

**RĀKṢASA I.** A particular sect of asuras. The ancients had ordained that Rākṣasas should not be killed at dusk. Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa, Bālakāṇḍa, Canto 22, Verse 22). Uttarāmāyaṇa, contains the following story about the origin of Rākṣasas. When Brahmā was reciting the Vedas at the beginning of Kṛtayuga he felt very hungry and certain forms emanated from his face. Those who were born from his anger assumed the form of Rākṣasas and those from his hunger that of Yakṣas. The Rākṣasas turned out to be evil folk killing and eating cows and brahmins. Praheti and Heti were the first born Rākṣasas, the latter of whom wedded Bhayā, daughter of Kāla, and to them was born a son called Vidyutkeśa. He married Sālakaṭāṅkā, daughter of Sandhyā. Though a child was born to them they forsook it in the Himālayan slopes and went their own way.

At that time Śiva and Pārvatī came that way and after blessing the child returned to Kailāsa. The child was named Śukeśa. He married Devavatī, daughter of the Gandharva called Maṇimaya and three children were born to the couple, viz. Mālyavān, Sumālī and Mālī. They did tapas to propitiate Brahmā and when he appeared requested him thus : "We must defeat Yakṣas Kinnaras, Gandharvas, Siddhas, Vidyādhara, Yama, Kubera, Vāsava, Nāga kings and daityas and dānavas and we must not be defeated by any one. We must kill all enemies and they shall not kill us. We three shall never quarrel among ourselves."

Brahmā granted all their prayers. The three, proud and haughty due to these boons, began roaming about consuming cows and brahmins. They asked Viśvakarmā to build a city for them and he built for them Laṅkā on Mount Trikūṭa in the south sea. The three brothers took their abode in Laṅkā. Mālyavān, Sumālī and Mālī married respectively Sundarī, Ketumatī, and Vasudhā, daughters of the Gandharva woman Narmadā. Mālyavān begot of Sundarī seven sons called Vajramuṣṭi, Virūpākṣa, Durmukha, Suptaghna, Yajñakośa, Matta, and Unmatta, and also a daughter called Nalā.

To Sumālī were born of Ketumatī ten sons and also four daughters.

Four sons were born to Mālī of his wife Vasudhā, and they became the ministers of Vibhīṣaṇa.

Then thousands of Rākṣasas were born as sons, grandsons, brothers, nephews, etc. to the above and they lived in Laṅkā, a terror to the whole world.

While the daughters of Sumālī, Vekā, Puṣpotkāṭā, Kaikasī and Kumbhīnasī were once walking in the forest they saw Kubera on a visit to Brahmā in all pomp and glory. They understood that Kubera owed his pomp and glory to his being the son of Viśravas and therefore, the next day one of the four, Kaikasī, went to Viśravas's āśrama and prayed for children by him. Three sons called Rāvaṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa and Kumbhakarṇa and a daughter called Śūrpaṇakhā were born to her by Viśravas. They secured boons by performing tapas and Rāvaṇa lived in Laṅkā as king of the Rākṣasas.

**RĀKṢASA II.** An approved system of marriage. (See under Vivāha).

**RĀKṢASAGRAHA.** An evil spirit connected with the Rākṣasas. Affected by this spirit man will immediately become mad. (Vana Parva, Chapter 23, Verse 50).

**RĀKṢASAYAJÑĀ (RĀKṢASASATRA).** Parāśara Muni once conducted a yajña to annihilate the Rākṣasas altogether. (Ādi Parva, Chapter 180). The provocation for Parāśara to conduct the yajña was that a Rākṣasa called Kalmāṣapāda ate Śakti, the father of the muni and the son of Vasiṣṭha. When the yajña had reached its climax Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu went to Parāśara and held conciliatory talks with him, and Parāśara, ended the yajña. The Agni that he had made to devour the Rākṣasas was discarded on the slopes of the Himālayas. According to the Purāṇas that fire, even to this day, continues consuming the Rākṣasas, trees and rocks. (For details see under Kalmāṣapāda and Parāśara).

**RAKSITĀ.** A celestial woman, daughter of Kaśyapa-prajāpati by Pradhādevī. (Ādi Parva, Chapter 65, Verse 50).

**RAKṢOBHAKṢA.** A hell. (For details see under Kāla.)

**RAKṢOVĀHA.** A kingdom in ancient India. The Kṣatriyas there were annihilated by Paraśurāma. (Droṇa Parva, Chapter 70, Verse 12).

**RAKTA.** A son of Mahiṣāsura. He had two sons called Bala and Atibala. He had also a number of mighty army generals like Dhūmrākṣa and thousand akṣauhiṇis under each general. (Skanda Purāṇa, 7.1.119).

**RAKTABĪJA.**

1) *General.* Rebirth of Rambhāsura, father of Mahiṣāsura. Stories of Raktabīja and Rambhāsura are inextricably intertwined.

2) *Origin of Raktabīja.* Once upon a time there lived an asura king called Danu. His two sons, Rambha and Karambha who had no children, did tapas at Pañcanada for the blessing of having issues. Rambha and Karambha meditated upon Mālavaṭa Yakṣa, the former seated at the centre of the five fires and the latter standing in the water. Indra in the guise of a crocodile dragged Karambha away by the feet and killed him. Angry at the death of his brother, Rambha decided to cut off his head and offer it in fire. When he was about to do so, Agni appeared and told him that suicide was worse than killing others, and promised to grant him whatever he desired. Accordingly Rambha requested Agni for a son more effulgent than the latter, who would conquer the three worlds and would not be defeated even by the Devas and the Asuras. Rambha further wanted that son to be as powerful as Vāyu, exceptionally handsome and skilled in archery.

Agni blessed Rambha that he would have, as desired, a son by the woman whom he coveted. On his way back home he saw a beautiful she-buffalo, which he married. He took the buffalo which got pregnant by him, to Pātāla to protect it from the attack by other buffaloes. One day another buffalo felt a passion for Rambha's wife and in the fight that ensued Rambha was killed by it. Rambha's wife died in his funeral pyre. It was from the centre of the fire that the very powerful Mahiṣāsura was born. Rambhāsura also rose from the fire under the name Raktabīja. (Vāmana Purāṇa, Chapter 17; Devī Bhāgavata, 5th Skandha).

3) *Boon to Raktabīja.* Raktabīja secured from Śiva a boon according to which if one drop of blood from his body fell on the battlefield, many Raktabījas would arise from the blood and fight the enemies. Each of these Raktabījas would also be like the others in the matter of strength, form and weapons. (Devī Bhāgavata, 5th Skandha).