

The
Ramayana
in
Historical Perspective

H. D. SANKALIA

M

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 *Kiskindhakanda* (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 characters, 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 *Raghuvamsa*, 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 tirnahy*.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 तीर्णः 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 Vibara. 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 Copperplate inscription of King Bhojavarman, from Belava,³⁰ district Dacca, Bangladesh, says that this king was exhorted by one Puru-sottama 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 Altindooar 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 Buddhist 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 Gondasarman and one Nagasarman. 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.