

= Kalmashapada =

In Hindu mythology , Kalmashapada (Kalmasapada , ?? ? ?????) , also known as Saudasa (?????) , Mitrasaha (??? ? ???) , Amitrasaha and Kalmashanghri (Kalmasanghri) , was a king of the Ikshvaku dynasty (the Solar dynasty) , who was cursed to be a rakshasa (demon) by the sage Vashishtha . He is described as an ancestor of Rama , the avatar of the god Vishnu and the hero of the Hindu epic Ramayana . Many texts narrate how Kalmashapada was cursed to die if he had intercourse with his queen , so he obtained a son from Vashishtha by niyoga , an ancient tradition whereby a husband can nominate another man to impregnate his wife . Kalmashapada 's story is narrated in various works including the classic epic poems Mahabharata and Ramayana , and the Puranas .

= = Background = =

The Mahabharata and the Puranas agree that Kalmashapada was the son of the king Sudasa (Sudhasana) ; however , the Ramayana names his father as Raghu , a king whom the other texts identify as a descendant of Kalmashapada . All texts agree that his ancestors include Sagara and Bhagiratha , though the generations between Bhagiratha and Kalmashapada may vary among the texts .

Some texts state that Kalmashapada 's birth name was Mitrasaha , but he was known by his patronymic Saudasa . A commentator on the Vishnu Purana says that Mitra @-@ saha (literally , " one who forbears a friend ") is an epithet the king acquires from the curse of the sage Vashishtha . The king restrains (saha) himself from retaliation against his friend (mitra) Vashishtha 's curse , though he possesses the power to do so . The Vayu Purana , the Agni Purana , the Brahma Purana , and the Harivamsa call him Amitrasaha , " one who forbears (saha) a foe (amitra) " ; here , Vashishtha is taken to be an enemy .

Kalmashapada was the king of Ayodhya (Kosala) and was married to Queen Madayanti . The Bhagavata Purana notes that she was also known as Damayanti .

= = The curse = =

= = = Shakti 's curse = = =

The Mahabharata narrates : Once , Kalmashapada was roaming the forest for hunting . He encounters the sage Vashishtha 's eldest son Shakti on a narrow path . As a kshatriya (member of the ruler class) , Kalmashapada does not make way for Shakti , a brahmin (priestly class) . Nevertheless , Shakti refuses to budge . Finally , an enraged Kalmashapada hits Shakti with his whip . In turn , the sage curses the king to wander the forest for 16 years . The sage Vishwamitra , the arch @-@ enemy of Vashishtha who desires to have Kalmashapada as his disciple , sends a rakshasa to possess the king 's body . Vishwamitra plots to destroy his enemy 's family with the help of the king . Under the influence of the rakshasa , the king serves human flesh to a Brahmin , who sets Shakti 's curse into effect . The king turns into a cannibalistic rakshasa .

= = = Vashishtha 's curse = = =

The Uttara Kanda of the Ramayana and the Shiva Purana narrate about Vashishtha cursing Kalmashapada with slight variation . The Uttara Ramayana tells that once , while hunting in the forest , Kalmashapada mistakenly kills a rakshasa disguised as a tiger cub . His fellow rakshasa ? who was also disguised as a cub ? assumes his true form and warns the king that he will take his revenge against the wrongful death at the proper time . The Shiva Purana and the Bhagavata Purana identify the other rakshasa as the brother of the slain one , and does not mention the tiger cub disguise . The Vishnu Purana also notes that the demons appeared in the form of tigers .

The king returns to his capital and invites his guru Vashishtha to the Ashwamedha sacrifice . The sage accepts . The vengeful rakshasa assumes the form of the sage and informs the king that he secretly desires to eat meat (a taboo for sages) , and that the king should come to his ashram and offer him meat . Deceived by the rakshasa 's disguise , Kalmashapada with his queen goes to Vashishtha 's ashram and presents him with meat . The sage feels insulted seeing the taboo offering , and curses the king to be a rakshasa .

In the Shiva Purana , the Bhagavata Purana , and the Vishnu Purana , the rakshasa disguises himself as a Brahmin cook and gains entry to the king 's kitchen . When Vashishtha arrives in Ayodhya on the king 's invitation for a Shraddha ceremony , or simply dinner , the demon cooks human flesh and offers that to the sage on behalf of the king . The enraged sage curses him to be transformed into a human @-@ eating rakshasa and wander the forests . The pious king is outraged by the unjust curse and quarrels with the sage . Vashishtha reduces the curse to 12 years when he hears of the rakshasa 's deception . But the king is not satisfied . He takes water in his hand to cast a curse on Vashishtha , but the queen dissuades him . However , the curse @-@ ridden water cannot be wasted . If thrown on the ground , it will destroy the crop . If thrown in the air , it will spoil the rains . Throwing in any direction would harm some living beings . Ultimately , the king throws the water on his own feet . Since the king 's feet become black and white in colour , he gains the epithets Kalmashapada and Kalmasanghri (literally , " pied feet ") .

= = Life as a rakshasa = =

The Mahabharata narrates that Kalmashapada cultivates an intense hatred for Vashishtha and his sons . He eats Shakti and his 99 brothers to seek his vengeance . The grief @-@ stricken Vashishtha leaves his ashram and starts roaming the forest . He even tries to kill himself , but fails every time . Texts such as the Mahabharata , the Linga Purana , and the Kanchipuranam blame Vishwamitra for provoking Kalmashapada to slay Vashishtha 's sons . An older scripture , Brihaddevata , also mentions that multiple Saudasas (sons of Sudasa) slay the hundred sons of Vashishtha .

Various texts relate that in the forest , Kalmashapada encounters a young Brahmin couple engaged in coitus . Kalmashapada disturbs the act before climax and captures the Brahmin youth . His wife pleads that her husband has not impregnated her yet , and that it is improper to kill a Brahmin . However , Kalmashapada devours the youth . The chaste Brahmin widow wails and curses Kalmashapada that he will die if he touches any woman with amorous intent . The wife cremates her husband and commits sati by jumping into his funeral pyre .

The Shiva Purana adds an continuation : The sin of killing a Brahmin transforms into a monster called Brahmahatya , who starts following Kalmashapada . The latter tries to escape the monster , and finally reaches King Janaka 's court . There , the sage Gautama teaches Kalmashapada divine knowledge and directs him to the Shiva temple of Gokarna to free him of his sins . At Gokarna , Kalmashapada performs intense austerities and is liberated from Brahmahatya .

The Mahabharata also records an encounter between the sage Uttanka and Kalmashapada . After serving his guru Gautama for a hundred years , Uttanka is allowed to go , but must provide Gautama with Gurudakshina , a traditional repayment for his teacher 's services . Gautama 's wife Ahalya suggests that he bring her the divine earrings of Madayanti , Kalmashapada 's wife , as repayment . Uttanka meets the cannibalistic Kalmashapada , who approaches Uttanka to eat him , but Uttanka stops him and explains that he is duty @-@ bound to get Madayanti 's earrings as gurudakshina and that he , Uttanka , will return to Kalmashapada after fulfilling his obligation . Kalmashapada agrees and directs him to his wife , who refuses to part with her earrings until Uttanka brings some token from Kalmashapada as proof of his consent . Upon returning from Kalmashapada with a token , Madayanti gives him the earrings .

= = Liberation from the curse and children = =

The Mahabharata narrates that Vashishtha meets Kalmashapada at the end of the 12 @-@ year

period and frees the king of the curse . The king returns to his original form and accepts the sage as his guru and purohita (priest) . Both of them return to Ayodhya . However , Kalmashapada is still heirless and cannot unite with his wife in coitus due to the Brahmin widow 's curse . The king requests Vashishtha to inseminate Madayanti , following the practice of niyoga . The queen becomes pregnant by the sage but does not deliver for 12 years . Finally , the frustrated queen breaks her womb with a stone and her son is born . Since the son is born with the aid of a stone (Ashman) , he is named Ashmaka (" the child born of a stone ") . The Mahabharata adds that this act of " giving " his wife to a Brahmin helps Kalmashapada attain heaven .

A central character of the epic , King Pandu , who is cursed to die upon having sex with his wife , convinces his wife Kunti to have niyoga with the gods and mother children for him , citing the example of Kalmashapada . The scholar Meyer suggests that the tale of Pandu may be inspired by the much older narrative of Kalmashapada .

Other texts agree that Vashishtha ends Kalmashapada 's curse ; however , there is some variation . In the Bhagavata Purana , Vashishtha himself strikes the queen 's belly with a stone after seven years to free the child . The Vishnu Purana credits the queen for opening her own womb , but the period is seven years .

All texts agree that Kalmashapada is an ancestor of Dasharatha and his divine son Rama , the hero of the Ramayana . The names of Kalmashapada 's children and the number of generations between Kalmashapada and Dasharatha varies . The Vishnu Purana , the Vayu Purana , the Bhagavata Purana , the Kurma Purana , and the Linga Purana contain a few variations of the names . According to them , Ashmaka was the son of Kalmashapada , and nine generations lie between Kalmashapada and Dasharatha . The Matsya Purana , the Agni Purana , the Brahma Purana , and the Harivamsa call Kalmashapada 's son Sarvakarma (who is said to be the grandfather of Kalmashapada in the Vishnu Purana , et al .) , but agree as to the number of generations with the Vishnu Purana , et al . The Ramayana identifies the son as Shankhana and states that ten generations lie between Kalmashapada and Dasharatha .