realized, and will be further known as our knowledge of archaeology of this period increases.

Unfortunately, the epic refers in a most general way to the furniture and material possessions in the houses and palaces in Ayodhya, Kiskindha and Lanka, so that we cannot pick out any of these for further scrutiny. But for dating purposes, the significance of the references to *Gajalakshmi* and *ihamriga* as architectural motifs on the pillars in Ravana's palace has been amply demonstrated; and that of the references to *kridagriha* (sports stadium) as well as of the detailed scenes of revelry in Lanka. More than one sports stadia have been found at Nagarjunakonda, and there are several sculptures portraying revelry. It is more than probable that Lanka's description is based on an Indo-Roman city like Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda, while that of Ayodhya is based on that of Taxila.

Hence, it has been thought advisable to give a description of the 'palaces' exposed at Taxila, together with their plans. As Marshall said more than twenty-five years ago this is the only city so far revealed by archaeology. Even now this remains true

and would probably remain true unless a concerted attempt is made by the various agencies to reconstruct what the ancient cities in India were like in reality.

At Sirkap (Taxila) no less than three palace complexes together with their temples, were brought to light. Each palace complex had a number of 'courts'. The various *kaksas* (halls) mentioned by the *Ramayana* while describing the residence of Dasaratha and Rama should be very similar to these. As the author of this study pointed out long ago in an article on 'Houses and Habitations through the Ages', the square plan, that is, the central square (*chatuhsala*), around which various rooms or apartments were located, remained until recently the principal architectural feature of a small or large house or palace in India.⁴

Again, this is the only city of the early historical period, most probably a contemporary of the cities described in the *Ramayana*, where such straight roads flanked by shops have been found. Hence photographs of these have also been reproduced here from Marshall.

Along with these have also been reproduced scenes of revelry from Nagarjunakonda, the amphora, and wine cups from Taxila and other places; and the photographs of Romans or Indo-Romans recorded from the same city. In this context, one should mention again the signet-rings from Taxila, as well as the Gajalakshmi and *ihamrigas* from Bharhut, Sanchi and western Indian caves, particularly Nasik, Amaravati, and Kausambi.

It should be emphasized that the signet-ring does not figure among the ornaments at Sanchi even in the later period.⁵

All these singly and cumulatively would demonstrate the impact and adoption of Roman culture in India in the early centuries of the Christian era. It is very likely that when further excavations take place in India, or the existing finds are studied more critically, we might find still more evidence of this culture.

Such excavations would be particularly welcome to understand the development of our conventional arms, such as the *gada*, the bow, arrow, sword, the spear and defence armour like the shield. At present we have the most reliable evidence, again from the excavations at Sirkap (Taxila).

This undoubtedly shows what tremendous growth in type and

⁴ *BDCRI*, Vol. XX, 1958, pp. 137-63.

⁵ M.K. Dhavalikar, *Ajanta-A Cultural Study*, Poona, 1973, p. 76.

technique took place after the Indo-Greek, Parthian and Saka invasions.⁶ This fortunately is distinctly documented by the *Ramayana*.

Anyway, the picture that we have from this study of the material aspects of life depicted in the *Ramayana* is not unusual, and fully credible. What is remarkable, and what has remained, an ideal throughout the centuries are the characters of Rama, Lakshmana, Sita and Hanuman. This has remained constant in spite of interpolations.

Observance of *dharma* has been regarded as an ideal. Whenever an occasion arose it has been emphasized by all, Rama and Sita, the Vanaras and the Rakshasas, Vibhisana and Malyavan, and at the end, by Suparsva. It is this insistence on the observance of *dharma*, one's duty to one's father or parents and one's profession, that has caught the imagination of people in India. Naturally, among these few characters Rama and Sita stand out most prominently. Rama came to be regarded as an ideal king, and a dutiful son and husband; Sita an ideal of Indian womanhood, ever chaste, bold, brave and dutiful, so much so that she gives up her life to prove her innocence. Rama, as a true popular ruler, cared for the opinion of his people and exiled Sita against his conscience, as we are told specifically.

Lakshmana once again carried out his elder brother's orders, at the cost of his life, first by stopping Durvasa and then by allowing him to meet Rama when he was told not to allow anybody. Thus, the three main characters in the epic remained true to their *dharma*.

With regard to other concepts, moral or ethical, philosophical or metaphysical and social, we do observe some change from *kanda* to *kanda*. All these have been noted and fully discussed. These, though few, reflect the changes taking place in Hindu society, owing to the impact of the changes in the political scenario. Specially noticeable is the hardening of the *varna-srama-dharma* and the open or regular observance of *sati*. This was completely absent

⁶ After this was written, two works by G.N. Pant have appeared, as noted earlier. Both these, but particularly the second one on *Indian Archery* corroborates what the author has been emphasizing. To make the point easily understandable, the arrows from Taxila as found by Marshall and the conventional ones illustrated by a manuscript of the *Dhanurveda* have been reproduced.

in the *Ayodhyakanda* and *Kiskindhakanda*, and even in the *Yuddhakanda*, but is specifically referred to in the *Uttarakanda*.

Thus, in one way or another, this hypercritical study of the *Ramayana* has helped to make our knowledge of the past more precise. It will become more so, as archaeology refines its tools and techniques. For it was with the assistance of the latter that the study was initially attempted.

As far as the problem of Lanka is concerned, it has been shown here, on a detailed consideration of the epigraphical evidence, that from at least the fourth century B.C., Simhala and Lanka were regarded as different. The former was also known as *Tamraparni-dvipa*. The original Lanka must probably be somewhere in eastern Madhya Pradesh. However, by the fourth century A.D., it was believed to be in the Indian Ocean but still not identified with Simhala. Thus both Lanka and Simhala, though believed to be islands in the ocean, were regarded as separate. Only in the last couple of centuries has the Indian mind come to identify Lanka with Simhala, and the same as Ceylon or Sri Lanka.

At the moment Sonepur on the confluence of the Tel and Mahanadi, District Bolangir, western Orissa has been identified as the western Lanka, mentioned in a ninth or tenth century inscription from Sonepur of Kumara Somesvaradeva.⁷ Preliminary investigation also showed that the site is very old, going back to at least the fifth century B.C. There are also remains of fortifications. Potsherds of various historical periods as well as iron tools and weapons were collected from the mounds. A large hoard of silver punch-marked coins was also found here some 30 years ago.⁸ Excavations, which have been planned, should give very interesting results.

It is also intended to explore the Godavari Delta in search of *purva* or eastern Lanka. Even today many small and big islands in the river are known as 'Lanka'. Out of these some should be large enough and yield the same kind of antiquities as Sonepur.

Finally, as far as the question of deification of Rama is concerned, it can be definitely said that it was a very gradual development. In fact, almost all the deities, Vedic as well as non-Vedic or

⁷ *Epi. Ind.*, Vol. XII, 1913-14, p. 237.

⁸ Bipin Behari Nath, 'Punch-marked Coins from Sonepur', *The Orissa Historical Journal*, Vol. I, 1952, p. 27.

Puranic, figure but little in the *Ramayana*. Siva played no part in the main story and Vishnu appeared very gradually, prominent only in the *Balakanda* and *Uttarakanda* when Rama was fully identified with Vishnu, Krishna and Narayana and Sita with Lakshmi. Though this identification took place in about the fifth century, still it took a couple of centuries for people to actually start worshipping Rama. This is proved best archaeologically, though it was well surmised by the late Prof. G.H. Bhatt, General Editor of the *Ramayana*.⁹ First came the depiction of scenes from the epic in Vishnu and probably Siva temples in Madhya Pradesh, then in Andhra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu in the south, and Gujarat and Rajasthan in the north. It was at this time, at about the seventh century, that the *Ramayana* was carried across to the Indian colonies in southeast Asia.

⁹ G.H. Bhatt, *The Valmiki-Ramayana*, Vol. I, *Balakanda*, Baroda, 1960 p. 33.

11. Appendices

I RAMAYANA PANELS IN TEMPLES

‘A perusal of inscriptions and extant monuments’, says Dr B. Rajendra Prasad (one of the former students of the Deccan College, and at present Lecturer in History and Archaeology, Nagarjuna University), ‘has established that no temple was raised to Lord Rama till the tenth century A.D. However, *Ramayana* panels frequently occur from the seventh century onwards.’ The following is a list of *Ramayana* panels that belong to this period:

1. Undavalli caves: seventh century A.D.—depicting Sita in Ashokavana, Hanuman, and Jatayu-*vadha*.
2. Sivanandisvara temple, Kadamara Kalava: seventh century A.D.—depicts Vali-Sugriva fighting with Rama releasing an arrow.
3. Vishnu-Brahma temple, Alampur: eighth century A.D.—depicts Jatayu-*vadha*.
4. Papanasesvara temple, Papanasi: ninth to tenth century A.D.—depicts Jatayu-*vadha*, Rama-Ravana-*yuddha* and other battle scenes.

II STADIUM AT NAGARJUNAKONDA

Rajendra Prasad also informed me that, at Nagarjunakonda as I had anticipated, not only has an amphitheatre of the Roman type been exposed in the excavation, but also the Site 37 which was earlier identified as a palace by Longhurst¹ is now identified as a place of recreation. This is a 24-pillared hall. On the pillars

¹ A.H. Longhurst, *The Buddhist Antiquities of Nagarjuna-konda, Madras Presidency*, Memoirs, Archaeological Survey of India, Delhi, 1938, pp. 9-33.

are depicted women bathing in a tub, scenes of dance, revelry, copulation and wrestling.

There are other examples of pillared halls containing scenes of revelry and *maithuna* (copulation).

III PALACES AT TAXILA

Several references have been made earlier to palaces and finger-rings in the excavations at Taxila by Sir John Marshall. It was thought advisable to present this evidence at one place. This has been done, as far as possible, in the words of Marshall himself. Hence no changes are made in his statement.

At Taxila the palace (Block K) is like a glorified private house—planned on the same lines but on a bigger scale, and with more spacious courts and rooms. Its walls are more massive and higher in proportion to their massiveness, so that one can see the palace from any part of the city rising well above the surrounding roofs.

An unusually imposing apsidal temple of the Buddhists, *griha-stupa* stands on a raised plinth near the middle of the court facing the west, and consists of a rectangular nave with a porch in front and a circular apse behind, the whole surrounded by an ambulatory passage entered on both sides from the front porch. The chapel measures 129 feet east to west by 51 feet north to south, the nave being 41 feet long internally by 28 feet 9 inches wide, and the apse having a diameter equal to the width of the nave.

Blocks I and J, next door to the royal palace, seem to have served as administrative offices of some sort (though it is also said that Block J consisted of small closely packed dwellings).

The most important of all the buildings in Sirkap is the one regarded as a royal palace (Block K) because of its size and relatively spacious dimensions. It occupies a central position almost at the corner where the two chief streets, running north-south and east-west, must have crossed one another, and where there appears to have been an open square. On its western side, which overlooked the main street, the palace had a

frontage of 352 feet and from east to west a depth of about 410 feet. There is evidence that the 'private hall of audience' (pl. 31. b) had columns of grey sandstone and the walls were covered with lime or mud plaster, and finished with a colour wash.

Only three entrances to the palace now exist, and all are small. The one from the main street, probably reserved for the king or for state occasions, led across an open court and down a corridor on its right-hand side to a court which probably served the purpose of the 'Court of Private Audience' in moslem palaces.²

The chambers which surround this were the best built and most spacious in the palace (pl. 34. a). One of them on the eastern side, about 850 feet long, possibly served as a banquet hall. Adjoining were a bathroom and the lavatory (presumably).³ To the south of this court was the 'Court of the Guard'—a small court with chambers on two sides.

The group of courts and rooms described above form a rectangle measuring approximately 165 feet from north to south by 135 feet from east to west. Adjoining this rectangle on its eastern side is a second rectangle of the same width but about 30 feet less from east to west, which is divided by a well into two almost equal halves. The southern half is occupied by a large open court with a hall flanked by two small chambers on the southern side and four other chambers on its western side.

Marshall thought that these could be the Court and Hall of Public Audience (*Diwan-i-Aam*). In the north west flank of the palace are women's quarters, screened from the main street by a line of shops. As usual they comprise an open courtyard encompassed by rooms, with an open hall south of the court. Nearby there is a small *stupa*-shrine which probably served as a private shrine (pl. 34. b).

Not very far from here is a self-contained residence with several rooms. Except that the palace is a larger one and built more substantially than the private houses in Sirkap, there is nothing grandiose in its proportions, or in its adornment. And this is a typical feature of the Parthian palaces.

Marshall said as far back as 1951 that this is the first plan of a building of this kind yet to be recovered in India, and it not only bears a striking resemblance to the Parthian palaces at Assur,

² Marshall, *Taxila*, Vol. I, p. 173.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

Dura and Nippur and to early Sassanian palaces at Kish, but that its plan can be traced as far back as the Assyrian palaces of Mesopotamia. As in the palace of Sargon at Khorsabad (Perrot and Chipiez, *Historie de l'Art Antique*, tome II, pl. V), which is on a more vast scale, we have the same great court surrounded by chambers, and on one side of it, a court for retainers; and on the other, the apartments of the *zenana*. The other half of the palace is partitioned for receptions and public rooms. And instead of the zigurrat tower placed at the side of the *zenana*, we have a modest *stupa*-court. This palace is dated to the first century A.D.⁴

Opposite the royal palace there was evidently another palace building. The complex of courts and rooms so far disclosed extend about 200 feet from north to south and 250 feet from east to west, and consists of little more than two rectangular courts with a number of rooms ranged about them and two small groups of tenements on their eastern side. These courts are as spacious and substantially built as those in the royal palace itself. The largest court measures 40 feet 9 inches from north to south by 60 feet 2 inches from east to west.⁵

IV FINGER-RINGS

As Marshall has said, the practice of wearing finger-rings goes back to remote antiquity in India as in the Mediterranean coasts and Egypt.⁶ A few copper or bronze specimens of a simple design have been found at Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa.⁷ Whereas on the sculptures of Bharhut both men and women may be seen wearing a number of rings on their fingers and thumbs.⁸ However, in none of these can we confidently see any inscriptions; that is, signet-rings, or rings bearing the name of the

⁴ Abstracted from Sir John Marshall, *Taxila*, I, London, 1951, pp. 150-1 and 171-6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁶ Marshall, *Taxila*, Vol. II, p. 638.

⁷ John Marshall, *Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization*, Vol. I, p. 35, pl. XLVIIIa.

⁸ Cunningham, *Bharhut*, pls. XXII, 1; XXIII, 1; XXIV, 4.

owner. These occur for the first time, as Marshall's excavations at Taxila show, during the Graeco-Roman or Kushano-Parthian period, dated around the first century A.D.

The earliest rings at Taxila are those from the Bhîr Mound dated between the fourth and second century B.C. These are of silver, copper, iron, lead and shell, but none of gold. Of the nine copper-rings, those numbered between 25 to 30 and 34 have plain bezels, and so also those of iron and lead (nos. 57 and 59).⁹

The bezels or the flat portion on the rings are found carved with various devices. These usually bear intricate poses of gods and goddesses on Indo-Greek coins.¹⁰ On some are found carved the humped Indian bull, whereas two rings have the *svastika* and *nandipada*.

There are five rings of gold (nos. 14-17), with inscriptions; in every case they bear the name of the owner, usually in the genitive case and belonging to a period between the second or first century B.C. and the first century A.D. Ring no. 15 has an inscription in Kharoshthi and Brahmi which reads: *Mahayasa putrasa Manavasa* (of Manava, the son of Mahayasa). Another reads: *Samanavasa* (of Samanava).

In four instances inscriptions are also found on copper-bronze rings (nos. 53-56). Of these no. 54 belongs to the first century and no. 56 to the fifth century.¹¹

Rings made of other material such as iron, lead, stone, shell, glass and paste have not yielded any inscriptions, though they have a bezel on some of them. Thus the evidence from Taxila is definite. A signet-ring bearing the name of the owner in the genitive case occurs for the first time between the second or first century B.C. and the first century A.D. Wheeler's excavation at Charsada produced no rings.¹²

In the rest of India, there have been few large excavations of early historical sites. Most of these undertaken after 1947 were vertical only. The most important of these were at Hastinapur, Kausambi, Vaisali, Sisupalgarh in U.P.,¹³ Bihar, and Orissa;

⁹ Marshall, *Taxila*, Vol. II, p. 638.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 641.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 648.

¹² Wheeler, *Charsada*.

¹³ B.B. Lal, 'Excavations at Hastinapur', *Ancient India*, pp. 5-157; G.R. Sharma, *The Excavations at Kausambi*, 1957-9, Allahabad, 1960; B.P. Sinha, and S.M. Roy, *Vaisali Excavations*, Patna, 1958-62; B.B. Lal,

Nagarjunkonda¹⁴ in Andhra; Nasik, Kolhapur, Nevasa, Pauni,¹⁵ Ter,¹⁶ Bhokardan¹⁷ in Maharashtra; Baroda, Nagara, Deoni Mori, Dwarka¹⁸ in Gujarat, and Maheshwar,¹⁹ Eran,²⁰ and Ujjain,²¹ in Madhya Pradesh.

From amongst these sites, two rings with a bezel were found in a late level at Hastinapur, and a ring with a flower engraved on a ring from Eran. At Bhokardan six rings of shell were found. Of these, three rings have a bezel and decoration, but no writing at all. All these are dated between the first century B.C. to the third century A.D.

Thus, outside the North-West Frontier Province where the Indo-Greek and Parthian influence was most strongly felt, signet-rings are rare.

This conclusion is supported by a study of the Nagarjuna-konda sculptures.²² Though so many kinds of ornaments from various parts of the body have been carefully noted and illustrated no ring is shown. Surprisingly rings also do not appear as ornaments on men and women from Gandhara.²³ Nor do they occur even later at Sanchi and Ajanta.²⁴

'Sisupalgarh, 1948: An Early Historical Fort in Eastern India', 1954-55, New Delhi, 1955, *Ancient India*, No. V, 1949.

¹⁴ Full report not yet published.

¹⁵ H.D. Sankalia and S.B. Deo, *Excavations at Nasik and Jorwe*; H.D. Sankalia, and M.G. Dikshit, *Excavations at Kolhapur*; H.D. Sankalia et al., *From History to Prehistory at Nevasa* (1954-56), Poona, 1960; S.B. Deo and J.P. Joshi, *Pauni Excavation*, Nagpur, 1972.

¹⁶ Full report not yet published.

¹⁷ S.B. Deo and R. S. Gupte, *Excavations at Bhokardan—1973*, Nagpur-Aurangabad, 1974.

¹⁸ B. Subbarao, *Baroda through the Ages*, Baroda. B. Subbarao and R.N. Mehta, 'Excavations at Vadnagar', *JMSU*, Baroda, Vol. IV, 1953; Mehta and Chowdhary, op. cit.; Z.D. Ansari and M.S. Mate, *Excavations at Dwarka—1963*, Poona, 1966.

¹⁹ H.D. Sankalia, et al., *Excavations at Maheshwar and Navdatoli*, Poona-Baroda, 1958.

²⁰ Full report not yet published, but a ring with a flower engraved on a bezel was found.

²¹ Full report not yet published.

²² K. Krishna Murthy, *Nagarjunakonda—A Culture Study*, Delhi, 1977.

²³ K. Krishna Murthy, *The Gandhara Sculptures—A Cultural Study*, Delhi, 1977.

²⁴ M.K. Dhavalikar, *Sanchi—A Cultural Study*, Poona, 1965 and *Ajanta—A Cultural Study*, Poona, 1973.

V INTERPOLATIONS ✓

Though Kane had said that, in his opinion the core of the *Ramayana* story is as old as 300 to 250 B.C., and later than the *Mahabharata*,²⁵ it appears that few scholars have taken note of this important statement.

Now there is additional evidence that the present *Ramayana*, even the Critical Edition, is not only later than the *Mahabharata*, but also later than the *Puranas* like *Vayu* and *Matsya*.

Kane²⁶ has pointed out how the various questions posed by Rama to Bharata when the latter goes to Chitrakuta to bring him back, are not only inopportune and inappropriate but copied wholesale from the *Bhisma* and *Sabhaparva*. Likewise Mankad has also drawn the attention of scholars to sections of the *Balakanda* that were taken from the *Vayu* and *sargas* in the *Kiskindhakanda* from the *Matsya* and many other *Puranas*.

Now none of these *Puranas*, as shown by Patil, Hazra²⁷ and other scholars, are earlier than the period between the third and the fifth centuries A.D., while the *Matsya Purana* is placed between the sixth and seventh centuries and some of its portions could be as late as A.D.1000.

Thus, the *Ramayana* in its present state cannot be earlier than the fifth century A.D. It would be also clear how contradictory and inconsistent are the assertions of Mirashi,²⁸ when he asserts that some portions of the *Ramayana* were not composed after our contact with the Roman civilization. For not only had this been pointed out by Kane, but now shown by *all* the editors of the Critical Edition, namely Bhatt, Diwanji, Mankad, Shah and Vaidya and conclusively proved by this present hypercritical study. Though some portions of it and certain concepts and customs, as shown here, might be traced back to an earlier period, it should be pointed out that the question of borrowing either the ideas, or even the actual verses, or even entire *sargas*,

²⁵ Kane, *History of Dharmasastra*, Vol. I, p. 396.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 399-401.

²⁷ D.R. Patil, *Cultural History in the Vayu Purana*, Delhi, 1972. H.C. Hazra, *Studies in the Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs*, Dacca, 1940.

²⁸ V. V. Mirashi, 'Location of Ravana's Lanka', *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, Baroda, Vol. XXIV, 1974-75, p. 368.

should not be accepted without further critical study. It is possible that both the *Matsya Purana* and the *Ramayana* have borrowed from a third, hitherto unknown, source, the *Bhuvanavinyasa sargas*.

On this question of dating the Puranic material, the new evidence, both archaeological as well as historical, should be increasingly used. For these alone are sure pointers in the welter of ideas.

If this line of thinking receives additional support from horizontal excavations at the two key sites (assuming that these are the original sites), Ayodhya and Hastinapur, then we may have to change our opinion about the priority of Rama over Krishna. For the projection of the former in Indian tradition is primarily due to folk literature like the *Puranas* and *Jatakas*.

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