

= Kabandha =

In Hindu mythology , Kabandha (??? ? ? , Kabandha , lit . " headless torso ") is a Rakshasa (demon) who is killed and freed from a curse by the god Rama ? an Avatar of Vishnu ? and his brother Lakshmana . Kabandha 's legend appears in the Hindu epics Ramayana and Mahabharata , as well as in later Ramayana adaptations .

Kabandha was a gandharva (celestial musician) named Vishvavasu or Danu , who was cursed and made into an ugly , carnivorous demon by Indra , the king of the gods , and / or a sage . In an encounter with Rama and Lakshmana , the brothers sever his arms and proceed to cremate his corpse . Upon his death , Kabandha resumes his gandharva form and directs Rama to the Rsyamukha mountain , where the exiled monkey @-@ chief Sugriva is hiding . Kabandha advises Rama to form an alliance with Sugriva , who would be of assistance in the search for Rama 's wife Sita , who had been kidnapped by Ravana , the demon @-@ king of Lanka . Following Kabandha 's instructions , Rama befriends Sugriva and rescues Sita with his help .

= = Literary sources = =

The most detailed account of Kabandha appears in the third book , Aranya kanda , of the 4th century BCE epic Ramayana , Sargas (cantos) 69 @-@ 73 . However , Kabandha first appears in canto one of the first book Bala kanda of the Ramayana , in which the entire story is summarized .

The account of Kabandha also appears in the Ramopakhyana ? the retelling of Rama 's story in the Aranya Parva ? the third book of the Mahabharata (composed over a period of 200 years , 5th century BCE to 3rd century BCE) , and its appendix Harivamsa , as well as in later adaptations of the Ramayana such as Kalidasa 's Raghuvamsa (composed between 4th to 6th century CE) , Bhatti 's 7th century work Bhattikavya , Bhavabhuti 's 8th century play Mahaviracharita , Murari Mishra 's 10th century drama Anargharaghava , Kamban 's 12th century book Kamba Ramayana , Adhyatma Ramayana (chapter 9 of Aranya kanda , dated between late 14th to early 15th century) from Brahmanda Purana and Tulsidas 's 16th century work Ramacharitamanas .

= = Early life and curse = =

The Ramayana narrates : Kabandha was born as a gandharva (celestial musician) named Vishvavasu . He was the son of the gandharva Sri Vishvavasu or Sri and was also known as Danu (???) . Vishvavasu performed penance and got the boon of immortality from the creator @-@ god Brahma . He became arrogant due to his boon and attacked Indra , the god @-@ king of heaven . Indra used his celestial weapon the Vajra (thunderbolt) and drove Vishvavasu 's head and thighs into his body . Vishvavasu pleaded that he be given a way to find and eat food . Upon Vishvavasu 's beseeching , Indra gave him two long arms and a mouth on his belly . Indra also decreed that Kabandha would regain his original form when Rama severs his arms .

The Ramayana further adds : Kabandha spent his days near the hermitage of the sage Matanga in the Krauncha forest . There , he spent his time scaring sages . Once , Kabandha attacked the sage Stulashira , who cursed him to remain in his hideous form for eternity . Upon Kabandha 's pleading , the sage reduced his curse and said that Kabandha would be freed of his form , once Rama and Lakshmana sever his arms . So Kabandha waited in that forest for Rama 's arrival . Growse suspected the tale to be a later interpolation arguing that it does not appear in all versions / translations of the original Ramayana .

The Adhyatma Ramayana tells that Kabandha (the name Vishvavasu is not used) was a Gandharva chief , who was blessed by Brahma with immortality . He was " drunk with the wine of youth and beauty " and used to roam the universe enchanting beautiful maidens . Once , he laughed at the sage Ashtavakra (" one who was eight deformities ") , who cursed him to become a Rakshasa , though the sage assured him that Rama would free him of the curse . Still arrogant , Kabandha once chased Indra . The rest of the Indra episode mirrors the Ramayana telling .

The Mahabharata tells that Kabandha was a gandharva named Vishvavasu in his previous life and

was cursed by Brahma to be born " from a Rakshasa womb " . The Mahavira @-@ charita calls Kabandha 's real form Danu , son of Sri . The Bhattikavya does not explicitly name Kabandha . He is introduced as " a dreadful demon that was always hungry and being endowed with long arms " . Later , he is identified as Sri 's son , who was cursed by an ascetic . The Ramacharitamana tells that Kabandha was cursed by the sage Durvasa , who is known for his hot temper in Hindu mythology .

= = Etymology and description of the demonic form = =

The Mahabharata describes him thus : Kabandha was " as big as a mountain , dark as a black cloud , with pointed hairs all over his body and looked fierce with a voice as loud as thunder . He had an eye on his stomach , round and yellow , emitting a glare like a fire @-@ name . Looking wicked he thrust his big tongue out of his huge mouth licking the sides . " The Ramayana presents a similar description of Kabandha . Kabandha had a broad chest and was without a head or neck . He had only one eye on his chest and a mouth on his belly . He used his long arms to draw his prey closer . Kabandha is often depicted as a tree .

Since Vishvasu now did not have a head , but just two arms and a mouth on his stomach , he came to be known as the Rakshasa (demon) Kabandha , the " headless torso " . The word Kabandha is often used to describe a large big @-@ bellied barrel or a headless trunk , shaped like a barrel , which retains its vitality .

Adhyatma Ramayana tells that Kabandha was a fierce cannibal and his arms were eight miles long . His huge face ? which had no eyes or ears ? was at his chest . He had no head or legs .

= = Encounter with Rama = =

The Ramayana narrates : Rama , his consort Sita and his brother Lakshmana were exiled to the forest for a 14 @-@ year period . While in the forest , Sita was kidnapped by the demon @-@ king Ravana . Rama was informed of Sita 's fate by the dying vulture Jatayu , who had been mortally wounded in trying to save her . Searching for Sita , Rama and Lakshmana reached the Krauncha forest , where Kabandha dwelt . The brothers first encountered a demoness , who tempted Lakshmana . Lakshmana cut off her nose , ears , and breasts , and the brothers moved deeper into the forest , where bad omens greeted them .

Suddenly , Kabandha appeared before them . The demon blocked the path of the brothers , who tried to escape by taking a different route , but were finally caught by Kabandha . The demon grabbed Rama in his right arm and Lakshmana in his left . Finding themselves helpless in Kabandha 's clutches , Lakshmana appeals to Rama to escape and find Sita , leaving him behind as a sacrifice to the demon . Rama consoled him . Kabandha declared that he was extremely hungry and asked them who they were who had come to sate his hunger . At this time , Lakshmana realized that the strength of the demon lay in his hands and suggested that they cut off the demon 's hands . Annoyed by the brothers ' conversation , Kabandha decided to eat them at once and drew them closer to his mouth . The brothers drew their swords and quickly cut off the arms of the demon , who fell down with a mighty roar .

The fallen Kabandha again asked for the names of his vanquishers . Lakshmana introduced himself and Rama and asked the demon who he was . Kabandha narrated his story to the brothers and declared that he recognized Rama by the very fact that Rama had severed his arms . Kabandha requested that Rama perform his cremation rites , offered him what information he could , and died .

While other adaptations tell a tale about the encounter similar to Ramayana , Mahavira @-@ charita is a notable exception . A woman called Shramana is caught in the clutches of Kabandha and calls for help . While roaming in the Dandaka forest , Rama hears her call and sends Lakshmana to check . Lakshmana kills Kabandha and leads Shramana to Rama . Shramana turns out to be a messenger of Vibhishana (Bibhishana) ? brother of Ravana ? who has joined forces with Sugriva against Ravana . Anargharaghava mirrors the Mahavira @-@ charita , replacing

Shramana with Guha , a forest chief who leads them to Sugriva .

= = Counsel to Rama = =

The Ramayana narrates : the brothers burnt Kabandha 's corpse on a funeral pyre . As the pyre was lit , Kabandha 's demon form melted and from the flames Vishvavasu rose up in the air in his celestial form , dressed in spotless garments and finery as a chariot from heaven appears to get him . Vishvavasu told the brothers that to fight calamity there are six ways , one of which to nurture a friendship with someone , who is in trouble . He advised the brothers to find the monkey (vanara) king Sugriva , who would guide them in the quest for Sita . Vishvavasu informed Rama that Sugriva was driven out of his kingdom by his own brother Vali and that Rama should help Sugriva regain his kingdom . The deposed Sugriva dwelt at Rsyamukha hill . Vishvavasu then described in detail the route to Rsyamukha hill . He instructed Rama to travel in the western direction till he reached the Pampa lake in the region called Matangavana where sage Matanga 's hermitage once stood . Ram would meet vanaras at this lake and also sage Matanga 's aged female disciple Shabari , who is waiting for him and after Rama 's visit , would ascend to heaven . To east of Matangavana is the Rsyamukha hill , which has an arduous path up . Kabandha revealed that one who ascends to the top of this hill , his dreams come true . Kabandha also assured Rama that his sorrows would end after reaching this hill , where Sugriva dwelt in a cave on the side on the hill . Kabandha then disappears .

The Mahabharata corroborates the Ramayana account . Vishvavasu tells Rama to seek the help of Sugriva , who would know where Ravana stays . Kabandha also assured Rama that he would definitely meet Sita again . In the Mahavira @-@ charita , the divine person that leaves the funeral pyre informs Rama that he is Danu and a curse had turned him in a demon , who was manipulated by Malyavan ? Ravana 's chief adviser ? to create havoc in the region . He expresses his gratitude to Rama and cautions him that Malyavan has also set Vali against him .

In Bhattikavya , Jatayu dies in the arms of Rama without revealing that Sita is in the clutches of Ravana . After his arms are chopped , the unnamed demon ? identified with Kabandha ? falls and starts his counsel . The funeral pyre scene is dropped here . The demon tells Rama that Ravana abducted Sita and has taken her to Lanka . He advises Rama to form an alliance with Sugriva , without which Ravana will not be overcome . He instructs Rama to negotiate a deal with Sugriva as per which Rama will kill Vali and end Sugriva 's sorrows and in return , Sugriva would mobilize his forces to defeat Ravana . The demon praises Rama , who purified the demon by his sword . The demon urges Rama to believe him as he is telling the truth . At last , the demon transforms into a radiant divine being as he was telling the truth and plunges into the sky .

Kamba Ramayana concurs with the Ramayana account about the counsel , but adds a panegyric on Rama by the celestial Danu . Danu exalts Rama as an incarnation of Vishnu and even compares him to baby Krishna , another incarnation of Vishnu . Raghuvamsa , which is a summary of the lives of ancestors of Rama and his own , does not mention the details of the killing of Kabandha , however it acknowledges the counsel . In a passing reference , it notes : " At the advice of Kabandha , who by death escaped from curse , there grew up friendship between Rama and the monkey @-@ chief (Sugriva) " .

Rama and Lakshmana followed Kabandha 's instructions and reached Pampa Lake . There , as per Kabandha 's prophecy , they met Shabari and then Sugriva . An alliance with Sugriva would finally help Rama defeat Ravana and save Sita .

The Adhyatma Ramayana , the Mahavira @-@ charita , the Anargharaghava and the Ramacharitamanas do not discuss the counsel at all and credit Shabari or Shramana or Guha as the one who leads Rama to Sugriva . In the Adhyatma Ramayana , Kabandha appears from the pyre as a divine being and reveals his true identity as a cursed gandharva . He further extols Rama in a hymn stating that various worlds and deities are embedded in parts of his body and Rama is the Supreme being and then disappears .