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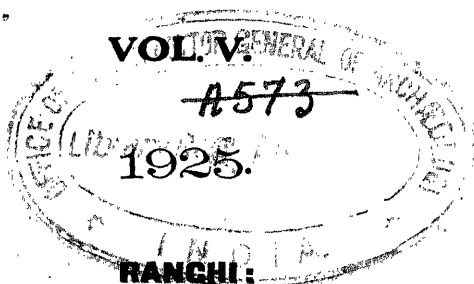
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II. THE ABORIGINAL TRIBES IN THE RĀMĀYANA.

BY G. RAMADAS, B. A., M. R. A. S.,

The Ramayana of Valmiki is generally considered to be a poem of no historical value. This opinion is mostly due to the supposition that it is filled with characters that are quite different from *bonafide* men. Prof. A. A. Macdonell writes, "The poet knows nothing about the Deccan except that Brahman hermitages are to be found there. Otherwise it is a region haunted by the monsters and fabulous beings with which an Indian imagination would people an unknown land."¹ The orthodox Hindu believes these 'monsters and fabulous beings' had had once real existence in flesh and blood; and they refuse to be convinced by argument. But when the descriptions of these beings, their habits and customs as given in the epic, are studied in the light of the ethnology of the tribes living in India at present, these monsters and fabulous beings transform themselves into real men. This kind of examination has never been made, though attempts have been made to identify the Vedic Dasyus, Anāsās &c with the aboriginal tribes still found in the hills of India. The word Dasyu which is interpreted to be the Vedic form of Dāsa, appears to be a modification of 'Dēsya', (original inhabitant), a name applied to the tribes living in the jungles and hills by the civilized men from the plains. These Dēsya's still preserve

¹ Imperial Gazetteer of India vol II, p. 238.

the 'early stage of human progress as that ascribed to them by the Vedic poets more than 3000 years ago.'²

In this paper it is attempted to elucidate the habits and customs of the several tribes that Rāma was made to meet with in his wanderings; and to identify them with the tribes found in India to-day.

From the time the precincts of Kōsala were left, Rāma met with both inimical and friendly tribes. As in the Vedas so in this epic also the tribes that offered opposition to the progress of the Princes of Ayodhya, are called Rākshasā, while those that helped them to subdue the Rākshasas are called Vānaras. The former are said to be living in the forest of *Danḍāka* and the later had their habitats beyond the forest.

The first Rākshasa that confronted the Princes in the forest was Virādha, the type of a tribe that had been almost extinct by the time. He is thus described in the epic (III 2):—

4. Dadars'a giri-s'ṛingābham purushādādam mahā-
svanam.
Gambhīrāksham mahāsatvam vikatam vishamōdaram.
5. Bhībhotsam vishanam dīrgham vikatam ghōradar-
s'anam.
Vasānam charma-vai-yāghram vasārdam rudhirokshi-
tam.
6. Trāsanam sarva-bhūtanām vyātītāsya-mivāntakam.

² W. Wim Hunter.

Trinsimhā-cha-turō-vyāgrān dvau-Vrikau prishatān-
dasa.

7. Sa-vishānam vasōdishtam gajasya-cha s'iromahān.
Avasajyāyasē s'ulē vinadantam mahā-svanam.

- “Vast as some mountain peak in size,
“With mighty voice and sunken eyes,
“Huge, hideous, tall, with monstrous face,
“Most ghastly of his giant race.
“A tiger’s hide the Rākshasa wore
“Still reeking with the fat and gore :
“Huge-faced, like him who rules the dead,
“All living things he struck with dread.
“Three lions, tigers four, ten deer
“He carried on his iron spear
“Two wolves, an elephant’s head beside
“With mighty tusks which blood-drops dyed.*

Here is a being of the most horrible appearance. There may be a little exaggeration in this description; but to men living in the hills of Vizagapatam and Ganjam districts of the Madras Presidency, the very picture of Virādha presents itself in a hill-man returning with a thigh or head of a bull or buffalo on his shoulder. Black sun-scorched skin, bushy hair, completely nude but for a strip of cloth round his loins, sweat streaming down his body and the bleeding leg or head of the ox on his shoulder, is a common sight in the hill tracts. The above description of Virādha appears to be true to nature for men accustomed

* This and other metrical translations of passages from the Ramayana are taken from Griffith’s translation of the ‘Ramayana’.

to see the hillman after he has obtained his share of the carcass.

Virādha was clad in skins and the spear was his only weapon. He himself informed Rāma that he was the son of Jaya and Satahradā. Above all these, greater importance is laid on the disposal of his dead body. This enables us to find the race better than thousands of personal descriptions; for, "the race is judged by the views it holds on the futurity of the soul and by the honours it pays to its dead".³ Virādha begs Rama to bury his corpse in a pit, for by so doing he attains salvation (III. 4.)

Avatē-chā-pi mām Rāma prakshipya kus'alee
vraja.

"First under earth my body throw
"Then on thy way rejoicing go",
because—(20) Rākshasām gata-satvānā-mēsha dharmā-
sanātanaḥ.

Avatē yē nidhīyantē tēshām lōkā-sanātanaḥ.

["Such is the law ordained of old
"For giants when their days are told:
Their bodies laid in earth, they rise
"To homes eternal in the skies".]

Here Virādha is made to state the Sanātana Dharma of all the Rākshasās. All of them were buried, and burial was the custom of the men of primitive times. "The burial customs certainly express a kind of worship of departed souls which has played and still plays so important a part in the religious ideas of all primitive peoples and is

³ *Vedic India* by Ragozin.

one of the oldest fundamental notions common to mankind". ⁴

The Rākshasās were the primitive tribes of India. They were the पूर्वदेवाः because they inhabited the country before the advent of the Aryans, the देवाः. That they were created when the world was filled with water is said in *Uttarakanda*, canto 4.

Prajāpatih purā srishtvā hypa-ssalilasambhavah.
Tāsām gōpāyanē satvā-nasrija=tpadma-sambhavah.

Tē satvā=ssatvakartāram Vinītava=dupasthitāh.
Kinkurma iti bhāshantah kshut-pipāsā bhayārditāh.

Prajāpatistu tānyāha satvāni prahasana-niva.
Abhāshya vāchā-yatnēna rakshadhva-miti mānādāh.
Ityuktā-stē kshudhā-vishthā ambhāmsyādātu=
mudyatah.

Ambhām-syētāni rakshāma uktavanta=stathā-pare.

Jñatvā Prajāpati=stēshā=māha dhātvardha-samyutam
Yakshēti jakshanē dhātu=stathā rakshas-tu pālanāt.

Yakshṇā=dyaksha ityukta=stādā rakshastu pālanāl.
Rakshāmēticha tatrānye jakshāma iti-chāparē.

Bhukshitā bhukshitai=rakta=statastānāha bhūta-kṛt
Rakshāmēti cha yai=ruktam rākshasā=stē bhavantu-
vah.

The Lord of Creation, born in the lotus, created at first the watery world. To protect the waters he created beings; but not knowing what to do, though suffering from hunger and thirst, they prayed to the Creator; He said smilingly, "You must carefully guard (the waters)" Though told so, some, pinched by hunger, began to drink; but the others undertook to keep guard. The

⁴ Harmsworth *History of the World*, vol I.

Creator understood their inclinations and spoke so as to suggest the root meaning of the words; for, 'yaksha' comes from a root which means 'to eat'; while the root of 'raksha' means 'to protect'. So by eating they became *yakshā*; and the others by keeping gaurd became *rakshā*. He said, "those that gaurd, shall be known as *Rakshasā*".]

Those of the created that wished to protect the waters were called *Rākshasā*. This clearly shows that these were the primitive tribes. The *Rāmāyana* tells us that they were of three tribes, each having its own parentage. *Virādha* is the representative of the class that descended from *Joyā* and *S'atahradā*. The second class were the descendants of *Pulastya* and *Diti*. The third and the last class were the children of *Danū*.

To the second class of *Rākshasas* belonged the tribe of *Rāvana*, the lord of *Lankā*. As intimated by *Virādha*, burial was observed by this class; but the poet had no occasion to mention it in particular with regard to this tribe. Once for all he made *Virādha* tell us of a custom common to all *Rākshasas*. Whenever a tribe is found to follow a different one, he does not fail to mention it. Since the *Rākshasā* of *Rāvana* tribe did observe the *Sanātana Dharma* with no change, it was needless to say it over again.

But the funeral of the lord of *Lankā* had to be specially described as his corpse was given *Aryan* rites. The *Aryanised Vibheeshana* did not consent to give such honours to the body of a

यक्तधर्मव्रत, क्रूर, वृशंस, अनृत and परदारभिमर्शन (VI 114-95). *

But Rāma intended to introduce Aryan customs into the Rākshasa race by giving Pitṛimēdha rites to Rāvana, the lord of the class. With this object in view Rāma said, (VI. 114), 'I admit that—

Adharmā-nrita samyuktah kamam tvesha nis'ācharah.
(This Rākshasa had disobeyed the law and was a liar);

but he was—Tējas'vi balavān s'ūra-ssamyugēshu
cha nityas'ah.

(a man of prowess and strength and always a warrior in battles).

S'atakratu mukhai-rdevai-s's'ryāte na parājitah.

[It is also heard that he had never been defeated by the gods led by S'atakratu (Indra)]

Mahatmā balasampanno=Rāvano=loka-rāvanah

(Though Ravana had vexed the world, he was illustrious and had great strength)

Moreover,—maraṇāntāni vairāni (all enmity ends with death) and also nivṛttam nah prayōjanam (our purpose is attained); therefore,—

Avas'yantu kshamam vāchyo mayā tvam

Rakshas'es'vara.

You shall excuse me, O lord of the Rākshasas!, if I speak to you (thus).

And,—Tavāpi mē priyam kāryam; (you must oblige me;) twat probhāvāt-ccha mē jitam. (It was by your prowess that I could win). Excuse me and—

* Tyakta-dharma-vrata, krira, nrs'amsa, Anrita and para-dārābhimars'ana.

(one that left the observance of the law ordained, cruel, destructive, a liar, one who touches others' wives).

Kriyatām asya samskārah; [give him (Vedic) funeral rites].

for,—mamā-pyēsha yatha tava; (he is as much related to me as he is to you.)

Tvat-sakās'āt-ddas'agreeva-ssamskāram vidhipurvakam
Prāptumarhati dharmajña tvam yas'obhāg-bhavishyati.

(Rāvana deserves to receive Vedic funeral rites at your hands. You know the law and you shall obtain fame.)"

Why did Rāma take so much trouble to make the unwilling Vibheeshana give Aryan funerals to the body of Rāvana? Was not his object fulfilled with the death of the demon King? By saying मर्यान्तानि वैराणि Rāma expresses a desire to make the Rākshasas friendly to the Aryans. This could be attained by converting them into 'Aryanism'. Since the disposal of corpses was considered to be the most important, it was thought that the whole race would embrace Aryan religion if their lord's body was cremated according to the Vedic rites. Rāvana's body was given cremation and the Rākshasas were sought to be Aryanised in culture. Here is found the Aryan system of permanently subduing an inimical people.

Are not the African savages subdued by converting them into Christianity? History tells us that Asoka preached that the conquest by Law of Faith was better than the conquest by arms. This was not a discovery or innovation made by the great Mauryan Emperor. Long before the kingdom of Magadha had its existence, the Aryans of the Punjab recognised its efficacy. (R. V. I. 160-5)

ते नो' मृगानो महिनी महि श्रवः क्षत्रं द्यावा पृथिवी
 घासथो बृहत् । येनाभि कृष्टीक्षननाम विश्वदा पना
 व्यसोजो अस्मे समि'वताम् ॥

“Praised by us, O Mighty Heaven and Earth, vouchsafe unto us great glory and sublime supremacy; unite us with admirable energy whereby we may ever spread our (religious) race everywhere”.

It now clearly appears that Rig Vedic Aryans believed that the ‘sublime supremacy’ could be obtained only by the spread of their ‘religious race’. Rāma also acted on this principle.

Yet in spite of such evidence of a permanent conquest of Lanka by Rāma, it is remarked that Rāma was not described as ‘establishing Aryan dominion in the south or as intending to do so’.

The third tribe of Rākshasas is represented by Kabandha, the son of Danu. He had a queer appearance and lived upon every being that came into his embrace. As there was a little difference between the disposal of the dead bodies of this tribe and the Sanātana Dharma of other Rākshasas, the demon had to give instructions with regard to his own funerals. (III. 72.30).

Kintu yāvan-nayā-tyastam savita srānta-vāhanah,
 Tāvan-mām-avatē kshiptvā daha Rāma yadhā-vidhi.

“Now ere with wearied steeds the Sun

“Through western skies his course have run,

“Deep in a pit my body lay

“And burn it in the wonted way”.

What that Vidhi was, is to be inferred from the way in which fire was applied to the pyre by Lakshmaṇa (III. 73.2.)

Lakshmaṇastu mahōlkābhi-rjvalitābhi-ssamantatah,
Chitā-mādeepayāṁśa sāprajajvāla cha sarvatah.

(Then Lakshmaṇa taking brands of burning flame applied fire to every part of the pyre that it might burn as a whole).

Lakshmana took burning brands of fire and placed them on all sides of the pyre that it might burn simultaneously and wholly. This appears to be the Vidhi spoken of by Kabandha.

Even now in India there are tribes that observe this system of funeral. Thurston's *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* describes the funeral rites of the Nayars thus:—

“A small pit about the size of the corpse is dug and across this are placed three long stumps of the plantain tree one at each end and one in the middle, on which as foundation the pyre is laid.....It is a matter of greatest importance that the whole pyre burns at once. The greatest care is taken that it burns as a whole consuming every part of the corpse”.

Thus the three tribes that were inimical to the spread of the Aryan race were vanquished. The Virādhā and the Kabandha tribes, which had been already decaying, entirely disappeared from the *Dandaka* forest region after the advent of Rāma. The third one which was numerous and which offered greater resistance was first subdued by force of arms and then were converted into the Aryan faith so that they might not relapse into their primitive habits again.

Then those tribes that offered hospitality to the

Princes, or helped the brothers to overcome the stubborn Rākshasas have to be studied. First of such tribes were the Nishādas that lived between the borders of Kosala and the Ganges.

Sringi-bēra on the Ganges was their chief town and Guha was their lord. The Nishādās were good archers and they were so proud of their archery that they even ventured to oppose Bharata. Their proximity to water and the abundant supply of timber in the forest made them good boat-builders and ferrymen. When Rāma expressed his desire to cross the river with his wife and brother, Guha ordered his men to prepare a boat suited for the purpose. (II 52-6)

अस्यवाहन संयुक्तां कर्णग्राहवतीं शुभाम् ।

सुप्रतारां दृढां तीर्थं शीघ्रं नावमुपाहर ॥

The number of fighting men is intimated in

नौकाशतानां पञ्चानामेकैकस्य शतं शतम् ।

सन्नद्धानां तथा यूनां तिसृष्वूद्यतघृन्विनाम् ॥

There were five hundred boats and in each boat there were one hundred archers.

The Nishāda King was a friend of Rāma; when he heard of the arrival of the Princes in his country, he accorded a hearty reception to Rāma, Seeta and Lakshman. The meeting of Rāma and Guha was cordial. Rāma went in advance and embraced the King of the Nishādās. (II. 49-35).

Tamārtastam Guhō Rāghavamabrabhit.

Then Guha offered all kinds of food to Rama

(II. 50-39)

Bhakshyam bhōjyañ-cha pēyañcha lēhya-ñch-ēdamu-
pasthitam.

S'ayanāni-cha mukhyāni vājinām khādanañcha tē.

[“See, various food before thee placed,
 “And cups to drink and sweets to taste,
 “For thee soft beds are hither borne,
 “And for thy horses grass and corn”.]

But Rama accepted only the fodder for the horses and declined the other things with thanks. It was not that he had any objection to eat the viands but because he had taken the vow of hermitage. (II. 49·44).

कुशचीराजिनघरं फक्तमूक्तशिनञ्च माम् ।

विद्धि प्रणिहितं धर्मं तापसं वनगोचरम् ॥

Bharata who was not bound by such vows accepted every kind of food similarly offered by Guha. From these facts it clearly appears that the Aryans had no objection either to touch the men of the forest or to partake of food given by them. As the name Sringi-bēra, which is half-Aryan and half non-Aryan, indicates, the Nishadas seem to have been semi-Aryanised by their close proximity to the kingdom of Kosala.

This friendly tribe helped them over the river; and having roamed in the Dandaka forest for ten years Rāma, Seetā and Lakshmana went to live in the Panchavaṭi. There they met with *Jatayu* who offered to watch over Seeta, whenever the brothers were absent on hunting excursions. No particulars of this tribe were given. Similarly, when the Vānaras that had gone to the south in search of Seeta sat in despair on the shore of the sea, Sampati came out of a mountain cavern and told them that he was the brother of *Jatayu*

But nowhere are given any particulars of their customs. *Jaṭāyu* tells Rāma of the origin of species, and Sampati tells the Vānars of the different varieties amongst the birds. Though both of these accounts seem to be rather tiresome, still, I think, that some hints as to the origin of totemism and its divisions may perhaps be derived by a careful study of the two accounts.

Rāma and Lakshmana, searching for Seetā, arrived in the hermitage of Sabari, a representative of a tribe of Sabaras that lived on the banks of the lake of Pampā. The description of the abode with its hearths and the courteous reception offered by the old woman to the brothers show how a non-Aryan tribe was absorbed into the Aryan fold. The old woman entering the funeral pyre, is perhaps, a symbolic way of describing the complete Aryanisation of the tribe. Whatever it may be, this character does not show any direct bearing on the main story. She did not condole with Rāma in his misery; nor did she even tell him in what direction Seetā was taken away. For a man sorrowing like Rāma, no such words as are said by Sabari will be consoling; they will be, on the other hand, boring. Then what might have been the purpose of the poet in introducing her here? A careful consideration shows that she was intended to intimate the nationality of the people living in the country to the south of the *Dandaka* forest.

This half-Aryanised condition of the people, perhaps, made Manu give them an origin as the offspring of a Brahman father and a Sudra mother (See Muir's *Sanskrit Texts*, Vol. I, p. 481).

Her abode is placed just at the entrance of Kishkindhya, the centre of Vānar influence. But for her, it is an unknown and insoluble problem to identify the Vānars, the supposed man-like monkeys, with any of the tribes living now in India.

Having left the hermitage the brothers went towards the hill Risyamūka, the refuge of Sugreeva and his followers. When Sugreeva saw the brothers coming towards the hill, he lost heart and fleeing away with his followers, hid himself.

1 Tau-tu drishṭva mahāt-mānau bhrātarau Rama-
Lakshmaṇau.

Varāyudha-dharau veerau Sugreeva-s's'ankiaō-bhavat.

2 Udvigna-hridaya-ssarvā dis'a-ssamavalokayan.

Navya-tishtbata kasminschi-ddēsē=vānara-punga-
vah.

“Sugreeva moved by wondering away
“The high-souled sons of Raghu saw,
“In all their glorious arms arrayed;
“And grief upon his spirit weighed.
“To every quarter of the sky
“He turned in fear his anxious eye,
“And roving still from spot to spot
“With troubled steps he rested not.”

Even now the men of the hills of Ganjam and Vizagapatam run away at the sight of an official livery or turban. But amongst them there may be one or two persons that have grown bold and courteous by associating with the civilised classes. All the official or bartering work of the villagers

is managed by such men who are regarded with some respect. Such a man was Hanuman who by visiting the Aryan colonies in the *Dandaka* forest, had acquired not only purity of speech, but also refinement of manners. Therefore he approached the princes and spoke to them gracefully and courteously.

The inhabitants of Kishkindhya celebrated their festivals with song, music and dance as the hill-men do even now. IV. 27.

IV. 27. 28. Geeta vaditra nirghōsha-s's'ryatē jayatām-
vara.

Nardatām vānarāṇāñcha mṛdangā-dambarai-ssaha.
Labdhvā bhāryām kapivarah prāpya-rājya
subṛdvrtah.

Dhruvam nandati Sugreev-ssamprāpya mahateem-
s'riyam.

(Oh best of warriors!) "Sweet music and song of the minstrels

"And, when the Vānars dance, will come

"The sound of tabour and of drum,

"Again to spouse and realm restored,

"Girt by friends, the Vānar lord

"Great glory has acquired ; and how

"Can he be less than happy now ?"

The inhabitants of Kishkindhya live chiefly upon roots and fruits though they have plenty of corn in their granaries. The tribesmen living in the hills of Ganjam and Vizagapatam eat chiefly the roots they dig out from earth and the fruits the forest trees yield. The produce of the field is used occasionally for festive days; while most of

it is utilised in bartering. Both men and women take intoxicating drinks which is also a characteristic of the men of Kishkindhya. Tārā was प्रसक्तन्ती स दविदुवकाक्षी (IV. 33. 37½). When Lakshmaṇa approached her, she was पानयोगाद्भिनिदुत्तककञ्जा (ibid. 39½).

The younger brother married the widow of his brother. Sugreeva married the widow of Vali. Rāma says, (IV. 27:4).

स्वञ्च पत्नौ मयिप्रेतां तारां ज्वापि सभौषिताम् ।

विहरन्त महीरात्रं कृतार्थं विगतज्वरम् ॥

“With royal Rumā by his side,

“Or Tārā yet a dearer bride,

“He spent each joyous day and night

“In revelry and wild delight”.

This appears to be a custom compulsory on the widow. Vali himself enjoins Sugreeva not to disgrace Tārā but maintain her in the rank he had given her (IV. 18:56).

Maddōsha kṛta-doshām tām yathā Tārām tapasvineem
Sugreevo-nāvamanyēta ta thā=vasthatu-marhasi.

“Let not Tārā, left forlorn,

“Weep for Sugreeva’s wrathful scorn.

“Nor let him, for her lord’s offence

“Condemn her faithful innocence.

“And well and wisely may he reign

“If thy dear grace his power sustain”.

Though Tārā was entrusted to the care of Sugreeva, her son Angada had to be specially placed in the protection of his uncle; for Tārā did not undertake to be responsible for the up-bringing of Angada. This fact proves that the widow had no hold

either on the property or the children of her late husband. Nachā-ham hari-rājasya prabhavā-myangadasya vā. Pitrvya-stasya sugreeva ssarva-kāryē=shvanantarāh.

["No rule or right, a widowed dame

"O'er Angad or the realm I claim.

"Sugreeva is the uucle, he

"In every act supreme must be."]

These customs are still to be seen amongst the Savaras of Ganjam. "A widow is considered bound to marry her husband's brother.....The man that marries the widow says on oath that she has taken with her no property belonging to the deceased or his children." (*Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Thurston).

The custom of marrying the widow does not extend to the elder brother. It is an offence if the elder brother lives with his younger brother's wife. It was for this offence that Vāli suffered death. (IV. 18-19).

The Vānaras that were sent in search of Seetā, looked for her in every place during the day time but at night-fall they all assembled in one place and slept three (IV. 47. 4 & 5). This is a peculiar habit observed amongst the hill tribes of Ganjam and Vizagapatam. Even in drinking ale (मद्यु) the habit of the modern hill tribes presents itself in Rāmāyana wherein the Vānaras are said to drink in cups of leaves (द्रोण) holding them with both hands, V. 61. 9.

Madhūni dṛoṇa-bāhubhih parigrihya tē.

Pibanti kapayah kēchit sanghs'a-statra hrishthavat.

(Those monkeys, holding the leafy cups, containing the drink quaffed it; some made merry in bands).

(VI. 4. 91½) द्रोणमात्र प्रमाणात् लम्बमानानि वानराः ।

यद्युः पिबन्तोद्दृष्टास्ते मद्युनि मद्युपिङ्गताः ॥

Where the tribesmen drink, the whole tribe sit together and drink ale in cups made of leaves. The sylvan habit is intimated by the 'droṇās' made of leaves.

There is not much to be inferred from the funerals of Vāli; for even in modern times, every Savara dead body is cremated. The grand ceremonial way described may be a little exaggeration. That all the villagers should follow the corpse to the burning place, is a custom commonly seen amongst the hill tribes. Greater similarity between the Savaras of to-day and the Vānaras of Kishkindhya is found in the principle of classifying themselves into septs.

A study of the words used in the epic to denote the inhabitants of Kishkindhya shows that every word indicates a special character of these beings. Before the real significance of these words is discussed, it is but necessary to show that Vālmiki never intended that these beings should be understood to be monkeys that are now found in the jungles of India.

When Sugreeva said to Rāma, (IV. 7. 7).

“नाहं ता मनुशोचामि प्राकृतो वानरोपि सन् ।”

he intimates that the class of men to which he belonged were Prākṛitah (men of nature). This contrasts with men of civilisation. This clearly appears in the words, “मनुष्य योः प्राकृतयोश्च वीर्यः” (VI.

15.7) where Rāvana calls the Princes मनुष्याः and the Vānars by प्राकृताः. There are several places where मनुष्य is used in the sense of 'an inhabitant of cities and janapadas'. Sugreeva is spoken of as one of the four 'pursharbhas', (Rāma, Lakshmana, Vibheeshana and Sugreeva) that had gathered in one place (VI. 25-29-30), and the rest were Vānaras. (ibid. 31) जलादा सङ्क्रामयितुं सर्वं तिष्ठन्तु वानराः ।. Again when Vānaras were fleeing on seeing Kumbhakarna, Angada chided them for being afraid like the real monkeys. (VI. 66.5&21) क्व गच्छथ भयत्रस्ता हरयः प्राकृता यथा प्राकृता हरयः clearly means the natural real monkeys. This proves that these Vānaras were not monkeys as they are generally understood to have been. Though all words that are common both to the monkeys and the inhabitants of forests are found used, the word मर्कट is nowhere found in the epic used for the followers of Sugreeva. The male members of the class are said to have had tails; but the women are not described to have had this appendage. In addition to these facts, a study of the real meaning of each word used to denote these men, further confirms the view that the members of the army of Rāma were human beings and not the monkeys that are generally seen in the forests of India.

Of all the words used to name these people, Vānar is found repeated 1080 times. Its significance is intimated by the explanatory compounds such as वनचरिन्, वनोक्त् &c. (VI. 4.65) वानरा वनगोचराः ।

IV. 50.13½ ततः पर्वतकूटायो हनुमान्पवनात्मजः ।

अबवौ दानराश्वरी कान्तावनकोविदः ॥

ibid. 53.25. तस्मिन्नतीते काले तु सग्रीवेण कृते स्वयम् ।

प्रायोपवेशनं युक्तं सर्वेषां वनोकसाम् ॥

From these it clearly appears that the word signifies a forester and not a monkey. It should be derived from वन a wood, and हस to play; but not from वा implying resemblance and नर a man

हरि which is used 540 times is also explained by वनचारि and other compounds that it might not be misunderstood for a monkey.

(IV. 39.12) हरिणि र्मघनिह्रीदै रण्यैश्च वनचारिभिः ।

(VI. 42.22) वीरबाहु स्सुबाहुश्च नलश्च वनगोचरः ॥

निपीड्योपनिविष्टास्ते प्राकारं हरियूद्यताः ॥

The word seems to be used for that class of Vānaras who differed in colour from क्षाः who are said to be of dark complexion. (VI. 27.5).

नीलानिव महासेषां क्षिप्रतो यांस्तु पश्यसि ।

... ..

यते त्वा मभिवर्तन्ते राज नृक्षा स्सुदारुणाः ॥

In such compounds as *क्षवानर, ययृक्ष, the difference in colour alone appears to be emphasised. Both *क्षः and वानराः were under the sway of Sugreeva; he was हर्यृक्षाणां गणेश्वरः । When Ravana spoke about the individuals of this class, he draws no distinction amongst them.

V. 46.10. दृश्याहि हरयः पूर्वं मया विपुक्त विक्रमाः ।

वाक्तीच सहस्रग्रीवो जाम्बवान्श्च महावक्तः ॥

V. 60.15. Ravana calls जाम्बवान् a हरिस्तम and in जाम्बवत्प्रमुखां कपीन् he includes the Riksha-rāja amongst the कपयः । Nor did Rāma observe any difference between the Vānaras and *क्षाः.

(VI.76.57½) रामस्तु व्युथितं श्रुत्वा वाक्त्रि पुत्रं रणाक्षरे ।

व्यादिदेश हरिश्चेष्टान् काम्बव त्पुमुखां स्ततः ॥

In spite of these glaring statements in the epic itself, it is inconceivable how the word could be understood to mean 'a bear'; its original significance must have been either forgotten or its original form must have been so mutilated as to obscure its real meaning.

The *क्तवङ्ग* is used about 240 times, its use appears to be appropriate wherever it is used. It signifies their capacity to run. V. 60.1. अश्विपुत्रो महावेगो बक्तवन्तो पत्तवङ्गमौ. Wherever the word is used it should be understood to intimate the quickness of their speed or their natural habit of running. They run away at the sight of civilized men. Because Hanuman was the best of runners he was sent to bring the herbs.

Kapi which is used about 420 times furnishes us with a clue to identify the people of Kish-kindhya with the modern hill-men. 'Kapi' means a monkey but we have seen that other words used to name these men signify the tribes wandering in the forest. It has already been proved that the customs and manners of the people of Sugreeva are still found in a hill tribe called the Savaras. But the Rāmāyana describes these Vānars to have had tails and therefore they were *kapayah*. It is this appendage that has misled many to understand the Vānars of Sugreeva's army to have been monkeys. That this tail is not a natural one is intimated in V. 53.3, where Vibheeshana says—

कपीनां किल लांगुल मिष्टं भवति भुषणम् ।

That tail is an important ornament but not a limb of the body. Among the Savaras there are a class of men who wear the ornament of a tail.

“A tribe of Savaras is called Arsi or Arisi which means a monkey in the Savara language. Their Oriya neighbours call them ‘Lambo Lanjiya’ (long-tailed) which is the Oriya translation of the Savara word “Arsi” (*Castes and Tribes of S. I.*). They got this name from the long piece of cloth which the males allow to hang down. The name signifies the peculiarity in the dress of men and it does not appear in that of women. In Rāmāyana also the Vānar women are not said to have had tails. If the Savara ‘Arsi’ is translated into the Oriya ‘Lambo Lanjiya’ even in modern times, what wonder if it has been translated into the Sanskrit कपि by the poet Valmiki? As these forest men wear a long piece of their dress, hanging down they were called कपयः and the word signifies, as every name in the epic does, a striking feature in these men.

Just as the Vānaras were divided into the कपयः and क्वाः by their colour or complexion, the long appendage in the dress gave rise to the two classes of वानराः and गोलाङ्गुलाः. We have already seen that the significance of कपि was a long hanging piece of dress; गोलाङ्गुल, from its root meaning, signifies a tail with a tuft of hair at the end. In spite of this, it is understood to mean a long-tailed monkey with a black face; but this

monkey has no tuft of hair at the end of the tail. The tail of this class of गोलकुला is a piece of ornament like the tail of the Arsi (कपि) The chief feature of the गोलकुला: is a tuft of hair at the end. This kind of tail also is worn for ornament by the Savaras.

“Usually the Saora’s dress (his full dress) consists of a large bunch of feathers (white generally) stuck in his hair on the crown of his head, a coloured cloth round his head as a turban, and worn much of the back of the head, and folded tightly, so as to be a good protection to the head. When feathers are not worn, the hair is tied on the top of the head or a little at the side of it” (*Castes and Tribes of S. I.*). A tuft of hair hanging out loose from a knot, two or three inches high, gives the idea of the end of a cow’s tail. Hill-men with such a head dress have been noticed by previous writers.

Since the Vānars of the Rāmāyaṇa resemble in dress, customs and manners the Savaras of today, and many of the names of persons, places and objects existing between the Ganges and Lanka are of Savara origin; it is clear that Sugreeva and his men were Savaras or of tribes allied to them.

In modern times all the tribes allied to the Savaras are called the Mundaris and the name includes the Savaras, the Gadabas, the Asuras, the Mundaris &c living in Central India from Indore on the west to the Ganjam District in the east. But these tribes being influenced by the neighbour-

ing Aryan classes have partly adopted the Aryan languages and customs, or have altogether forgotten their original language and became Aryanised completely.

“There are, on the other hand, several Aryanised tribes in Northern India who have certainly once spoken some Munda dialect. Such are the Cheros in Behar and Chota Nagpur; the Kherwars, the Savaras who have formerly extended so far north as Shahbad, many of the so-called Rajbansis and so forth... At all events Munda languages must once have been spoken over a wide area in Central India and probably also in the Ganges valley” (Grierson).

Ptolemy writes, “Towards the Ganges are the Sabari, in whose country the diamond is found in great abundance.” That their original home was to the South of the Ganges can be understood from the distribution of the Savaras in modern times. “We find them largely spread over the Orissa division and the Orissa tributary states..... Farther to the north they occur in Saugar and Damoh and in former times they are said to have been settled in Shahbad.” (Grierson).

The Vānars of the Rāmāyaṇa had their headquarters at Kishkindhya which, from the statements made in the epic, clearly appears to have existed to the north of the Vindhya mountains and south of the Ganges. To the north of the Ganges lived the semi-Aryanised foresters called the Nishādas who had their chief centre at Sringi-bera. Then how did these foresters living between the Ganges

and the Vindhya come to spread themselves from the Vindhya to the hills of Orissa? The reason is not far to seek. The political changes that had taken place in the North-west of India had dislocated the forest tribes and compelled them to seek shelter elsewhere. Sir Herbert Risley says, "Local tradition ascribes to the Savars the conquest of the Cheros and their expulsion from the plateau of Shahabad in about the year 421 of the Salivahana era or A. D. 500." The occupation of Shahabad by the Savars is evidenced by a number of ancient monuments in the district that are still put down to the Savars, who are supposed to have been driven South by the inroad of Rajputs under the Bhojpur chief which made an end to their rule". The disturbances caused to the peaceful rule of the Eastern Ganga Kings of Kalinga during the 7th, 8th, and 9th centuries by the hill tribes show the incursions of the Savars into that country. Ranaka Dharmakhedi, a vassal of Vajrahasta III says in his grant dated A. D. 1054 that he had terrified a host of enemies on the western mountains. In the 7th century the earlier dynasty of the Gangas had been overthrown by one Bālāditya; Kāmarnava I had to defeat the enemy and establish the Ganga rule again. These documentary evidences combined with the evidences offered by the place-names such as Jayati, Kindām &c clearly show that the Savaras had made serious attempts to establish settlements in the kingdom of Kalinga until they were finally subdued and were forced to settle peacefully during the reign of Vajrahasta III of Kalinga.

From these considerations it can be seen that the Savaras were, from time to time, dislodged from their settlements and were compelled to find new homes. Being naturally accustomed to live in forests and hills, they seem to have always occupied such tracts as the plateau of Shahbad and the forests of the Eastern Ghats. A careful study of the localities now occupied by the Savaras show that they preferred to migrate through hills and forests. This natural propensity to avoid cities and other centres of civilization and to move over hills and dales is mentioned in the Rāmāyaṇa. When Rāma led the Vanar hordes to Lanka, they avoided the cities and Janapadas and marched along the hill sides. (VI. 4·39).

वर्ज्य अग्राभ्यांश्च स्तथा ज्ञानपदानपि ।

By taking this route it was easy for them to obtain roots and fruits they chiefly lived upon. Wherever they settled they were particular to see that the chief articles of their food were abundantly procurable. This natural habit is poetically expressed when Rāma was made to pray to Indra to bless the Vānars that roots and fruits should be abundantly obtained wherever they inhabit, (VI. 123·8½)—

अकाले चपि मुख्यानि मूलानि च फलानि च ।

नद्याश्च विमला स्तत्र तिष्ठेयु र्यत्र वानराः ॥

The above considerations show that the Savaras or the Vānars had their original home between the Ganges and the Vindhya, but were, in subsequent times, compelled to leave those homes and find new ones elsewhere. Even in their original

homes they seem to have been divided into tribes as in modern times, according the amount of admixture of Aryan civilization in their customs and language. The Nishādas on the banks of the Ganges, the Jaṭāyu tribe at the Panchavati, the Sabari tribe at the Pampā, the Vānars of Kishkindhyā and the Sampati tribe in the Vindhya,—such are some of the tribes of the Savaras mentioned under the name of the Vānars or foresters in the epic.

From the distinct mention of the detailed habits, customs and manners of the tribes of the so-called Rākshasas and of the Vānars, and the use of the aboriginal names of persons, places and objects with such changes as would be required by Aryan intonation, it may be reasonably inferred that Valmiki had personal knowledge of the peoples and of the places lived in by those men; if not, he could not have depicted them so faithfully and so truthfully. This inference may help us to rightly interpret the tradition attached to the origin of the poet.

It is said that, though he was born a Brāhman, at first he led the life of a *Chandāla* for a long time when seven Rishis took pity on him and initiated him in the *mantra* of Rāma. Uttering the name he sat down in a place and an ant-hill grew over him. Nārada came to the ant-hill after sometime and told him the story of Rāma's wanderings. Because he came out of an ant-hill he was named Vālmiki. Because he has narrated the story of Rāma, he has been raised to the rank of a *rishi*. This tradition, as all traditions

are, must have been built on the acquaintance of the poet with the customs of the aboriginal tribes who, from time immemorial, have been considered to be *Chandālas*. That Vālmiki was inclosed in an ant-hill may be taken to be a metaphorical way of indicating the disappearance of the poet from the Aryan community. During this period he might have been wandering amongst the forest tribes studying their customs and language. When he again revealed himself to his own class of men, he brought out the story of the "Wanderings of Rāma," which became very popular and raised him to the rank of a *rishi*. Had it not been for the faithful and real representation of men and places, the poem would not have been so much appreciated as to make a *rishi* of its author.

On these considerations it cannot be denied that the persons said to have been inhabiting the region of the *Dandāka* forest were not ghosts and demons created by the imaginative brain of the poet, but were *bona fide* human beings having real existence and following such customs as are still found amongst the forest tribes who still maintain, uncontaminated, those very customs which they were observing in primitive times.*

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