

Epilogue of Ramayana

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his kingdom among his sons, Ikshvaku gave to Danda the region between Vindhya and Shaivala (Panna) ranges. But as Danda misbehaved with Arāja, the daughter of his royal priest Ushanas, the sage cursed him as a result of which his kingdom was burnt to ashes and the region was turned into a forest known as Dandakaranya. This story may have been included to show that this forest was originally a part of the Kosala kingdom and was later usurped by the Rakshasas. So it was natural that Raama should give protection to the hermits there and take deterrent action against the encroaching Rakshasas.

It is human nature to denigrate the vanquished and deify the victors. The redactors, especially Suta and the author of the U-style, have shown Ravana as a ten-headed demon and Raama as an incarnation of Vishnu. Most of the descriptions of Ravana as Dashagriva, with ten necks (5. 6), occur in the additions made by Suta. Suta also refers to his ten heads and his many arms in the Sundarakanda (47. 6-8). On the other hand, Harivamshakara states that when Hanuman entered Ravana's place at night, he saw Ravana asleep with his two arms stretched on the floor (5. 8-13) and with shining earrings in his two ears (5. 20-27). It is true that when Ravana reveals his identity to Sita. He describes himself as the mighty Dashagriva, the king of Lanka (3. 46. 2) When he resumed his true form, he was referred to as Dashasya (3. 47. 7). Jatayu also accosts Ravana as Dashagriva (3. 48. 3), but later tells Raama that Ravana had taken his queen and wife (3. 63. 14). These sargas 46-48 belong to Valmiki's Ramayana, but the above stanzas which describe him as ten-necked etc. may have been inserted by Suta.

Further none of the persons, except Jatayu who had seen him at close quarters, refers to his ten heads. When Ravana discloses his identity to Sita, she does not say how a human can marry a ten-headed Rakshasa. Neither Sampati nor his son Suparsva who had seen Ravana carrying away Sita refer to his ten heads. When Vibhishana points out Ravana to Raama on

the battlefield, he too does not refer to his ten heads, but exclaims in wonder and admiration, " Oh, how resplendent and vigorous is this Ravana, the Lord of the rakshasas. He looks splendid, is difficult to gaze at, like the sun because of his rays ! " (6. 47. 26-27). So Ravana had, like any other human being, one head, two hands and two feet.

The references to Ravana's licentious behaviour which occur in the Uttarakanda such as his assault on Vedavati (7. 17), his abduction of beautiful girls and married women (7. 24) and his rape of Rambha have all been inserted by Sauti to show him as a debauchee. He further adds that the rape of Rambha resulted in a curse by her betrothed Nalakubera (7. 26), which prevented him from molesting Sita. Harivamshakara, however, gives a different reason for Ravana's conduct towards Sita. He says that though Ravana pressed his suit, he gave her the following assurance. " Even then, O Maithili, I shall not touch you, so long as you do not desire me (akaamaa). I shall bear my desire for you in my heart. " (5. 18. 6). Thus, though he was relentless in gratifying his desires and acquiring wealth through conquests, he was not a viciously sensual person as he has been made out to be by Sauti. The question whether the Rakshasas were man-eating demons or ordinary human beings will be discussed in Chapter VI.

On the other hand, while Valmiki depicts Raama as essentially human in Ramayana, its subsequent redactors have deified Raama and projected him as an incarnation of Vishnu. Suta for the first time affirms his divinity in the Balakanda (1. 14-16). He states that Vishnu incarnated himself as the four sons of Dasharatha and other gods were born as Vanaras. Suta also mentions Raama as an incarnation of Vishnu in the Yuddhakanda¹ Here he identifies Raama first with various deities and later equates him with Vishnu. Finally when after a long and

1. SR. 26. 31, 105. 5-10 and 107. 17-30.