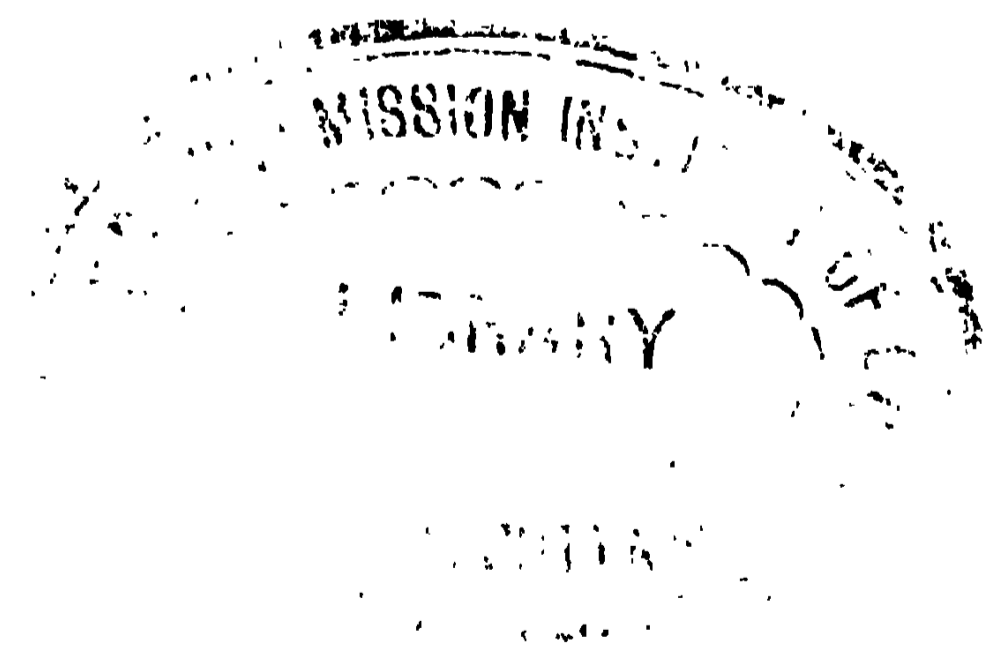


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adultery, murder, complicity and so forth, the person alone of the delinquent is to be seized by the kings' officers. It would thus appear that the terms *daśāparūdha* and *pañcāparūdha* in the ancient grants involved a remission of penalties for the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

U. N. GHOSHAL

## Rāvāṇa and His Tribes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

22 tābhyāṃ sa paripūrṇābhyāṃ bhujābhyāṃ rākṣaseśvaraḥ//

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

tasya rākṣasa-rājasya niścakrāma mahāmukhāt :

here '*mukhāt*' is singular ; and also

makuṭenāpavṛttena kuṇḍalajvalitānanam ;

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

- 3 vikṣipyā dīrghau niścēṣṭau bhujāv aṅgadabhūṣitau/  
makuṭenāpavṛttena bhāskarākūravarasā//

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

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



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

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

*Bhujau* is dual and *vadanam* is singular.

Mandodarī, his principal wife, laments describing his face

(VI, 114, 36) :

Kirīṭa-kūṭōj-jvalitam̐ tāmrāsyam̐ dīptakuṇḍalam/

.....        .....        .....        vaktram̐ na bhr̥jate//

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

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

3 udvaheyaṃ bhujābhyāṃ tu medinīm ambare sthitah̐.

*Bhujābhyām* is dual and therefore he had only two arms.

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

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

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

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

40 muṣṭibhyāṃ caraṇābhyāṃ ca gr̥dhrarājam̐ apothayat.

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

30 so 'yam eva purā śete puramadhye gṛhottame.

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

Hearing Sītā curse him for his misbehaviour, Rāvaṇa looked at

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

23 vivṛtya nayane krūre Jānakīm anvavaikṣata,

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

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

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

nivārayati bāhubhyāṃ yaḥ śailaśikharopamaḥ.

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

26 asau kirīṭī calakuṇḍalāsyo nagendra-Vijhyopamabhīma-

kāyaḥ.

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

81 dhvajāgre dhanuṣaś cāgre kirīṭāgre ca taṃ harim.

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

54 Rāvaṇasya śīro'cchīndacchrīmajjvalitakuṇḍalam/

tacchiraḥ patitaṃ bhūmau dr̥ṣṭaṃ lokais tribhis tadā//



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

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

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

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

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

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

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