

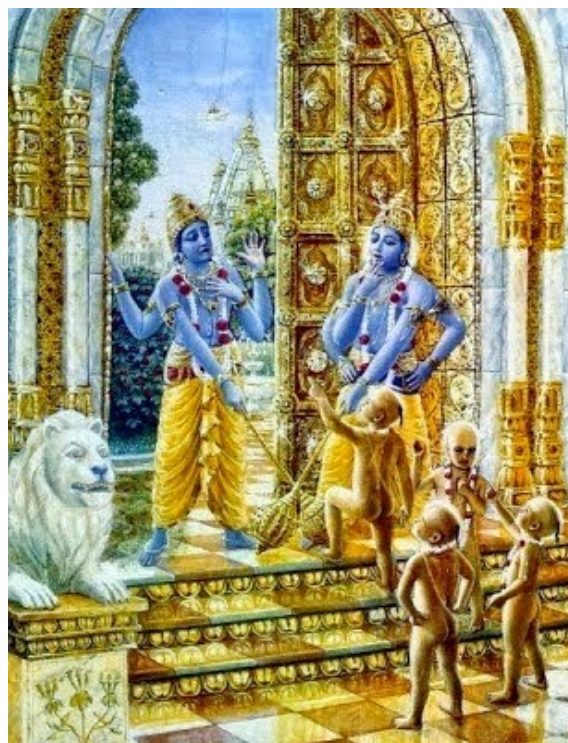
## Ravan - The greatness of the Demoniac King of Lanka



Ravan also known as Ravana is arguably by far the most misunderstood character in Vedic (Hindu) scriptures. The famous adage “never judge a book by its cover” seems rather appropriate in describing Ravan.

We, at DIPIKA humbly pray for the mercy of our Divine Mother Saraswati to compile this ground breaking article to make people around the world aware of Ravan and his place in Sanatan Dharma (Hinduism).

We shall revert to the Srimad Bhagavatam from the beginning on how Ravan came into being.



Jaya and Vijaya and the four Kumaras

From the Srimad Bhagavatam 3rd Canto chapter 15 and 16...

Lord continued 'When the four young (Kumara) sages by dint of their spiritual potency reached Vaikuntha (the spiritual abode of Lord Vishnu - meaning place of eternal bliss), they experienced a transcendental ecstasy they never had experienced before. After passing there through six gates without taking much interest, they at the seventh gate ran into two guardians (dvarapalaka) devas of the same age who carried valuable maces, bracelets, earrings, helmets and beautiful garments. But looking about with their arched eyebrows, restless breathing and reddish eyes, they seemed somewhat agitated. Seeing them both standing at the gate, the sons (the four Kumaras) of Lord Brahma passed, as they did before, the golden and diamond doors without taking any notice. They, after all, were the great sages who of their own accord moved everywhere without being checked or doubted.

When they saw them, four naked boys of age who had realized the truth of the self but who looked as if they were not older than five years, the two gatekeepers in disregard of the glory and the etiquette, in an attitude offensive to the Lord wrongfully blocked their way with their staffs. The moment they were faced with the slight hindrance of the two doorkeepers who, for all the inhabitants of Vaikuntha to see, refused them despite by far being the fittest of the Lord, their eyes, in their eagerness to see their most beloved one, suddenly turned red out of anger. The four sages said: 'Who are the two of you, to have attained here the service of the Supreme Lord by dint of your actions in the past? Which devotee who in Him is without anxiety and enmity, can be engaged as false as you? Who in the world is of such a deceptive mentality like yours that betrays confidence? Therefore, to secure the grace of the Lord of Vaikuntha, according to our opinion the appropriate measure for you antipathetic minds who consider matters in opposition, is that you both depart from here to the material world where one finds this threefold sin that is the enemy of the living being [lust, anger and greed.]

The two [doorkeepers] who understood that a terrible Brahmin curse had been pronounced by them, a curse that cannot be countered by any weapon, at once stricken with fear for the devotees of the Lord fell to grasp their feet in great anxiety. 'Let it be so that you have punished us for our sins. A lack of respect for great sages like you cannot go unpunished. But we pray that we, with a bit of your infinite compassion for our repentance, not in a state of illusion will lose the memory of the Supreme Lord when we have to descend to the material world.' That very moment the Supreme Lord Vishnu, from whose navel the lotus sprouted, learned about the offence against the righteous sages. To their delight He came to the place accompanied by His Goddess of Fortune (Lakshmi devi), walking on the very same lotus feet that are sought by the hermits and the wise. Seeing Him coming forward with all His associates and paraphernalia, the sages, now seeing the one whom they always had been looking for, fell into ecstasy over the sight of the chamaras [fans of yak-tail] that like beautiful swans waved a cool breeze that moved the pearls of His white umbrella, making them look like drops of water to a reflected moon.

Lord Brahma said: 'After having congratulated the four sages of yogic conscience for their words of praise, the Almighty One from the abode of Vaikuntha spoke. The Supreme Lord said: 'These two attendants of Mine named Jaya and Vijaya have committed a great offence against you four. The punishment that you, have awarded them, I approve, oh great sages, because they turned against you in enmity. I seek your forgiveness now because that offence against you, oh brahmins, who are the highest ones of God, is all Mine. I consider Myself the one who offended you since they who disrespected you are My attendants. When a servant does something wrong, one generally blames the one in whose name the offence was committed. But I am controlled by the brahmins who [may] express themselves with criticism. The Supreme Lord said: 'These two will soon elsewhere take birth from a godless womb. With their focus of

mind intensified by anger, they will remain firmly united with Me and before long return to My presence. Know that your curse was ordained by Me alone, oh learned ones.'

Lord Brahma said: They circumambulated the Supreme Lord, offered their respects and returned elated, full of praise in having learned about the glory of the Vaishnavas [the attendants of Lord Vishnu]. The Supreme Lord then said to His two servants: 'Leave this place, let there be no fear, but live in solidarity. Even though I am capable of nullifying a Brahmin's curse, I do not wish to do so, on the contrary, it has even My approval. This departure has been foreseen by Lakshmi Devi who was angry with you when you once prevented her from entering the gate while I was resting. As My enemy being unified in consciousness, you will find liberation from the consequence of not respecting the Brahmins and after only a short while return to Me.' Thus having addressed the two doorkeepers, the Supreme Lord returned to His abode decorated with rows of palaces and full of the wealth [of the servitude] of the goddess Lakshmi Devi. But that did not apply to the two excellent demigods who, because of the curse of the brahmins, inevitably had to miss the beauty and lustre of Vaikuntha and fell into the gloom. These two prominent associates of the Lord have now acquired access to the womb of Diti by the very powerful seed of Kashyapa Muni.

Lord Vishnu gave Jaya and Vijaya two options. The first option is to take seven lengthy births on earth as devotees of Lord Vishnu, while the second option was to take three births as His staunch enemies. After serving either of these sentences, they can regain their stature at Vaikuntha-loka and be with Him permanently. Jaya and Vijaya could not bear the thought of staying away from Lord Vishnu for seven lifetimes. As His enemies, they had to incarnate on earth three times so the Lord Vishnu could vanquish them. Thus, they would meet Lord Vishnu in each of their births. As a result, they chose to be born three times on earth, even though it would have to be as enemies of Vishnu.



Murthi's of Jaya-Vijaya stands prominently in the temple of Venkateshwara in Tirumala, the temple of Jagannath in Puri, and the temple of Ranganatha in Srirangam.

In their first incarnation on Earth during Satya Yuga, they were born as Hiranyaksha (Vijaya) and Hiranyakashipu (Jaya) to Diti (daughter of Daksha Prajapati) and sage Kashyapa (after whom Kashmir is named after - Kash {Kashyap Muni} and Mir {land}). Hiranyaksha was killed by Varaha (boar avatar) and Hiranyakashipu was killed by Narasimha (man-lion avatar).

<https://www.srimadbhagavatam.org/canto3/chapter18.html>

Chapter 18: The Battle Between Lord Boar and the Demon Hiranyâksha

<https://www.srimadbhagavatam.org/canto3/chapter19.html>

Chapter 19: The Killing of the Demon Hiranyâksha

Due to space in this article, we have included the links above to read more.



Hiranyaksha was killed by Lord Varahadeva

<https://www.srimadbhagavatam.org/canto7/c7-contents.html>

Chapters two to ten depict in detail the Kathas of the demon Hiranyakashipu, Prahlada Maharaja and Lord Narasimhadeva.

(Chapter 2 - Hiranyakashipu, the King of the Demons, Chapter 3 - on Bereavement, Hiranyakashipu's Plan to Become Immortal, Chapter 4 - Hiranyakashipu Terrorizes the Universe, Chapter 5 - Prahlâda Mahârâja the Saintly Son of Hiranyakashipu, Chapter 6 - Prahlâda Instructs His Asura Schoolmates, Chapter 7 - What Prahlâda Learned in the Womb, Chapter 8 - Lord Nrisimhadeva Slays the King of the Demons, Chapter 9 - Prahlâda Propitiates Lord Nrisimhadeva with Prayers, Chapter 10 -About Prahlâda, the Best Among the Exalted Devotees and the fall of Tripura)

Due to space in the article we have included the link above to read more.



Hiranyakashipu was killed by Lord Narasimha-deva

In their second incarnation during the Treta Yuga, they were born as Ravana (Jaya) and Kumbhakarna (Vijaya), and both were killed by Lord Raam.

<https://www.srimadbhagavatam.org/canto9/chapter10.html>

Chapter 10: The Pastimes of Lord Râmacandra

<https://www.srimadbhagavatam.org/canto9/chapter11.html>

Chapter 11: Lord Râmacandra Rules the World

<https://www.srimadbhagavatam.org/canto9/chapter12.html>

Chapter 12: The Dynasty of Kusha, the Son of Lord Râmacandra

Due to space in the article we have included the links above to read more.

<https://www.valmikiramayana.net/>

Book Five - Sundara Kanda mentions in detail regarding Ravan and Lord Raam.

For further reading do click on the Valmiki Ramayan link above

Due to space in the article we have included the link above to read more.



Kumbhakarna was killed by Lord Raam



Ravana was killed by Lord Raam

In their third life during Dvapara Yuga, they were born as Shishupala (Jaya) and Dantavakra (Vijaya) and both were killed by Lord Krishna.

<https://www.srimadbhagavatam.org/canto10/chapter78.html>

Chapter 78: Dantavakra Killed and Romaharshana Slain with a Blade of Grass

Dantavakra was the king of Karusha. He is named "Dantavakra" as his teeth were crooked after his birth. In the Mahabharata 2:30, he is mentioned as the king of the Adhirajas. After the Pandava general Sahadeva defeated him, making him pay tribute, he is reinstated on his throne. He attacks Lord Krishna, who is on His way to Dwaraka, after the Rajasuya sacrifice (which Dantavakra had not attended, to protest the killing of Jarasandha) to avenge Shishupala, and his friend Shalva. After announcing his intentions, he strikes his cousin on the head with his mace. Unfazed, Lord Krishna strikes his chest with the Kaumodaki, causing him to spit out blood and perish in the mace-duel.



Dantavakra was killed by Lord Krishna

Shishupala: The Mahabharata mentions that Shishupala was born with three eyes and four arms and was almost as handsome as like Lord Krishna. Suddenly a voice came out of the heaven Voice (*ākāśavāṇī*), This child's extra arms and extra eyes shall vanish when a certain person puts the child on his lap. He will die by the hands of that same person. Coming to visit his cousin, Lord Krishna placed the child on His lap and the extra eye and arms disappeared, thus indicating Shishupala's death was destined at the hands of Lord Krishna. Shishupala's mother Shrutsarva persuaded her nephew, Krishna, that He should pardon His cousin Shishupala for a hundred offences. At a later event, due to Sahadeva's opinion the Pandavas decided that Lord Krishna would be the special honoured guest of the sacrificial ceremony. This angered Shishupala and he started insulting his cousin Krishna, calling Him a mere cowherd and worthless to be honoured as a king. He also started insulting Bhishma, calling his vow to remain a celibate throughout life as an act of cowardice. Bhishma became furious and threatened Shishupala, but Lord Krishna calmed him down. Through this act, he committed his 100th sin and was pardoned by Lord Krishna. When he insulted Lord Krishna again, after committing his 101st abuse Lord Krishna stopped him, but the swords of Krishna's and Shishupala's supporters came out of their sheaths in the Raja Sabha and the war started, In the war, Shishupala massacred the Narayani guards of Lord Krishna. Then Lord Krishna used His Sudarshana Chakra (divine disk) on Shishupala and killed him. Then Shishupala soul merged into Lord Krishna. His liberation was determined by Lord Krishna after which his divine soul assumed the form of the Vaikuntha gatekeeper Jaya with four hands, three eyes, shankha (conch) and chakra (disk).



### Shishupala was killed by Lord Krishna

In their first two births they were brothers, and in their final birth, they were cousins. It has been noted that the strengths of Jaya and Vijaya gradually declined with each subsequent birth due to the yuga effect. In their first birth, they are born as asuras who captured and ruled the earth individually. In their second birth, they are born as rakshasas ruling merely a region on earth. In the third birth, they are born as humans in Lord Krishna's extended family itself. Moreover, Lord Vishnu incarnated as two avatars to kill Hiranyaksha (Lord Varaha) and Hiranyakashipu (Lord Narasimhadeva) in the Satya Yuga. Born as Lord Ramachandra in the Treta Yuga, He was able to vanquish both Ravana and Kumbhakarna. In the Krishna avatar during the Dvapara Yuga, the killing of Dantavakra and Shishupala are not even the purpose of the avatar, but rather they are slain to reduce the "bhuhara" the burden on Bhumi (Mother Earth) due to too many sinners and non-truthful people.

Now that the three births of Jaya and Vijaya have been discussed we can now proceed with this article.

### The birth of Ravana and his siblings

From the Valmiki Ramayana Uttara kanda, Chapter two...

"In Treta Yuga, that Rakshasa named Sumali (or Sumalaya) and his wife Tataka, emerged from the nether regions to range the world of men. With his earrings of pure gold, he, like unto a dark cloud, took with him a young girl who resembled Sri (Lakshmi devi) without her lotus, and as that Rakshasa wandered about on the earth, he beheld the Lord of Wealth (Kubera), who in his chariot (vimana - Vedic air-plane) Pushpaka (flower) was going to visit his sire. Beholding that son of Poulastya/Pulastya Muni (was one of the ten Prajapatis, or manasa putras (mind-born) sons of Lord Brahma, and one of the Saptarishi (Seven Great Sages{Rishi}) in the first Manvantara (age of Manu), that lord who was as radiant as a deva, advancing towards him like unto fire." Thereafter, that exceedingly intelligent Rakshasa, reflected 'Which is the best way of increasing our power?' Thus did the foremost of the Rakshasas, who was like unto a dark cloud and was wearing golden earrings, reflect within himself and, having considered awhile, that extremely sagacious Rakshasa said to his daughter Kaikasi, for such was her name, my daughter, it is time for thee to wed. Thy youth is slipping away and, afraid of being refused, those who are in love with thee do not pay their suit. Striving to fulfil our duty, we seek only thine advantage. Assuredly, thou art endowed with every good attribute and resemblest Sri (Lakshmi devi) in person, O Dear Child! A young daughter is a source

of anxiety to her father who is concerned for her honour, nor does he know whom she will wed. O Beloved Child, the mother's family, the father's family and the one into which she is received are all three involved in this anxiety. Do thou, therefore, seek out that blessed ascetic, the foremost of Poulastya's/Pulastya's offspring and choose Vishravas, the descendant of Poulastya/Pulastya, O My Daughter. Assuredly thou wilt beget sons equal to that Lord of Wealth (Kubera) who, in his splendour, rivals the sun.'

At these words, in filial obedience, that young girl went to seek out Vishravas where he was undergoing penance. At that time, O Ramachandra, that Twice-Born, the issue of Poulastya/Pulastya was engaged in the Fire Sacrifice and himself appeared like unto a fourth fire. Heedless of the late hour and, in obedience to her sire, she presented herself before the ascetic and, halting there with her eyes cast down, fixed on her feet, she scratched the earth from time to time with her toe. Beholding that lovely girl whose face resembled the full moon and who shone in her own radiance, that Muni (ascetic) of exalted lineage, enquired of her saying: O Fortunate One, whose daughter art thou? From whence dost thou come and for what reason or with what motive? Answer me truthfully, O Beautiful One!' Thus questioned, that young girl with joined palms answered: 'By thine own powers, O Muni, thou must be conversant with mine intentions! Learn only, O Brahmarishi, that it is by the command of my sire that I have come, and Kaikasi is my name. You must know the rest.'

Thereafter the Muni, reflecting awhile, uttered these words: 'I know well, O Fortunate One, what brings thee here. Thou art desirous of having sons by me, thou whose gait is like unto an intoxicated elephant! But, having presented thyself at this hour (at dusk, interrupting the evening devotion, which is inauspicious), hear me, O Fortunate One. Thou shalt bring forth offspring of a dark aspect delighting in the companionship of doers of evil deeds. O Lady of lovely form, thou shalt beget Rakshasas of cruel exploits.' At these words, Kaikasi prostrated herself, saying: 'O Blessed One who recites the Veda, I do not desire such sons, whose nature is depraved, from thee. Be gracious unto me!' Thus brought by that youthful maiden, Vishravas, foremost among Munis, like unto the moon in the presence of Rohini, added: 'O Lady of a lovely face, the son thou shalt bring forth last will be like unto me, assuredly he will be virtuous.' Thus did he speak to that young girl, O Ramachandra, and after some time she gave birth to a hideous child with the face of a demon, exceedingly dark; and he had ten necks and great teeth and resembled a heap of collyrium (kaajal). His lips were of the hue of copper, he had twenty arms and a vast mouth and his hair was fiery red. At his birth in Lanka, jackals and other wild beasts with flaming jaws circled from left to right. The deva Parjanya let loose a rain of blood whilst clouds emitted harsh sounds. The sun ceased to shine. Fierce winds blew and the unchanging ocean, Lord of the Rivers, was agitated. His father, who resembled the Grandsire of the World, thereupon conferred a name upon him and said: 'This child with ten necks shall be called Dashagriva.' (Ten-necked or ten-headed. Ravana's name at birth was Dashagriva).

After Ravana, the mighty Kumbhakarna was born, that giant who was unequalled on earth. Thereafter was born a daughter of hideous aspect, named Surpanakha. Kaikasi's last child was named Vibhishana. When this great being was born, a rain of flowers fell and in the heavens, celestial gongs resounded whilst an aerial voice cried: 'Excellent! Excellent!' Thereafter, Kumbhakarna and Dashagriva (Ravana) thrived in that vast forest and each was exceedingly powerful and they were the scourge of the worlds. The insensate Kumbhakarna ranged the three worlds devouring the great Rishis who were fixed in their duty, and yet he remained unsatisfied. As for the virtuous Vibhishana, ever vowed to righteousness, the study of the Veda being his chief nourishment, he lived as the subduer of the senses.



After a time Vaishravana (Kubera), the Lord of Wealth, went to visit his sire in his flower chariot Pushpaka and seeing him flaming with effulgence, the Rakshasi sought out Dashagriva and said to him: 'My son, behold Vaishravana, thy brother, blazing with glory and behold thy state, who art of the same family, O Dashagriva. Thou who art of immeasurable might, strive to be like Vaishravana himself.' Hearing his mother's words, the arrogant Dashagriva experienced a wave of overpowering bitterness, whereupon he formulated this vow: 'I swear to thee in truth that I shall become my brother's equal if not his superior in power. Banish any fear that may have entered thine heart!' Thereafter, in his spleen, Dashagriva, accompanied by his younger brother Kumbhakarana, began to undertake an exceedingly difficult task, undergoing a rigid penance. He thought: 'I shall accomplish mine end by asceticism.' Having thus resolved, he went to the lovely hermitage of Gokarna to purify his soul. There that Rakshasa with his younger brother Kumbhakarana, performed unsurpassed austerities. Such was his mortifications that he gratified the Lord, the Grandsire of the World (Lord Brahma), who, in his satisfaction, granted him those boons that would assure him a victory.

## Ravana's family

Ravana's parents were the sage Vishrava (son of Pulastya Muni) and Kaikesi (daughter of Sumali and Tataka or Ketumati). Ravana had ten maternal uncles and three maternal aunts. Dhumraksha, Prahastha, Akampana, Maricha, and Subahu, a few of his maternal uncles, were generals in the Lankan army. Kaikesi's father, Sumali, was instrumental in making Ravana the king of Lanka by advising him to receive boons from Lord Brahma, defeat Kubera, and establish rakshasa rule in the three worlds. Ravana's grand uncle was Malyavan, who opposed the war with Lord Ramachandra and Shree Lakshmana. He also had another grand uncle named Mali who was killed by Lord Vishnu. Ravana had seven brothers and two sisters, named Kubera, Kumbhakarna, Vibhishana, Khara, Dushana, Ahiravan, Kumbhini, Sahastra Ravana, and his famous shape-shifter sister called Shurpanakha. Ravana had three wives, Mandodari, the daughter of the celestial architect Maya, Dhanyamalini, and a third wife (her name isn't mentioned anywhere). His sons from his three wives were Meghanada, Atikaya, Akshayakumara, Narantaka, Devantaka, Trishira, and Prahasta.

Ravana had seven sons from his wives.

1. Mandodari, the daughter of the celestial architect Maya and divine Apsara Hema.
2. Dhanyamalini.

Ravana had seven sons.

1. Indrajit was the eldest son of Ravana and his wife Mandodari, the daughter of the celestial architect Maya and apsara Hema. He was killed by Shree Lakshman during a war.
2. Atikaya was the son of Ravana and his wife Dhanyamalini. He was killed by Lakshmana during a war.
3. Aksayakumar was the youngest son of Ravana and his wife Mandodari. He was killed by Shree Hanuman during a war.
4. Narantaka was the son of Ravana and his wife Dhanyamalini. He was killed by Angada during a war.
5. Devantaka was the son of Ravana and his wife Dhanyamalini. He was killed by God Hanumana during a war.
6. Trishira was the son of Ravana and his wife Dhanyamalini. He was killed by God Rama during a war.
7. Prahastha was the son of Ravana and his wife Dhanyamalini. He was killed by Lakshmana during a war.

Prahasta was killed by Neela according to Valmiki Ramayan

## Ravana and Mandodari's marriage

Mayasura who was the son of sage Kashyapa, married a beautiful apsara (is an exceptionally beautiful celestial singer and dancer) named Hema. Soon after they were blessed with two sons who was named Mayavi and Dundhubi. But they were not satisfied and instead pined for a daughter. To obtain a daughter, they soon started performing penances to appease the Celestials. Meanwhile at Mount Kailasha, an apsara name Madhura arrives to see Lord Shiva. At that time goddess Parvati, the wife of Shiva was away. It is while that the goddess was away that Madhura gets deeply attracted to Lord Shiva. A coincidence that Parvati returns to see Madhura setting her eyes on her husband. The goddess got deeply angered and cursed Madhura that she will lose all her maiden beauty that she uses as a tool, and she will lose this beauty which makes her think of herself as capable of deserving and seducing the Celestials. Goddess Parvati's curse turns Madhura into a frog. Parvati throws the frog into a well. Lord Shiva understands everything and goes to console Madhura. He informs her that, after spending 12 years in the well, she shall become normal and gain back her beauty and also a valorous, victorious and excellent man. 12 years pass by and the frog becomes Madhura again. She is much more beautiful. but she is still stuck inside the well. She cries for help and her high pitched cries are heard by Mayasura and Hema who were doing penance nearby, they soon spot her inside the well. They soon thought that the Celestials have granted them their wish and provided them a beautiful daughter like her. They become pleased and name her Mandodari.

Fast forward...

Ravana visits Mayasura and spots his beautiful daughter and falls in love with her. He marries Mandodari according to the Vedic rituals. Mandodari was extremely righteous, very beautiful, kind and gentle. There is not much appraisal of Mandodari in Ramayana because of the presence of Sita devi. Goddess Lakshmi (Sita) cannot be compared to a mere woman like Mandodari. Sita devi was much more than Mandodari in beauty, righteousness, duties and so forth.

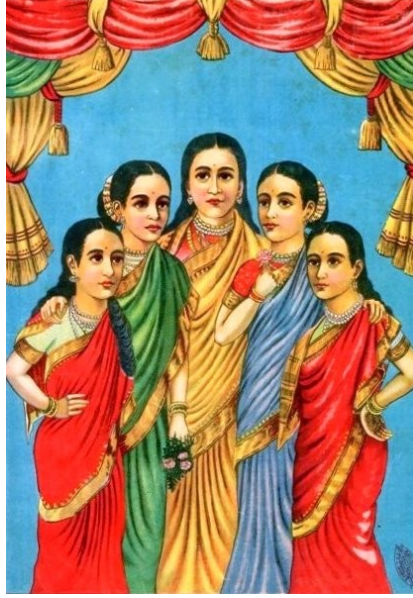
Shree Hanuman, while searching for Sita Devi in Lanka spotted Mandodari sleeping beside Ravana in his grand palace chambers and thought that she was Sita Devi. But he had heard from Lord Rama about Sita devi and couldn't think of a righteous and loyal woman, like her sleeping beside Ravana. Sita (Lakshmi) could very well give up her life rather than choose to sacrifice her loyalty to Lord Rama (Narayana). Mandodari was one of the \*\* Panchakanyas (view next page) who tried to show her husband Ravana the correct path but he didn't listen to her and thus was perished. She is described by Hanuman to have rescued Sita Devi from Ravana in the same way Dhanyamalini did. Mandodari was the chief queen of Lanka. She was respected by all because she was kind and virtuous and not like Ravana.

Mandodari was renowned as she was famous for her elegance and beauty. She was very intelligent. Being a righteous woman, Mandodari had attempted to stop Ravana from raping Vedavati (another form of Lakshmi) but to no avail. She had tried to convince him several times to return Sita devi to Lord Rama as she was His wife but still Ravana refused to listen to her. Ravana once tried to convince Sita to marry him but she refused and he attempted to behead her but it was Mandodari who held him and stopped him.

She is also mentioned when Ravana perishes. She laments and speaks about her husband's victories and his downfall. She was Ravana's favourite wife by far. After the defeat of Ravana, Mandodari was left alone. Lord Rama knew that she was an extremely righteous lady and did not deserve all the sorrow so he told Vibhishana (Ravana's younger brother) to marry her and give her all the respect that she deserved. Vibhishana did so. Lord Rama knew that the next thing Mandodari would do after the death of Ravana would be to end her life but she did not deserve it. So the Lord straight

away told Vibhishana to do what I mentioned above. Nevertheless, she was a righteous woman and that is the most important trait that made her place in Ramayana.

\*\* The Panchakanya (Sanskrit: 'Five maidens') is a group of five iconic women of the Vedic shastras, extolled in a hymn (provided below) and whose names dispel sins when recited. They are Ahalya, Draupadi, Kunti, Tara, and Mandodari. While Draupadi and Kunti are from the Mahabharata, Ahalya, Tara, and Mandodari are from the Ramayana. The Panchakanya are regarded to be ideal women who exemplify perfect wives in Sanatan Dharma.



The Panchakanya devi's (Five maidens)

Sanskrit transliteration

ahalyā draupadī sītā tārā mandodarī tathā |  
pañcakanyāḥ smarennityaṃ mahāpātakanāśiniḥ ||

English translation

Ahalya, Draupadi, Sita, Tara, and Mandodari. One should forever remember the panchakanya who are the destroyers of great sins.

Ravana is widely portrayed as being an evil character, though he was also a learned scholar. He was well-versed in the six shastras and the four Vedas. The word Rāvaṇa (Sanskrit: रावण) means "roaring" (active), the opposite of Vaiśravaṇa which means to "hear distinctly" (passive). Both Ravana and Vaiśravaṇa, who are commonly known as Kubera, are considered to be patronymics derived from "sons of Vishrava". Ravana was a title later taken on by Dashānana, and it means "the one with ten (dasha) faces (anana)". Further, roravana is Sanskrit for "loud roaring."

### The boon Ravana received from Lord Brahma

Ravana and his two brothers, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana, performed penance on Mount Gokarna for 11,000 years and obtained boons from Lord Brahma. Ravana was blessed with a boon that would make him invincible to all the creations of Lord Brahma, except for humans. He also received weapons, a chariot, as well as the ability to shape-shift from Lord Brahma. According to the Ramayana, the Devas approached Lord Brahma since Ravana was causing harm on Earth. Lord Vishnu appeared and bestowed blessings that he will incarnate as a human (Lord Ramachandra) and kill Ravana since His invincibility boon did not include humans.

Ravana is often depicted and described as having ten heads, although he is sometimes shown with only nine heads since he cut one off to appease Lord Shiva. He is described as a great scholar, a capable ruler, and a maestro of the musical instrument Veena. Ravana is also depicted as the author of the Ravana Samhita, a book on Hindu astrology, and the Arka Prakasham, a book on Siddha medicine and treatment. Ravana possessed a thorough knowledge of Siddha and political science. He is said to have possessed the nectar of immortality, which was stored inside his belly thanks to a celestial boon from Lord Brahma.

One of the most popular images of Lord Shiva is called "Ravananugraha", which was popular in the Gupta era. It depicts Ravana beneath Mount Kailash playing a musical instrument veena made out of his head and hands, and strings made out of his tendons, while Lord Shiva and Parvati devi sit on top of the mountain. According to the puranas, Ravana once tried to lift Mount Kailash, but Lord Shiva pushed the mountain into place and trapped Ravana beneath it. For a thousand years, the imprisoned Ravana sang Shiva Tandava Stotra, a hymn in praise of Lord Shiva, who finally blessed him and granted him an invincible sword and a powerful linga to worship.

Priestly ministers: In some accounts, Ravana is said to have had Shukracharya (the Venus planet), the priest of the Asuras (demons), as his minister, and in other accounts, Brihaspati (the Jupiter planet), the priest of the Devas. One account narrates how Ravana ordered Brihaspati to recite the Chandi paath (mantras of Chandi), more specifically the Devi Mahatmya {aka Durga Saptashati}, in order to stave off defeat. According to the Krttivasa text, Ravana arranged for a peaceful yajna, and invited Brihaspati to start the recitation of the Chandi paath.

Once, upon hearing a discourse from Sage Sanatkumara (of the four kumaras), Ravana attempted to invade Vaikuntha. Only Ravana managed to enter Vaikuntha's capital, Shwetadwipa, where he was hopelessly outmatched by the inhabitants and was forced to retreat. He killed Anaranya, the king of Ayodhya, although he cursed Ravana to be slain by Lord Raam. Ravana had wrestled his younger brother Kubera for the Pushpaka Vimana (the flower airplane) and won.

Ravana is worshipped as one of Lord Shiva's most revered followers, and he is even worshipped in some Lord Shiva temples.

Ravana worship: Ravana is worshipped by the Kanyakubja Brahmins of the Vidisha (Madhya Pradesh, India) region, who see him as a savior and a sign of prosperity, claiming Ravana was also a Kanyakubja Brahmin (are an endogamous Brahmin community mainly found in northern India). Thousands of Kanyakubja Brahmins of the village Ravangram of Netaran, in the Vidisha District of Madhya Pradesh, perform daily puja in the Ravana temple and offer naivedyam or bhog (a ritual of sacrifice to the Celestials). King Shiv Shankar built a Ravana temple in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh. The Ravana temple is open once a year, on the day of Dussehra/Vijayadashami (the 10th vedic day in the month of Ashwina (mid October - mid November), to perform puja for the welfare of Ravana.

The following temples in India are for Ravana as a Shiva Bhakta (devotee).

- Dashanan Temple, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh
- Ravana Temple, Bisrakh, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh
- Kakinada Ravana Temple, Andhra Pradesh
- Ravangram Ravana Temple, Vidisha, Madhya Pradesh
- Mandasaur, Madhya Pradesh
- Mandore Ravan Temple, Jodhpur
- Baijanath Temple, Kangra District, Himachal Pradesh

### Ravana-Dahan (burning effigy of Ravana)

Effigies of Ravana are burned on Vijayadashami (the 10th Vedic day in the month of Ashwina (mid-October - mid-November) in many places throughout India and places on Earth where Hindus reside to symbolize Lord Ramachandra's triumph over evil (Ravana).



Ravana Dahan

### Was Ravan the best brother ever?

Well, some think he is. He is a brother every sister should want to have. When his sister Shurpanakha came running to him with her nose cut off (by Lord Lakshman), Ravana went and sought revenge to avenge his sisters' indignation. Even though she was wrong he still went to sort out the perpetrator and this proves he loved his family.

### King Ravana visits the great Bali Maharaja for assistance to defeat Lord Ramachandra.

During the fight for Lanka, Ravana was feeling that he wasn't going to win. So he went down to the lower planetary systems to the planet called Sutala (three planets below planet Earth), where his ancestor Bali Maharaja has his abode. Ravana was thinking, "I'm not winning this battle against Rama, so let me get the help of Bali Maharaja, the King of the demons." So he went way down to Sutala Loka where Bali Maharaja resides, and he tried to enter. But when he tried to enter, there was a guard who kept stopping him. Every time he tried to get in, the guard would stop him. Ravana had many mystic powers, so in many ways he was trying to use his mystic powers to get in. So finally at the last moment, he entered. He went to visit Bali Maharaja. Bali Maharaja said, "What are you doing here?" Ravana replied, "There's a difficult fight up on planet Earth. I'm fighting this ordinary human being named Rama." Bali Maharaja said, "But you're a great rakshasa. How could you have trouble fighting an ordinary human being?" Ravana replied, "I don't know, but this person is displaying so many mystic powers, He has a huge army of monkeys and bears, so I'm having much difficulty." Bali Maharaja said, "You fool, that's Lord Ramachandra! He's the Supreme Personality of Godhead, He's not an ordinary man."

Ravana said, "What are you talking about? He's just an ordinary mortal. He's just a foolish person. All I need is a little help from you and I can defeat Him." And as much as Bali Maharaja tried to preach to him, he couldn't understand the glories of Lord Ramachandra. Bali Maharaja said, "You'd better give up the fight now, because if you don't, you're going to lose everything. My advice to you is that you give Sita devi back to Lord Ramachandra and stop the fight to save your life and your family and everything else." But even with so much preaching, still Ravana couldn't accept. So in order to try and impress upon him the greatness of the Lord, Bali Maharaja said, "Come take a walk with me." So they walked outside of the kingdom, and they saw a huge mountain. And the mountain was made of boulders of diamonds. "Look at this," Bali Maharaja said. "I'm going to give this to you. But I will only give it to you if you can lift it first." So Ravana was trying, but he could just barely get it off the ground. Ravana was very powerful, but he couldn't lift this mountain of diamonds. So Bali Maharaja said, "Now step back a bit

and take a better look at it. What does it look like?" So Ravana said, "It looks something like an earring, and earring studded with many beautiful diamonds." So Bali said, "Yes, that's right. This is the earring of our ancestor Hiranyakashipu. During the fight between Hiranyakashipu and Lord Nrsimhadeva, this earring fell down here. In your previous birth you were Hiranyakashipu, and the Lord killed you. You were much more powerful than you are now. You can't even pick up this earring that you used to wear. Now Lord Vishnu has come again, and He will surely kill you." But even after that example, Ravana couldn't understand. He left, he returned to the fight and was defeated.

**MORAL:** No matter how much the demons hear the glory of the Supreme Lord, they will never understand.

### **Ravana, Narada Muni, Shanideva and Shree Hanumanji Katha**

There is a popular belief that worshipping Shree Hanuman will assist in removing the hardships caused by Shani Bhagavan or the planet Saturn. Hindu's worship Shree Hanuman on Saturdays to remove the malefic influence of Shani in their Kundali (horoscope). As per Vedic Astrology, bad positioning of Shani in one's birth chart results in a difficult period in one's life. What follows is an interesting katha regarding why worshipping Shree Hanuman will help in overcoming Shani Dosha (weak/debilitated) or Sade Sati (is the seven-and-a-half-year period, during which Saturn passes through three signs—the moon sign, one before the Moon, and the one after it).

Ravana, had defeated all the Devas and had brought all the Navagrahas (Nine planets in Vedic astrology) under control. He kept all the grahas (planets) suppressed beneath his leg. Ravana was also a great astrologer. When his eldest son, Indrajit, was about to be born he forcefully kept all the grahas in the most favourable astrological position (in the 11<sup>th</sup> house in the Janma Kundali - birth chart). The Devas were very concerned that if Ravana's son was born in a favourable astrological position, he will be invincible in the future. So the Devas asked all the grahas (planets) to move from the favourable position in the 11<sup>th</sup> bhava (house). But they told they were unable to escape from the foot of Ravana. Shanideva agreed to assist and he was able to glance upon Ravana's face. The Shani Drishti, or Shani's glance, is as deadly as his position in ones birth chart. Shanideva can cast his deadly glance and this can ruin anyone. Do ask Lord Ganesh how he lost his head? Spoiler alert... At the insistent behest of Mother Parvati, Shanideva half looked at Lord Ganesh and his head was turned into ashes. The Devas accepted the assistance of Narada Muni to achieve Shani's Drishti. Narada Muni reached the palace of Ravana and saw Shanideva and other planets under the feet of Ravana. Narada Muni praised Ravana's victory over the grahas (planets) and said that he should stamp on their chest and this is true symbol of victory and not on their back as he is doing now. Ravana agreed to Narada's observation and immediately got the planets turned up. As Shani turned up, his glance fell on Ravana's face and this kick-started his hardships. To take revenge on Shanideva, Ravana kept him in a tiny prison that had no opening so that no one will again see Shanideva's face.

After several years, when Shree Hanuman arrived in Lanka - Ravana's kingdom - as a messenger from Lord Ramachandra to Sita Devi, he heard the cries of Shanideva from a dark prison with no holes. Hanuman broke open the prison and rescued Shanideva. Shanideva said that he is very thankful for helping him but as he has looked at the face of Shree Hanuman there will be hardships of Sade Sati or Shani Dosha for Shree Hanuman. It is the divine scheme of things and no one can escape from it. Shree Hanuman wanted to know what suffering he will have to face. Shanideva explained that first I will come upon your head and this will make you leave your home, wife and sons and go about suffering. Shree Hanuman said that Shanideva can come upon his head as

he has no family and his abode is at the feet of Lord Ramachandra. Shanideva took refuge on Shree Hanuman's head. Shree Hanuman then began to fight the demons that chased him in Lanka. In the process, Shree Hanuman began to head heavy boulders, trees and rocks. He crushed huge rocks with his head and Shani was getting hurt and suffering in the process. Finally, Shanideva got away from Shree Hanuman's head and said you are the only one who will not affect my inauspiciousness. I won't trouble you any further. Since you have saved me from Ravana's prison I would like to give you a boon. Shree Hanuman asked Shanideva not to trouble or cast evil eyes on his devotees. Shani promised not to trouble or cause hardships to Shree Hanuman devotees. From that day people started worshipping Shree Hanuman to escape from Shani.

### **How did Ravana get his 10 heads and do these 10 heads signify anything?**

When Ravana had once performed a 'Homa' (sacrifice) to please Lord Shiva in the want of ultimate powers, he had beheaded himself to satisfy Lord Shiva but surprisingly his head was back in place again. This got repeated ten times that Lord Shiva was so impressed and granted him ten heads and twenty arms, which come whenever he wishes for. Hence Raavan was also called Dasamukha (10-faced) or Dasakantha (10-throated) or Dasagriva (10-headed). The significance of Ravan's 10 heads according to the 'Shastras' and 'Vedas' symbolize 10 different qualities of the 'evil' learned king of Lanka. The analysts interpret his ten heads as the emotional states Ravana had gotten. They are kaam (lust), Krodh (wrath), Lobh (greed), Moh (obsession), Mada (vanity), Maatsarya (Envy), Ahankaara (Ego), Chitta (will), Manas (Heart), Buddhi (Mind or Intellect). They are interpreted to convey that holding a balanced attitude on all these characters makes a great personality.

### **Was Ravana a great devotee of Lord Shiva?**

Yes, he was a devotee (in terms of dedication but not selflessness). Yes, he offered his head to Lord Shiva and played music with his veins, all these things require guts but he did that only for material gains. There were some positive aspects of Ravana's personality like his knowledge of scripture, science, astronomy, and music, his great devotion to Lord Shiva and his bravery which bought even devas to surprise. But before we derive why Lord Shiva didn't help Ravana when he needed it the most we must mention the katha of Jalandhara, the ansh (part) of Lord Shiva. Jalandhara (he who holds water) was an asura/demon in the Mahabharata. He was born when Lord Shiva opened his third eye in his fury when Indradeva struck him with his thunderbolt. However, Indradeva was saved, and the energy emitted from the eye was sent into the ocean. The energy developed into a boy and was raised by Varuna, and eventually, by Shukracharya. When he grew up, he conquered the three realms - Svarga (heaven), Bhuloka (earth), and Patala (underworld).

Jalandhara defeated the devas and they were not happy about their defeat, dejected at their being stripped of their authority. Then Narada Muni, upon consulting with the devas, went to see Jalandhara. On being asked the purpose of his visit by Jalandhara, he described the beauty of Kailasha where Lord Shiva lived, and that he wondered if any other place matched its beauty. In response, Jalandhara showed off his riches to Narada, who commented that he did not have the most beautiful woman as his wife. Narada then continued to describe Lord Shiva's residence and also described to him about Parvati devi's exceptional beauty. Jalandhara sent his messenger Rahu to Lord Shiva and accused him of hypocrisy, pointing out that Lord Shiva claimed to be an ascetic but kept a wife, Parvati devi. He proposed that Lord Shiva hand over Parvati devi to him. Upon hearing these insults, Lord Shiva became so angry. War being determined, Jalandhara marched first to Kailasha; but finding that Lord Shiva had forsaken it and

taken up a position on a mountain near Lake Manasa, he surrounded the mountain with his troops. Nandi bull marched against them, and spread destruction; however, the army of the Celestials suffered many losses. Parvati devi then urged her husband to enter the war.

Fast Forward...

Jalandhara, hearing of the deception and his wife's death, was enraged and left Mount Kailasha, returning to the battlefield. The illusion ending, Lord Shiva and his forces realised the truth. Lord Shiva engaged Sumbha and Nisumbha in battle, but they soon fled. They were later killed by Parvati (Durga devi). Jalandhara then engaged Lord Shiva in battle. Towards the end of the battle, when most of Jalandhara's army had been slaughtered, Lord Shiva beheaded Jalandhara with a chakra (discus) created from his toe. Upon his death, his soul merged with Lord Shiva.

So if Lord Shiva didn't spare his own part when he disrespected a woman (though she was all capable - Aadi Parashakti herself), how can you expect him to take side of Ravana who kidnapped Sita devi.

It is mentioned in the Shiva Purana that Lord Shiva's mercy falls upon these three the most

1. Women (when she is sattvic {pure} by nature and actions),
2. Animals (unconditional),
3. Brahmin (not by birth but by action, the one who spend his life according to Vedas).

The day Ravana stopped following the principles of Lord Shiva, he lost the support of Lord Shiva. Ravana on the other hand forgot Lord Shiva and engaged in waging wars and pursuing his lusty desires. So, why would Lord Shiva save someone who crossed basic principles of morality causing harm to the dignity of a woman? This is the reason Lord Shiva didn't help him. On the other hand, Lord Shiva never fails to protect his devotees who follow the path of Dharma.

### What language did Ravana speak?

Vanaras (a of race forest-dwellers) are a race of intelligent, simian humanoids who dwell in the jungles and forests in ancient India. Vanaran is the language of the forest-dwelling, simian humanoids known as vanara. But more about this language doesn't seem to be available. Do note that although we say that Vanaras are ape-like beings they aren't like the gorillas, apes and monkeys we find in the wild today. Ravana was famously known to be an expert in Vedic pujas and chanting of mantras which were in Sanskrit. So he knew Sanskrit for sure. The Vanaras as well knew Sanskrit. When Lord Ramachandra and Shree Hanumanji spoke they spoke a very high level of Sanskrit. Ravana is implied to speak in a language the vanaras did not use.

Lanka, of which Ravana was the ruler was occupied by Dravidians (those they reside in the South part of ancient India) entirely. But Sanskrit, the language the Ramayana was written in is an Aryan language. Considering the enmity between Aryans and Dravidians just a while back, it is unlikely that Dravidians would speak Sanskrit. Right? But Valmiki Rishi differed. The people during the Ramayan era primarily spoke Sanskrit. The grades of the language differed among the different classes of people. Therefore the educated royalty would speak a more formal and grammatically-correct language whereas the masses spoke a less formal version. In Valmiki's Ramayana - Sundara Kanda, Sarga 16, Sloka 17 & 18 it is mentioned that Shree Hanuman debates over which language to use when chatting to Sita devi, Mansha Sanskritam (the grammatical error-free language of the twice-born) or the Vanara language when they meet for the first time. This is justified by Valmiki by saying that she might have mistaken him for Ravana and screamed thereby alerting the guards if he used the former, a non-simian language of class and elegance. What this means, therefore, is that it is assumed that because



Ravana was extremely educated and wise about the universe, he spoke the language of royalty (i.e.- Mansha Sanskritam, which roughly translates to Human Sanskrit). And not a Dravidian language. Although he lived in Lanka, the heart of Dravidian culture.

### Why was it so difficult to kill Ravana?

In the Valmiki's Ramayana, Lord Ramachandra was not able to kill Ravana when He cut off his head. With an intense desire to conquer the three worlds, Ravana observed penances to appease Lord Brahma with his devotion and determination. Following the severe austerities, Ravana chopped off his head as a part of the sacrifice and to appease Lord Brahma. As he was a demon and was well versed in various sorcery tricks, each time he chopped his head, a new head aroused in its place which endured him to continue his penance. This happened nine times, and each time he was able to continue his penance even more severely. However, after the ninth time, Ravana knew that this would be the last chance as his decapitated head would not arise again.

Yet, with a determination and a belief that it was useless to live when he could not appease Lord Brahma with his devotion, Ravana did not hesitate to cut off his head even for the tenth time and sacrificed it as an offering to Lord Brahma. With this final offering, Lord Brahma gets pleased and blesses him back with life bestowing his decapitated head. Pleased with Ravana's devotion, Lord Brahma asked him what he desired, and Ravana asked for the boon of immortality. But Lord Brahma said it was not possible as every life that was born had to perish at some point, even himself even though he was the creator of this universe. Instead, Lord Brahma gave him the celestial Amrit which was stored under his navel. Lord Brahma then mentions to Ravana that he would be invincible until the celestial pot of Amrit was safe under his navel and no one could kill him thus making him equal to that of being immortal until destiny decided a different course.

Ravana despite being the possessor of such great boons used them to conquer and terrify the world and hinder Dharma. His pride and arrogance grew and thought that he was invincible because of Lord Brahma's boon which made him vulnerable to many mistakes, of which abducting Sita Devi was the greatest of them all. Ravana's foolishness leads to a war wherein Lord Ramachandra came along with the Vanara (ape) army and attacked Lanka. Ravana's pride grew so much that Vibhishan left his brother's side and joined Lord Ramachandra in the mission to uphold Dharma.

In the final battle between Lord Ramachandra and Ravana, Lord Ramachandra tried various ways to decapitate the heads of Ravana, but a new head always came back as soon He cut off one. This was due to the Amrit under his navel placing Lord Ramachandra into a dilemma as to how He could defeat Ravana. It is at that time that Visbhishan told Lord Ramachandra the secret of the Amrit and the Lord first destroys the pot of Amrit under Ravana's navel making him weak. Then Lord Ramachandra used a divine weapon created by Lord Brahma and used it for killing Ravana. That weapon pierced through Ravana's chest and he was finally dead.

स वज्र इव दुर्धर्षो वज्रिबाहुविसर्जितः ।  
कृतान्त इव चावार्यो न्यपतद्रावणोरसि ॥ ६-१०८-१७

That arrow, which was inviolable as a thunderbolt hurled by the arms of Indra and irresistible as Yama the lord of Death, fell upon Ravana's chest.

स विसृष्टो महावेगह् शरीरान्तकरः शरः ।  
च्छेद हृदयं तस्य रावणस्य दुरात्मनः ॥ ६-१०८-१८

That arrow, released with great speed and which was capable of destroying the body, tore off the heart of that evil-minded Ravana.

Thus, the boon which was acquired by Ravana after a great deal of austerities succumbed to the powerful arrow of Lord Ramachandra, reminding a lesson that any boon which is used for selfish means perishes in front of the ultimate frontier of Dharma. Ravana was so fortunate to have seen the Lord just before dying and with the Lord's own hand, he died.

## Why did Lord Rama perform penance after killing Ravana?

The Skanda Purana, mentions in detail Lord Ramachandra's sin of Brahma-hatyaa from the forty-seventh chapter of the Setu-mahatmya of the Brahma khanda of the Skanda Purana. In the Padma Purana, Patala khanda, chapter eight, the great Muni Agastya advises Lord Ramachandra to perform Horse Sacrifice (Ashvamedha Yajna).

When Agastya Muni narrated Ravana's katha, Lord Ramachandra felt very much aggrieved about killing Ravana who was born in a Brahmana family lineage. Agastya Muni tried to convince Lord Ramachandra that Ravana who was a servant in Vaikuntha and he obtained demon-hood due to the curse of four Kumara sages. By killing him Lord Ramachandra have favoured that brahmana (namely Ravana) and said Lord Ramachandra to not again grieve over (the death of Ravana).

But, Lord Ramachandra said:

24-36. Sin is said to be of two kinds, namely deliberate and non-deliberate. Deliberate is that which is done with an intention. The non-deliberate is that committed unintentionally. The deliberate sin is exhausted only after experiencing (the fruit of that sinful) deed. The other one would perish through remorse. This is declared by the scriptural injunctions. The words of the good cannot be properly regarded as removing the grief of me who have intentionally committed the extremely censurable killing of a brahmana. Tell me a vow, a gift, a sacrifice, a (visit to a) holy place, or some great worship like that, which would burn My sin, and by which My spotless fame will purify the people who are defiled by sinful conduct and whose lustre is taken away due to the killing of a brahmana. Then, Agastya spoke these words to Lord Ramachandra, "O Lord Ramachandra, O great hero, O you who does favour to the worlds, listen to words which I (shall now) speak for removing (the sin due to) killing a brahmana. He who would perform a horse sacrifice, overcomes all that sin. Therefore, O soul of the universe, you perform that auspicious \*\* horse-sacrifice (Ashvamedha sacrifice).

Agastya Muni also told how others like Indradeva overcome Brahmhatya by performing horse sacrifice. And then, Lord Ramachandra performed an Ashvamedha yajna which is described in subsequent chapters of Padma Purana.

As per Valmiki Ramayana also, Lord Lakshman provided a strong reason (that Indra purified himself from the sin of Brahmhatya by Ashvamedha) to perform Ashvamedha which indirectly might mean performing Ashvamedha to remove the sin of killing Ravana.

\*\* The Ashvamedha was a horse sacrifice ritual followed by the Shrauta tradition of Vedic religion. It was used by ancient Vedic kings to prove their imperial sovereignty: a horse accompanied by the king's warriors would be released to wander for a year. In the territory traversed by the horse, any rival could dispute the king's authority by challenging the warriors accompanying it.

Sundara Kanda and Yuddha Kanda of Valmiki's Ramayana provide details of Ravana.

1. He performed great austerities and was blessed with boons from Lord Brahma
2. He was an able administrator, a great warrior with enormous strength.
3. He amassed great wealth belonging to various Celestials.
4. He was described to be Manmatha (Deity of love) i.e., very handsome, though his colour is dark.

Hanuman saw Ravana together with lust, vanity and intoxication, with wide red eyes which were slanted, like the deity of love in a person with a bow kept at a distance.

The following characteristics/qualities are attributed to Ravana, eulogising him to be a good man/misunderstood hero.

1. He stood for his family and his clan
2. He was a Brahmin, a descendant of Visravasa
3. A great scholar
4. A great warrior

Developed Lanka as a beautiful and advanced land to live in for the Demons.

Those who cite the above qualities of Ravana should also know that

a) Working towards the betterment of his clan or his clan is normal to every person. There is a big deal here.

Even King Dasaratha worked for the betterment of his people in the Kosala Kingdom. Can Dharma pardon him for the sin he committed towards Sravana Kumar, by hitting him with an arrow during the twilight time, by keeping the good things done to his people in mind?

It is against Dharma.

b) He was a descendant of Visravasa. It is true, but he followed Kshatriya Dharma - the rules of the Warrior Clan. So according to the Varna system, he was not a Brahmin. It is Myth. He stated that he was following Kshatriya Dharma.

"This thought of my sending you is not indeed the best option. But, this decision is said to be according to the duties of a king and is the commendation of a warrior class."

c) He might be a great scholar, but that does not compensate for the evil deeds he committed against so many innocent people.

d) He was a great warrior. He fought with courage till his end. However, that does not again write off the evil deeds he committed against so many innocent people.

e) He did not develop Lanka as a beautiful city. It was Visvakarma, who built it for the sake of Kubera, the cousin of Ravana. Ravana defeated him and encroached on that city. Ravana worked for the betterment of Demons living in Lanka. It is true. However, even a developed city will collapse if the King is an evil one. Sita Devi reiterates this.

"After getting a king who has an uncontrolled mind, interested in a bad path, wealthy states and cities also will be destroyed. After getting you like that this Lanka filled with the best things in a short while will be destroyed due to your one sin."

He was a great scholar in Ayurvedic medicine. He was the person who invented "Arka Shastra". The book "Arka Prakshaya" reveals this truth to the present world. Of his willingness to research Ayurvedic medicine, he wrote several books revealing the cures for many diseases. In one book he wrote, "Eating beef cause infect ninety-eight new diseases to human beings". The book "Kumara Tantraya" which reveals the treatments for infant diseases was written by him accepting the request of his pregnant queen Mandodari.

King Ravana invented the bow of the Violin. He also narrated the very first Raagas, the musical compositions of Eastern classical music known as Lanka Dehena. "Siva thandawa" is one of the great devotional compositions done by him, which is still being in use in India. He was the first king to fly over the world with his aeroplane (Vimana), known as Dandumonaraya, Vimaanaya or Ahasthara. Some evidence of Dandumonaraya the aeroplane is found in Rock inscriptions, Jataka kathas and Ola manuscripts. The Sinhalese folk stories are enriched with Ravana kathas. King Ravana was continuing a vegan-oriented lifestyle and was a real nature lover.

## Why is the character Ravana considered a "demon" though he had many positive attributes?

Ravana had many great attributes. Ravana was a great Scholar. He was the master of 64 categories of knowledge. He ruled his country with all excellence and benevolence. He was a follower of Dharma and protector of Dharma until the Sita devi incident. He had a consummate knowledge on all four Vedas and six Shastras, which we attribute to his ten heads symbolically. And much more! Though he kidnapped Sita devi, not even his finger touched her with bad intentions during her stay in Lanka. On the other hand, Lord Ramachandra doubted Sita devi's loyalty by making her to go through "Trial-by-fire" (Agni Pariksha). It is said that Ravana's past curse made him to kidnap Sita, but he had been gentle in his approach to her. So, what are the justifiable reasons in the katha for making a full-fledged war on Ravana's country, killing him, his family and his people? to consider him as a "Demon" and celebrating his death annually with much fan-fare?

Before actually coming to the exact answer, here follows a few kathas.

\* After gaining boons from Lord Brahma, Ravana became almost invincible. He further acquired seemingly unsurmountable powers and divine weapons by worshipping Lord Shiva. As a result, he made all the Celestials, including the Lord of Death Yamaraja, his prisoner. Lord Ramachandra's combat with Ravana was essential for the Celestials to be freed and rescued.

\* Ravana was a huge reservoir of knowledge. However, his knowledge was humbled by his lust for women. He once violated Urvashi's chastity and was cursed by her husband that if he touches any woman without her consent, his head would break into a thousand pieces. Hence, he couldn't force himself upon Sita Devi.

\* He was a demon king with no inclination towards Dharma. Lust, anger, infatuation and pride are known to be destroyers of one's existence. Ravana had all. His goodness was actually eclipsed by all the wrongs that he did.

\* Ravana kidnapped Sita's maya image, and not Sita Devi herself. Agni at the last minute intervened and took her to his abode for protection. Lord Ramachandra knew well in advance of what was coming, hence He left Sita devi in Agni's (Deity of fire) protection. Hence, the famous trial-by-fire incident was orchestrated to get Sita Devi back from the fire Deity. This fact is mentioned in Ramayana. Otherwise, Ravan would've been reduced to ashes just by touching Sita for she happened to be the incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi herself.

## What were the qualities in "Ravana" which made him the great king of Lanka?

Ravana is a devotee of Lord Shiva. The way he praised the cosmic dance of Lord Shiva (known as Shiva Tandava Stotram) was sublime. Even if you read it with poetic mind, you will realize that he was an amazing poet. He used to worship Lord Shiva everyday with abhisheka. He even lifted whole Mount Kailasa (Ravananugraha) to prove his strength.

He was an expert administrator. He knew the laws, and ruled his kingdom Lanka very effectively, even though he annexed Lanka from Lord Kubera forcibly. When Shree Hanuman destroyed Ashoka Vana and advised Ravana to return Sita devi to Lord Ramachandra, Ravana got very angry and decided to kill him. But when his younger brother Vibhishana says that it's not appropriate to kill a messenger, Ravana agreed with his brother but then orders to burn Shree Hanuman's tail.

After the war had started, after many of Ravana's men were killed including his brother Kumbhakarna and his son Meghanath, he got very angry and went to kill Sita Devi. But then one of his ministers says "Why killing this woman now? Fight like a man in the field and show what you are to the enemies." Then he refrains from that and participates in a war and dies in battle afterwards. (Ref: Adhyatma Ramayana)

He truly was a great brother. When Surpanakha came crying and holding her nose, she told her brother what happened to her. She told her brother the Lakshmana, cut off her nose and Ravana got angry. He wanted to get revenge on Lord Ramachandra, but since she described the beauty of Sita devi to him, he decided to abduct her. But he proves he loves his family.

The law of nature is that, even if you commit inappropriate actions for good reasons, it should not be entertained. However, at the same time, if you perform appropriate actions for inappropriate reasons, it will still help the world to prosper.

Now for some controversy...

### Was Sita Devi, Ravana's Daughter?

Was she? Well, whether Sita was the daughter of Ravana or not, the fact remains that there are various versions of her birth, because her real parents are not known. So, we will try to procure information as to how she came into this world.

\* Sita means furrow, which itself gives a hint of her birth katha. It is believed that she was found while someone was tilling the fields.

Let's go in details of various versions of the Ramayana to explore the origin of her birth.

\* Valmiki's Ramayana: In Valmiki's Ramayana and Kamban's Tamil epic Ramavataram, Sita devi is said to have been discovered in a furrow in a ploughed field, and for that reason is regarded as a daughter of Bhūmi Devi (the goddess earth). Sita Devi's birth star is Ashlesha Nakshatra (constellation) in the Hindu month of Chaitra. She was discovered, adopted and brought up by Maharaja Janaka, king of Mithila, and his wife Sunayana.

\* Reincarnation of Vedavati: Some versions of the Ramayana suggest that Sita Devi was a reincarnation of Vedavati. Ravana tried to molest Vedavati and her chastity was sullied beyond Ravana's redemption when she was performing penance to become consort of Lord Vishnu. Vedavati immolated herself on a pyre to escape Ravana's lust, vowing to return to another age and be the cause of Ravana's destruction. She was duly reborn as Sita Devi.

\* Reincarnation of Manivati: According to Gunabhadra's Uttara Purana of the ninth century BCE, Ravana disturbs the asceticism of Manivati, daughter of Amitavega of Alkapuri, and she pledges to take revenge on Ravana. Manivati is later reborn as the daughter of Ravana and Mandodari. But, astrologers predict the ruin of Ravana because of this child. So, Ravana orders to kill the child. Manivati is placed in a casket and buried in the ground of Mithila where she is discovered by some of the farmers of the kingdom. Then Janka, king of that state adopts her.

\* Ravana's daughter: In Sanghadasa's Jaina version of Ramayana of the 5th century BCE, Sita, entitled Vasudevahindi, is born as the daughter of Ravana. According to this version, astrologers predict that the first child of Vidyadhara Maya (Ravana's wife) will destroy his lineage. That's why Ravana abandons her and orders the infant to be buried in a distant land where she is later discovered and adopted by Janka.

\* Jain version: According to the Jain version of Ramayana, Ravana did love Sita but as a daughter. Yes! Daughter! It is said that she was born from none other than the pair, Ravan-Mandodari. Ravan was overjoyed when he saw his beautiful baby girl. Amidst these celebrations, the royal priest predicted destruction to the entire land of Lanka, if the baby continued to live. It was decided that the baby was to be placed in a well-decorated box and be thrown into the sea. When this was done, the water level rose and the box was engulfed.

\* Ravana and Mandodari once went on a journey. En route, Mandodari asked Ravana to show her how loud his roar was. Ravana cautioned her because the reverberating sound can harm Mandodari and the child that they were expecting. Mandodari didn't pay heed and insisted on the same. Ravana obliged. This resulted in Mandodari's termination of pregnancy. The couple dug some soil and put the baby there. But, as history has it, the child survived and was later, accidentally, found by King Janaka of

Mithila. This child later came to be known as Janaki (Sita devi). Hence, Ravana couldn't have violated her chastity at any given point in time.

**It was actually impossible for Rāvaṇa to take away Sitā. The form of Sitā taken by Rāvaṇa was an illusory representation of mother Sitā — māyā-sītā.**



**When Sita was tested in the fire, this māyā-sītā was burnt, and the real Sitā came out of the fire.**

**ŚB 9.10.11 (Purport)**

Finally some additional information about King Ravana...

- \* He was a great scholar in Ayurvedic medicine.
- \* He was a very staunch devotee of Lord Shiva and was expert in singing the difficult Shiva Tandava Stotra (in Sanskrit). Ravana was best known for composing in extempore, the Shiva Tandava Stotram, which has deep, powerful syllables and has made a huge impression on the modern world.
- \* Ravana invented the bow of Violin. He also narrated the very first Raagas, the musical compositions of Eastern classical music known as Lanka Dehena.

- \* Ravana was an accomplished musician. He was an excellent Veena player, music composer, improviser, poet and singer, rivalling the best Gandharvas.
- \* He was the first king that flew all over the world with his aeroplane (ancient vedic vimana), known as Dandumonaraya, Vimaanaya or Ahasthara.
- \* King Ravana was continuing a vegan oriented life style and was a real nature lover.
- \* Ravana was a great scholar and possessed advanced Sanskrit knowledge in the Vedas and the holy scriptures, music composition, poetry, astronomy, medicine, law, architecture, economics, political science, public administration, practical science, mathematics and military sciences.
- \* Ravana was such a great king that in his kingdom, even the so called poor people ate from golden vessels. In other words, there was no poverty in his kingdom and the Rakshasas were happy under his rule.
- \* After shooting the fatal arrow on the battlefield of Lanka, Lord Ramachandra told His brother, Lord Lakshman, "Go to Ravana quickly before he dies and request him to share whatever knowledge he can. A brute he may be, but he is also a great scholar". At this Ravana said that if you have come to me as a student then you must sit at my feet because teachers must be respected and you want to learn lessons. Lakshman went to Ravana and this time he stood near his feet. Ravana seeing Lakshman standing near his feet told him secrets that would make anyone's life successful. King Ravana said, "the most important lesson of life is that you must defer the bad action as much as you can and you must do good action without any delay and as much early as you can. If you follow this rule, you can save not only yourself but many other people from being damaged".

Ravana also told Lakshman about politics and statesmanship:

- 1) Do not be the enemy of your charioteer, your gatekeeper, your cook and your brother, they can harm you any time.
- 2) Do not think you are always a winner, even if you are winning all the time.
- 3) Always trust the minister, who criticises you.
- 4) Never think your enemy is small or powerless, like I thought about Hanuman.
- 5) Never think you can outsmart the stars, they will bring you what you are destined to.
- 6) Either love or hate God, but both should be immense and strong.
- 7) A king who is eager to win glory must suppress greed as soon as it lifts its head.
- 8) A king must welcome the smallest chance to do good to others, without the slightest procrastination.

REMEMBER HE WAS DESTINED TO KIDNAP SITA DEVI IN ORDER FOR LORD RAMACHANDRA TO KILL HIM. THAT WAS HIS DESTINY.

Though Ravan kidnapped Sita devi, not even his finger touched her with negative intentions during her stay in Lanka. On the other hand, Lord Ramachandra doubted Sita devi's loyalty by insisting she go through "Trial-by-fire" (Agni-Pariksha).

SO DON'T BE SO QUICK TO JUDGE KING RAVANA. Always look to the good that he did while on this planet.

**Kindly note:** Some the information mentioned above may portray the Celestials as adharmic, but you should know much information that one reads in our Shastras is totally inconceivable to us mere mortals. To truly understand our Vedic Scriptures can be quite an effort indeed hence it requires a Guru to explain the intricacies and the secrets it has in it. Every event conveys some noble secrets in some direct or indirect way. You have to understand it with one's inner self and not like a novel. The personalities in our Vedic Scriptures are of course not worthy of comparison to the characters we come

across in a novel. In each personality in our Vedic Scriptures, are there to convey message(s) to us. But let me state here categorically, when the Supreme Personality of Godhead Shree Krishna and His devotees like Lord Brahma, Lord Shiva, Mother Durga, Lord Indra, the nine planets, and so forth performs an act, it should NEVER be questioned. Yes, this will not go down well with many so called "new-aged" "I want the truth" people out there, but honestly what right does one have to question the Lord and his elevated servants? God can do what ever He pleases and He is not accountable to no being. BUT His servants are. The Lord has a reason for everything He does, and who gives one the right to question our Dear Lord. His Lila (pastime) is beyond human comprehension but we humbly tried to explain a little (with my minuscule intelligence) above as to why the Lord or His devotee acted in this regard.



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