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The King with the Vīṇā Flag – Perspectives of Rāvaṇa in film

Abstract

Rāvaṇa, the ten-headed Rākṣasa ('demon') king of the epic the Rāmāyaṇa, is the most fascinating of all the antagonists in films based on Hindu mythology, so powerful that even the Sun cannot rise without his orders, and celebrated as an unparalleled musician-scholar and great devotee of the god Śiva. His passion for the vīṇā, a string instrument with divine associations, is so great that this instrument adorns his royal flag as its emblem. His consciousness of his supreme powers and great knowledge soon gives way to *ahaṅkāra* (hubris) and lust, which leads to his eventual downfall and death at the hands of Rāma, a human avatar of the god Viṣṇu.

Perspectives on Rāvaṇa vary. My work brings out the contrast between his character in the epics and on screen, and the fundamental differences in how he is perceived in films in Hindi and in south Indian languages. I argue that film (cinema and TV) portrayals are more nuanced than his generally 'evil' image in ancient and medieval versions of the epic. I also argue that films from south India, especially Tamil ones, tone down the evil aspect more than those from the north, possibly owing to influences from Dravidian politics. Adherents of this stream of politics argue that the Rāmāyaṇa – including the 12th-century Tamil Rāmāyaṇa by Kampaṇ – served to impose north Indian Brahminical Aryan culture onto the Dravidian people of southern India. Rāvaṇa is seen as a great Dravidian leader, who was killed by the Aryan Rāma. I find that this image of Rāvaṇa has a strong influence in Tamil films, and to some extent in Telugu films. Remarkably, Kampaṇ's epic comes together with its opponent, Dravidian politics, to produce a glorious image of Rāvaṇa in film as a Tamil king who is a musician-scholar with mastery over the vīṇā. Though Telugu films usually do not mention Rāvaṇa's ethnicity, one film, where the superstar N. T. Rama Rao plays him, explicitly refers to him as a Dravidian.

This article focuses more on the south Indian films, comparing and contrasting them with the north Indian (Hindi) ones. Of the latter, the Rāmāyaṇa television series (1987) by Ramanand Sagar, where he is the antagonist, and the series *Raavan* (2006-08) on Zee TV, where he is the protagonist, are of special interest. In the former, he is arrogant, stubborn and wicked, but his greatness as a scholar and warrior is still highlighted. There are also Tamil influences, including Rāvaṇa's celebrated vīṇā flag and a 'Tamil-style' depiction of his court. Though Sagar's series has been termed a contributor to Hindu nationalism by many, it does not portray Rāvaṇa as a complete villain. The Zee series depicts Rāvaṇa in a manner highly unusual in the world of Indian mythological film – as a politico-cultural revolutionary. Rāvaṇa's vīṇā music, while depicted by Sagar, receives further emphasis in more recent Hindi series.

Thus, in both the north and the south, Rāvaṇa is a larger-than-life figure, and a mix of good and evil and of learned and arrogant. However, the evil aspects tend to be emphasized to a greater extent in the north. In spite of this difference, he dies an exalted death in films across languages. One Tamil influence – the vīṇā-player image – is so powerful that it has reached all over India, the 'Aryan' north included.

Keywords

Ravana, Ramayana

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Introduction

Rāvaṇa, the ten-headed, twenty-armed king of the island of Laṅkā, is the chief antagonist of the South- and South-East Asian epic Rāmāyaṇa, whose protagonist is Rāma, prince of Ayōdhyā in northern India.¹ Rāma is considered a human incarnation of the god Viṣṇu. Rāvaṇa is an evil Rākṣasa (demon) in several versions of this epic, including the canonical Sanskrit² epic, the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, which frequently refers to him as the “evil-souled one”³ and the one who makes others cry⁴, but also brings out his royal splendor.⁵ In revenge for the mutilation of his sister Śūrpaṅakhā by Rāma’s brother Lakṣmaṇa, Rāvaṇa abducts Rāma’s wife Sītā. Rāma then lays siege to Laṅkā with his army of Vānaras (monkeys). In the battle that results, Rāma kills Rāvaṇa, and takes back Sītā.

Films portray a far more complex Rāvaṇa. Though maligned for his abduction of Sītā, Rāvaṇa is also widely presented as a great devotee of the god Śiva, with mastery over scholarly disciplines including the Vēdas.⁶ He is the only ‘demon’ who is a scholar of music, a ‘divine’ art form.⁷ His instrument, the harp or lute known as *vīṇā*, which is also the emblem of his royal flag in the Tamil narrative,⁸ is the holiest of all, since it is played by Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning and of the arts including music, and by Śiva. A Sanskrit hymn in praise of Śiva, attributed to Rāvaṇa himself, is recited or sung to this day, and has appeared in many films.⁹ Though Vālmīki hints at these aspects of Rāvaṇa, and other Rāmāyaṇas dwell on them more, their most dramatic emphasis is in film. Rāvaṇa

is possibly the only mythological villain glorified to so great an extent, whether on the silver screen or the small screen, in northern or southern India. The marked difference between his persona in films of the south and that in Hindi films is an important focus of this article.

Evil or not, Rāvaṇa cannot be ignored, given the sheer number of films in which he is indispensable. In India, cinema and television have a crucial role in disseminating mythological stories. To the best of this author's knowledge, no other Rāvaṇa-centric article focused on mythological films has been written so far.¹⁰ More films have been watched for this work than there are arms on Rāvaṇa's body, all in their original languages, except for a Sinhala series, where subtitles were depended upon. This author treats mythology as literature, and does not enter into a debate on its historicity.

Popular film narratives present not simply an evil Rāvaṇa but also a just king, a musician-scholar and a devotee – rare qualities in a demon.¹¹ There is a broad trend to this nuance: the Rāvaṇa of north Indian (Hindi) films is generally violent, while south Indian (Tamil, Kannada, Telugu) films highlight his refined and less villainous qualities. In fact, his glorification is much greater in south Indian films, especially Tamil ones. This work argues that this points to an influence of E.V. Ramasamy's Dravidian politics, which views Dravidian south India as being subjugated by Aryan north India. Rāvaṇa is then seen as a great Tamil/ Dravidian king, and Rāma as representative of Aryan oppression. This will be discussed in

greater detail later in this work. That the iconic Telugu actor N.T. Rama Rao has played Rāvaṇa underlines the latter's importance. However, a Hindi series centered on Rāvaṇa – possibly the only such series in India – that aired on Zee TV from 2006 to 2008 also presents an elevated image of him, albeit not concealing his negative qualities. This article aims to highlight the portrayal of ambiguities in Rāvaṇa's character and to relate the north-south gradient in the emphasis on his positive qualities to the cultural and linguistic politics of the region, with greater focus on the south Indian representation.

The main body of this article begins by summarizing Rāvaṇa's 'traditional' story. Several parts of this story appear in a large number of films in more or less the same form. In the subsequent sections, the story is not repeated, but examples are given of specific episodes that bring out the variation in his personality in film most effectively.

1. Vālmiki's Rāvaṇa

The story of Rāvaṇa in the Vālmiki Rāmāyaṇa – the main mythological background for the films – is summarized below. His early life is described in the Uttara-Kāṇḍa ('later chapter') of this epic.¹² While this Kāṇḍa is considered by many scholars to be a later interpolation, it is of prime importance in the narrative of Rāvaṇa.

The land of Laṅkā is gifted to the Rākṣasa brothers Mālyavān, Sumālī and Mālī. But the Dēvas ('gods') defeat the Rākṣasas in battle, and the throne of Laṅkā

goes to Kubēra, son of the ṛṣi (sage) Viśravas. Sumālī comes up with a plan to recover Laṅkā. He sends his daughter Kaikasī to seduce Viśravas, who fathers four children with her. The eldest, Daśagrīva or Daśānana, named so for his ten heads, would later be called Rāvaṇa.¹³ He and the second son, Kumbhakarṇa, are terrifying demons. The only daughter, Śūrpaṅakhā, is wicked and ugly too. But Vibhīṣaṇa, the youngest, is a pious being. Now, ṛṣi-s are Brahmins – the priestly and scholarly caste considered highest in the Hindu caste hierarchy. Thus, given Rāvaṇa’s birth as the son of a ṛṣi, he is considered a Brahmin by many. This aspect is highlighted in Hindi films, and to some extent in Telugu and Kannada films. But in the Tamil narrative, his Tamil character becomes much more important.

To become as powerful as their elder half-brother, Daśagrīva and his brothers perform great *tapas* (austerities) to please Brahmā, the god of creation and their paternal great-grandfather, and acquire boons from him. Daśagrīva first asks for immortality, but when Brahmā—following the usual pattern in Hindu mythology—says that he cannot grant that, Daśagrīva asks for protection from being killed by a whole list of beings including the Dēvas and his own Rākṣasa race, but says that he has no need for protection from humans (*nara*) or monkeys (*vānara*), since they are too weak.¹⁴ He is of course ultimately killed by Rāma, Viṣṇu’s human avatar. Vibhīṣaṇa, however, asks for more ‘pious’ boons, such as never to stray from the path of Dharma (righteousness). Brahmā is so pleased that

he grants Vibhīṣaṇa immortality even without it being asked for. Kumbhakarna, by a slip of the tongue, asks for uninterrupted sleep.

Equipped with his new powers, Daśagrīva wrests Laṅkā from Kubēra and takes away his ‘aircraft.’ He then flies in it to Mount Kailāsa, home of the god Śiva, but as he approaches the mountain, is unable to move further. He then tries to lift Kailāsa out of the way, but Śiva presses it down, crushing Daśagrīva’s arms. The Rākṣasa emits a terrifying cry, and for a thousand years after that, sings Śiva’s praises, and cries aloud. Śiva, pleased, restores his arms, and gives him a new name: Rāvaṇa, the Screamer. After receiving further boons and gifts from Śiva, Rāvaṇa then flies back to Laṅkā. On the way, he meets a sage’s daughter, Vēdavatī, who is performing austerities. He attempts to force himself on her, but she jumps into a fire, after cursing him that she will be reborn for his destruction. She returns as none other than Sītā.¹⁵

Later, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā arrive in the Daṇḍaka forest, having been exiled there.¹⁶ Śūrpaṅakhā, who rules the place, encounters them there, and expresses a desire to marry Rāma. Rāma refuses, and sends her to his brother. This game continues for a while, until she notices Sītā and is about to attack her, when Lakṣmaṇa chops off Śūrpaṅakhā’s nose and ears. She then goes to Rāvaṇa and convinces him to abduct Sītā as revenge for her mutilation. Rāvaṇa, after having had Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa lured away, arrives disguised as a sage and kidnaps Sītā, placing her in his flying chariot. Rāvaṇa keeps Sītā captive in the Aśōka garden of

his palace. Several of Rāvaṇa's kin, including his wife Mandōdarī, his grandfather Mālyavān, his brother Vibhīṣaṇa and even Kumbhakarṇa, advise him to return Sītā, but his mind is clouded by hubris and lust, and he is stubborn.¹⁷

Rāma, having made friends with the Vānaras ('monkeys'), prepares to wage war on Laṅkā. A prominent Vānara, Hanumān, sets Rāvaṇa's city on fire¹⁸ in his quest for Sītā, but Rāvaṇa still does not agree to send her back. Vibhīṣaṇa, disillusioned with his brother's ways, defects to Rāma's side. The Vānaras build a bridge across the sea, and Rāma and his armies cross over and declare war. Rāvaṇa's side incurs huge losses. Nearly his entire army is destroyed. His giant brother Kumbhakarṇa, roused untimely from sleep, is killed by Rāma. All of Rāvaṇa's sons, and his maternal uncles too, are killed. But Rāvaṇa still refuses to part with Sītā. Finally, Rāma kills Rāvaṇa, places Vibhīṣaṇa on the throne of Laṅkā, and returns to Ayōdhyā with Sītā and Lakṣmaṇa.

Some films – especially in Hindi – add a scene after Rāvaṇa's fall, most probably derived from the Bangla-language Rāmāyaṇa by Kṛttibās Ōjhā (1381-1461), since this author did not find it in other prominent Rāmāyaṇas. As he lies dying, Lakṣmaṇa approaches him, to learn *rājanīti* (statecraft) from him, since Rāvaṇa's knowledge in this field is incomparable.¹⁹ In Kṛttibās, Rāvaṇa is extremely contrite in this scene. But in films, his royal and scholarly pride is intact. Lakṣmaṇa initially stands near his head, but Rāvaṇa (or Rāma) says that a disciple

must always stand at the guru's feet, and Lakṣmaṇa complies. Thus, Rāvaṇa is not truly defeated, in the sense that he makes his enemies bow down to his scholarship.

The Śiva Tāṇḍava Stōtram (henceforth referred to as 'the Stōtram'), the Hymn of Śiva's Cosmic Dance, is recited to this day.²⁰ Though absent from the epics,²¹ this Sanskrit poem is widely said to have been composed in Śiva's praise by Rāvaṇa himself during the Kailāsa incident, and is depicted in film in a grandiose manner. The author of this article has found the Stōtram in Hindi and Telugu films, whereas Tamil films describe this episode with Rāvaṇa singing the Sāma Vēda (the scripture considered to be the source of all music) or the Kāmbhōjī rāga to the accompaniment of the vīṇā.²² Such attributes tone down his 'demonic' side and underscore his 'scholarly' or 'musician' side. The Sāma Vēda reference is present in Vālmīki too, but it receives greater emphasis in the 12th-century Tamil Rāmāyaṇa of Kampan, and consequently, in Tamil film depictions of Rāvaṇa.

The next section discusses the Tamil image of Rāvaṇa, since it is so powerful that it influences even north Indian (Hindi) film depictions. The article then moves on to Telugu and Kannada perspectives, and ends with a discussion of Rāvaṇa in Hindi film.

2. Rāvaṇa in south Indian film: The Tamil perspective

There appear to be two main sources for the Tamil image of Rāvaṇa – the first one being the Kampa Rāmāyaṇam, and the second being Dravidian politics. In the following paragraphs, the influence of each is discussed.

The modern Tamil perception of Rāvaṇa appears to be much more sympathetic than in other regions of India. His devotion (*bhakti*) to Śiva and his expertise in music, both as a performing art and an academic discipline, receive great emphasis. Tamil or Telugu temples to Śiva contain statues of Rāvaṇa, sitting at Kailāsa's foot in a vīṇā-playing pose – the vīṇā often being one whose rod is made from one of Rāvaṇa's own twenty arms²³ and whose sound-box is one of his own ten heads – as a *vāhanam* ('vehicle') for the deity when it is taken out for processions.²⁴ This brings out his great importance in the mythology of Śiva.

As other Rāmāyaṇas do, Kampaṇ's epic too calls Rāvaṇa an *Arakkaṇ* (Rākṣasa), dark-complexioned, with curved teeth, ten heads and twenty arms.²⁵ However, major additions are the frequent appearance of Rāvaṇa's royal *vīṇai-k-koṭi*, the *koṭi* (flag) with the vīṇā emblem,²⁶ and the mentions of Rāvaṇa's mastery over music and the Sāma Vēda.²⁷ Rāvaṇa's image in Tamil culture as a musician-scholar is so powerful that it has found its way into films in other languages as well. For example, the vīṇā flag is seen in the Telugu film *Sampoorna Ramayanam* and Sagar's Hindi series. However, one feature found only in south Indian films – mostly Tamil ones – is the attachment of *-īśvara* ('lord') – a suffix otherwise used

in gods' names – to the name of Rāvaṇa, making it *Rāvaṇēśvara*.²⁸ This, then, presents a clear north-south divide, and also sets Rāvaṇa apart from every other 'demon', underlining the respect he commands as a great scholarly monarch.

I observe that Tamil films on Rāvaṇa often contain pointers to the common belief that he was a Tamil king. In *Sampoorana Ramayanam (SRI)*, a 1958 movie, Rāvaṇa's entry scene has him singing "O Śiva, lord of the southern lands, God of the people of our country, I praise you", in the words of the Tamil Śaiva poet Māṇikkavācakar (9th century).²⁹ A TV series called *Ramayanam*, which features this same line, indicates that Tamil is the mother tongue of Rāvaṇa and his kin.³⁰

In the 1972 movie *Agathiyar*, Rāvaṇa describes himself as a master over several kinds of *yāl*, ancient Tamil harps.³¹ He is also an expert painter. The protagonist of this film is the sage Agastya (rendered *Akattiyar* in Tamil), who is considered to have brought Aryan culture to the Tamil regions.³² Rāvaṇa challenges Agastya to a music contest. The multi-rāga song they sing while playing *vīṇās* is full of complex wordplay, and has each saying that he will defeat the other.³³ Solfège and rāga names are interwoven cleverly and meaningfully into the lyrics. Agastya's music is powerful enough to cause Rāvaṇa's *vīṇā* strings to snap one by one and the nearby mountain to melt. Rāvaṇa, humbled, promises Agastya that he will not trouble people in the southern lands or any other region where the latter is worshipped.

Songs in Rāvaṇa's praise are common in film. In Telugu films, it is typically his wife Maṇḍōdari who sings.³⁴ In *SRI*, a musician from a foreign land arrives in Rāvaṇa's court to sing his praises while playing the vīṇā. The song is *Vīṇai-k koṭiyuṭaiya vēntaṇē* (*O king with the vīṇā flag!*).³⁵ The foreigner sings melodiously, but plays a wrong note on the vīṇā. Rather than being furious at this and announcing a punishment—as would be expected of a demon—Rāvaṇa acts as a senior in the field of music and, blessing the visitor, benevolently asks him to work harder on his vīṇā-playing. At his family's request, Rāvaṇa begins to demonstrate several rāgas, impressing the entire court. He finally launches into an elaborate presentation of his favourite rāga Kāmbhōjī, with which he had pleased Śiva in the past.³⁶ At this point, the string breaks—a bad omen—and Śūrpaṇakhā walks in with a scarred face. Her arrival sets the stage for the hubris-induced downfall of this great scholarly and artistic ruler, since it results in his decision to abduct Sītā.

The rāga Kāmbhōjī is not as old as films make it out to be. Kampaṇ's 12th-century Rāmāyaṇa only mentions Rāvaṇa and others playing older Tamil melodies known as *paṇ*,³⁷ and Kāmbhōjī's present form is not older than the 17th century.³⁸ However, it seems to have become an integral part of the Tamil understanding of Rāvaṇa, given that at least three films – *SRI*, *Agathiyar* and the TV *Ramayanam* – feature him performing this rāga. Years before coming across any of these films, the author had heard of Rāvaṇa's association with Kāmbhōjī from a Tamil schoolmate.

In an important scene in *SRI*'s narrative, Rāma, having destroyed Rāvaṇa's chariot and all his weapons and humiliating him by causing his crown to fall to the ground, tells him to "go today and come tomorrow."³⁹ Rāma could have easily killed Rāvaṇa in this situation, but is bound by the Dharma of war that forbids attacks on an unarmed enemy. Pity from the enemy is considered a deep insult for a brave warrior. We see the complete downfall of the earth-shaking monarch who had once fought the Elephants of the Directions and, not wishing to dislodge their broken tusks from his chest, had worn these as ornaments.⁴⁰ He walks home through a sea of corpses. Utterly broken and humiliated, Rāvaṇa sings a mournful song in his Śiva shrine, and then rides into battle even when Maṇḍōdari begs him to return Sītā and end the war.⁴¹ He proudly announces that Rāma's name will be associated with his name until the end of time.

SRI and the TV *Ramayanam*, while extolling his scholarship and his music, say that the abduction of Sītā is an unpardonable sin. A 1976 film, *Dasavatharam*, only shows Rāvaṇa's demonic side. But the movie *Ilangeswaran* (1987), probably based on a play by the same name, strives to subvert every other film narrative of Rāvaṇa.⁴² It begins with Rāvaṇa sitting in Vaikuṅṭha (Viṣṇu's heaven), dressed as a typical Vaiṣṇava devotee (in contrast to his usual Śaiva appearance). The divine sage Nārada describes to him the ongoing Daśahrā festival on Earth, which in northern India is celebrated by burning effigies of a ten-headed Rāvaṇa.⁴³ Nārada remarks that the humans do not know that the ten heads represent ten positive

qualities. This criticism of the burning of Rāvaṇa's effigy is reminiscent of the Dravidian politics of E.V. Ramasamy, popularly known as Periyar, the Great One (1876-1973), in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Periyar's ideology, which was based on the belief that south Indians were originally of the Dravidian race, was strongly critical of Brahminical Hinduism which he considered an Aryan abomination. Part of his ideology was a critique of the demonization of the 'Dravidian' leader Rāvaṇa in the Rāmāyaṇa,⁴⁴ and advocating the rituals of *Rāvaṇa-līlā* (plays based on Rāvaṇa's life) and *Rāma-dahanam* (burning of Rāma [as an effigy]) as a counter to the north Indian ('Aryan') rituals of *Rām-līlā* and *Rāvaṇ-dahan*. The Rāma-burning ritual was carried out by his wife Maniammai after his death, and continued at some scale at least till 2016.⁴⁵ Notably, *Ilangeswaran*, while being strongly pro-Rāvaṇa, deifies Rāma like all the other mythological films.

Seemingly echoing Periyar's thoughts, *Ilangeswaran*'s Rāvaṇa expresses displeasure with his portrayal in several Rāmāyaṇas beginning with Vālmīki's. He is furious that his actions such as kidnapping Sītā are labeled demonic, whereas when Indra, king of the Dēvas, behaves in a similar way, he is called a god. This film presents Sītā as Rāvaṇa's biological daughter—a narrative found in some Rāmāyaṇas—making his abduction of her not evil or lustful.⁴⁶ However, Rāma misunderstands, declares war, and kills him. His end is a consequence of his past

sin and Vēdavati's curse. However, being the earthly incarnation of Viṣṇu's gatekeeper, he is granted salvation after death.⁴⁷

Though the Periyar influence appears more direct in *Ilangeswaran*, the general perception of Rāvaṇa as a scholarly Tamil monarch, ubiquitous in Tamil films that portray him, is in line with Periyar's views. It is notable that though Periyar was so critical of the Rāmāyaṇa, his ideology combines with Kampan's epic to create the image of Rāvaṇa that we see in Tamil film. The influence of this perception is so strong that it is not limited to Tamil circles. Components of it—especially the vīṇā—are found not just in Telugu films, but in Hindi films too, as we will see later.

3. Rāvaṇa in south Indian films: Telugu and Kannada perspectives

Rāvaṇa's character in Telugu films is very similar to that in Tamil films. He is a vīṇā player, singer and music connoisseur here too, taking after the depiction in Kampan's Tamil epic. However, barring one prominent exception that will be discussed in this section, Rāvaṇa's ethnicity is generally not commented upon. This is most probably because the influence of Periyar's Dravidian politics has largely been limited to the Tamil world, and not all of south India. Interestingly, the Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇamu, a well-known Telugu Rāmāyaṇa, does not contain the music angle.⁴⁸

The Telugu actor-turned-politician Nandamuri Taraka Rama Rao (1923-1996), popularly known as NTR, was a superstar.⁴⁹ He has played prominent ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ mythological characters, such as Rāma (including in *SRI*), Kṛṣṇa, Duryōdhana and Karṇa.⁵⁰ In both kinds of roles, the entire focus tends to be on him. He bestows a glorious persona on even a negative character. His role as Rāvaṇa in the three films *Seetharama Kalyanam* (*The Wedding of Sītā and Rāma*, 1960), *Bhookailas* (*Kailāsa on Earth*, 1958) and *Sri Rama Pattabhishekam* (*The Coronation of Śrī Rāma*, 1978) is of special interest.

The role in *Kalyanam* is the most demonic of NTR’s Rāvaṇas, since it includes Rāvaṇa’s rape of the heavenly nymph Rambhā.⁵¹ But there are also romantic moments, such as a scene where Maṇḍōdari sings Rāvaṇa’s praises as he accompanies her on the vīṇā. Rāvaṇa’s poetic abilities shine forth in his rendition of the Stōtram in Śiva’s praise. Even when playing a vīṇā strung with his own guts, NTR’s Rāvaṇa appears ‘impressive’ rather than ‘evil.’⁵²

Bhookailas, a Telugu film (made simultaneously in Kannada as *Bhookailasa*), is based on the eponymous 1938 Kannada play. The premise is Rāvaṇa’s encounter with Śiva and his attempt to bring Śiva’s energy in *liṅgam* (phallic) form to Laṅkā, a story from the Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa.⁵³ In the portrayal of this story in a Hindi series, *Devon ke Dev Mahadev* (2011-14), Rāvaṇa’s hubris makes him initially attempt to uproot Kailāsa itself with Śiva atop it in a bid to take the god to Laṅkā, but in *Bhookailas*, he seeks the *liṅgam* out of filial duty, since it

is Kaikasī who asks for it. But the gods worry that giving it to a ‘demon’ could have disastrous consequences. To distract Rāvaṇa, they manipulate his mind to desire the goddess Pārvatī, consort of Śiva, and Rāvaṇa marries Maṇḍōdari mistaking her for the goddess. Through another trick, they cause the *liṅgam* to become inextricably fixed to the ground before it can reach Laṅkā. But through this, Rāvaṇa becomes the reason for the establishment of a new shrine to his beloved god Śiva, Gōkarṇa, which would be known as *Bhū-Kailāsa* (Kailāsa on Earth). *Bhookailas* does not feature the vīṇā, but contributes to Rāvaṇa’s musician image by depicting him singing songs such as the iconic *Dēvadēva Dhavaḷācala-mandira* (*God of Gods, Dweller of the White Mountain*), a hymn to Śiva, sung by Rāvaṇa as he walks towards the abode of his beloved deity. This song has been sung by the well-known vocalist Ghantasala Venkateswara Rao.⁵⁴

When Rāma and Rāvaṇa face each other in the 1971 movie *Sampoorna Ramayanam*, each comments on the *tējassu* (brilliance, splendor) of the other, with Rāvaṇa adding that Rāma is a worthy opponent. The “go today and come tomorrow” scene follows, with the Tamil line directly translated into Telugu.⁵⁵ A lonely Rāvaṇa, after breaking into a musical lament over the loss of his near and dear ones, realizes that Rāma is Viṣṇu. Then comes a ‘ten heads’ scene much like *SR2*, except that the winning emotion is not anger, but the quality of a proud, brave warrior who never shies away from battle. He has already told Maṇḍōdari that

ending the war now just to save his life is pointless. He orders the Sun—who, like the other ‘Planets’, is under his control—to rise, and plunges into combat.⁵⁶

Like NTR playing Rāvaṇa in several Telugu films, in the 1960 Kannada film *Dashavathara* (*The Ten Avatars [of Viṣṇu]*), it is the iconic Kannada star, Rajkumar, who plays Rāvaṇa.⁵⁷ Here one finds Rāvaṇa being addressed as Rāvaṇēśvara, in the manner of Tamil films. Rajkumar’s Rāvaṇa is aware of his past as Viṣṇu’s heavenly gatekeeper, and is desperate to be killed by Viṣṇu as Rāma so that he can return to that position and get salvation. To this end, he knowingly officiates at a religious ritual to ensure Rāma’s victory, a scene that emphasizes Rāvaṇa’s Brahmin character. Lakṣmaṇa says of him, “People’s barbed tongues (*muḷlu nālige*) may call Rāvaṇa a Rākṣasa (demon), but here in Laṅkā, he is the beloved son of the goddess of Dharma.”

Pattabhishekam has NTR playing both Rāma and Rāvaṇa. It is classified under Rāmāyaṇa films in the filmography owing to its name *Sri Rama Pattabhishekam*, but it deserves to be in the ‘Rāvaṇa-centric’ category, given how magnificent Rāvaṇa’s character is. NTR’s Rāvaṇa here is a far more ‘noble’ soul than in *Bhookailas* and *Kalyanam*, and closely parallels Rajkumar’s Rāvaṇa of *Dashavathara* in his proud yet humble performance of the ritual for Rāma. The episode where Rāvaṇa acts as a guru to Lakṣmaṇa is depicted more grandly and honorably here than in other films, and takes place not on the battlefield after Rāvaṇa’s fall, but within his palace, before his final battle.⁵⁸ After being asked by

Rāma to “come tomorrow,” Rāvaṇa returns the next day and says to Rāma, “Look, I am here. Destroy your enemy.” When Rāma’s fatal arrow hits him, flowers rain on him from heaven, forming a large carpet around him. He lies down on it and salutes Śiva, who sends the water of the divine river Gaṅgā into his mouth.⁵⁹ Having paid respects to Brahmā, Rāvaṇa gives up the ghost with Viṣṇu’s name on his lips. This is the most glorified version of Rāvaṇa’s death that this author has come across.

An aspect that sets *Pattabhishekam* apart is in Rāvaṇa’s monologue following Śūrpaṅkhā’s mutilation. He asks whether this act is an attack of the Aryan race on his Dravidian race. Intriguingly, in this film, he is both a Dravidian and a Brahmin: while Periyar’s view would be that Brahmins represent Aryan culture and are the enemy of the Dravidian race. References to Aryans and Dravidians are indeed rare in mythological films. NTR’s own politics from 1982 onwards was focused on a Telugu identity rather than on a pan-Dravidian one.⁶⁰ It would be interesting to know his political leanings at the time of his role in *Pattabhishekam*, and compare them to those of the makers of this film.

4. North Indian perspectives

In the south, the image of Rāvaṇa as a musician receives great celebration. Though northern (i.e. Hindi) films depict this as well, the overall image is quite different. Some examples are presented in the following paragraphs. Of these, a television

series centered on him that aired on Zee TV from 2006 to 2008, named *Raavan*, presents a character never seen on screen before or after. In general, though the Rāvaṇa of north Indian films is scholarly like his south Indian counterpart, he is more brutal. In addition to these, Zee's Rāvaṇa is a political revolutionary – something that is unusual in the world of Rāmāyaṇa-related cinema and television series.

The episode of Rāvaṇa as Lakṣmaṇa's instructor in statecraft, though from the Bangla Rāmāyaṇa, is pervasive in Hindi film. This brings out Rāvaṇa's Brahmin character.

The Rāvaṇa of *Sampoorna Ramayan* (SR2, 1961) is a strange mix of 'good' and 'evil' qualities.⁶¹ He once attempts to force himself on Sītā. He violently kicks Vibhīṣaṇa on the chest while banishing him. But after that, as he stands alone, he asks himself whether he should fight Rāma or return Sītā. As he ponders this, his additional heads, each representing a different quality, appear. The first to appear – and the last to disappear – is Knowledge, representing his discernment of right and wrong, followed by three other positive qualities on his right and four negative qualities on his left – a larger-scale equivalent of the 'angel' and 'devil' versions of characters so common in cartoons. The positive heads, which implore him to return Sītā, and the negative heads, which urge him to go to war, are equally balanced – until one more head appears. This is Anger, to which Rāvaṇa ultimately succumbs.

At the start of the war, Rāma bows to Rāvaṇa—to Rāvaṇa the great scholar (*Mahā-panḍit*), not to Rāvaṇa the warrior. But Rāvaṇa retorts that only warriors exist on the battlefield, and challenges Rāma to fight. After the war, when Lakṣmaṇa, who has come to the dying Rāvaṇa to learn statecraft, asks why such an intelligent scholar as him should become Rāma's enemy, he remarks that this was what made him victorious over Rāma: Rāvaṇa never let Rāma enter Laṅkā, but he has managed to secure a place in Rāma's house, i.e. Viṣṇu's heaven Vaikuṅṭha.

The *Ramayan* series (1987) directed by Ramanand Sagar has been extensively studied in the context of a rise in Rama-centric Hindu nationalism.⁶² Here Rāvaṇa, while wicked and arrogant to the extent of not heeding the advice of any well-wisher, is not a complete villain. In his entry scene, he is welcomed into his court with an adulatory song and dance performance which includes a picturization of several verses of the Stōtram.⁶³ He is a brave warrior and proud king whose head bows down in front of nobody except Śiva. It is held high even at the moment of death. He receives an emperor's funeral, where Rāma himself praises his knowledge and pays respects to him. Interestingly, Sagar makes Rāvaṇa's court appear like that of a Tamil king⁶⁴ through a Tamil-style statue of dancing Śiva, the dancers' costumes, and the pillars shaped like the mythical beast *yāli*.⁶⁵ Another Tamil influence is the prominent depiction of the vīṇā flag.⁶⁶ It is important to mention that Sagar quotes several Rāmāyaṇas, Kampaṇ's included, as his sources.

More recent Hindi series, such as *Vishnu Puran (Tales of Viṣṇu)*, 2000-2002), *Devon ke Dev Mahadev (Mahādēva,⁶⁷ God of Gods)*, a Śiva-centric series aired from 2011 to 2014, and *Siya ke Ram (Sītā's Rāma)*, a 2015-16 series, have depicted Rāvaṇa much more demonically. In *Mahadev*, he is a great devotee who turns evil. In *Vishnu Puran* and *Siya ke Ram*, he is a villain through and through. However, in the latter, he is honored in death, as he recalls his past as Viṣṇu's gatekeeper. As he lies dying, he imparts lessons to Lakṣmaṇa that are not limited to statecraft and become a spiritual discourse. This series stars Karthik Jayaram, a south Indian actor who mostly works in the Kannada industry, as Rāvaṇa.

It is interesting to observe the trajectory of the vīṇā in Hindi film depictions of Rāvaṇa. It is not shown in *SR2*. Sagar's series might be the first Hindi film to depict it. 21st-century series such as the two mentioned in the previous paragraph give it more emphasis. *Mahadev* portrays Rāvaṇa as setting the verses of the Vēdas to music, and singing them as he plays his vīṇā. *Siya ke Ram* also has scenes of a vīṇā-playing Rāvaṇa.

Though not a mythological series, *Bharat Ek Khoj (India: A Discovery)*, 1988-89) covers the Rāmāyaṇa in two episodes. It draws from several versions of the epic, and, with a historian's eye, places it in the context of Indo-Aryan culture, with its caste hierarchy, advancing southwards in ancient India. The indigenous people, seen as savages by the Indo-Aryans, were called *rākṣasa*, roughly translated as 'demon.' Rāma's decimation of Rākṣasas in Daṇḍaka to 'save' Brahmin sages is

interpreted as the Indo-Aryans increasing their territory by killing the indigenous people. Interestingly, Rāvaṇa's part-Brahmin birth indicates a mixing of Aryan culture with indigenous culture, says the narrator. Ironically, the 'Aryan' Rāma, though the enemy of the 'Rākṣasa' Rāvaṇa, recognizes his scholarship and, as he lies dying, sends Lakṣmaṇa to him to learn statecraft.

Raavan (2006-08) on Zee TV, with Narendra Jha (1962-2018) in the lead role, is possibly the only Indian TV series on Rāvaṇa's life. It is based primarily on two Rāvaṇa-centric Hindi novels: *Vayaṃ Rakṣāmaḥ* (*We Protect*) by Acharya Chaturseen (1891-1960) and *Laṅkēśvar* (*The Lord of Laṅkā*) by Madanmohan Sharma "Shahi" (1945-1987), which have a multi-layered, pseudo-historical narrative and deserve a separate academic study.⁶⁸ Both contain anachronisms which find their way into the series. We see telescopes, flying machines, firearms and bombs. Laṅkā is shown as already being a scientifically advanced civilization in 5000 BCE. Unlike in the novels, here Rāvaṇa tells his own story, before imparting his knowledge of *rājanīti* to Lakṣmaṇa. This Rāvaṇa is unusual, and does not fit neatly into the north-south pattern that this work has spoken of so far.

Shahi says that through *Laṅkēśvar*, he aims to bring out the "exalted and scholarly character of the World-Emperor Rāvaṇa."⁶⁹ On the other hand, Chaturseen's Rāvaṇa, while being a scholar of the Vēdas, is rather brutal. Jha's character draws from both. Although Rāvaṇa's violence is not condoned, he is

portrayed as a great being. The title song has Rāvaṇa singing about his own attributes, while dancing and playing on drums.

Here we see a very different Rāvaṇa from earlier films: tall and slim, with long arms and shoulder-length hair. He often wears boots and a flowing cape, and carries a sword or battle-axe, which appear more Western than Indian. Rāvaṇa's clan are known as Daityas (Asuras), not as Rākṣasas. Rather than a class of mythological beings, the term 'Rākṣasa' represents adherents of Rāvaṇa's new cult.

In Vālmīki's epic, Brahmā creates the waters, and two sets of beings. Those who say that they will protect (*rakṣāmaḥ*) the waters are termed Rakṣas-es or Rākṣasa-s, and those who say that they will consume (*yakṣāmaḥ*) the waters are termed Yakṣa-s.⁷⁰ In Chatursen's novel, these statements become cultural mottos. "Vayaṁ rakṣāmaḥ" (*We protect*) is in fact used as a war cry by Rāvaṇa and his forces. A theme that is central is the establishment of a new culture, almost a new religion, known as the Rakṣa-Sanskṛti, the Rākṣasa Culture.⁷¹ It is opposed to the Ārya-Sanskṛti – the Aryan culture – and aims to wipe it out. Anybody who does not accept the Rakṣa culture is killed. There are several visuals of the Rākṣasa armies plundering and massacring, with Rāvaṇa's laughing face as a backdrop. The Rakṣa-Sanskṛti has no basis in the epics, and is most probably Chatursen's own idea, derived from *rakṣāmaḥ* ('[we] protect'), that influenced Shahi's novel too. This TV series depicts the spread of this culture to lands as far as Indonesia and Africa.

Zee's Rāvaṇa is an intriguing character. Everything he does, whether taking back Laṅkā from Kubēra, or sending Śūrpaṅakhā to the Daṇḍaka forest, is for the sake of furthering the Rakṣa-Sanskṛti. His killing of her husband—an episode recorded in Vālmīki's Uttara-Kāṇḍa—is because of the other's refusal to accept the new cult.⁷² In fact, his very abduction of Sītā is not out of attraction for her, but in retaliation for what he sees as an attack on the Rakṣa-Sanskṛti. He even publishes a new Vēda, the Kṛṣṇa Yajurvēda or 'dark' Yajurvēda, where the original Vēdic deities (Dēvas) have no place, and Rudra (Śiva) is the only deity to be worshipped.⁷³ He has no personal attachment to Laṅkā, and conquers it only for Sumālī's sake. He aims to wipe out the caste hierarchy of the Aryans, and promotes intercaste marriages. His own marriage to Mandōdarī is an intercaste one, since he is a Śūdra and Mandōdarī is a Kṣatriya. All other films describe Rāvaṇa as a Brahmin, and the Zee series is possibly the only one that depicts him as a Śūdra, though it occasionally calls him a Brahmin. In contrast to this 'progressive' image, Zee's Rāvaṇa is ruthless, killing anyone who refuses to accept his tenets. He beheads them with his axe as he shouts "*Vayam rakṣāmah.*"

Even this series is not devoid of the vīṇā image, though the emphasis is less than in Sagar, *Mahadev* and *Siya ke Ram*. The Zee series does depict the Kailāsa episode with Rāvaṇa playing a vīṇā made with part of his own head.

Zee's Rāvaṇa, in a stark departure from Vālmīki, clarifies to his wives Mandōdarī and Citrāṅgadā that his abduction of Sītā is purely a political act. On his

deathbed, he says to Lakṣmaṇa, “You may think that [my] abduction of your sister-in-law is the basis for our enmity, but this feud is very old...” implying that this is a clash of cultures, not of individuals.

The depiction of Rāvaṇa’s final fall differs from both novels. He sees Rāma’s Brahmāstra coming towards him, but does not retaliate, since only another Brahmāstra can counter a Brahmāstra, and this would have disastrous consequences. He says to himself, “No, Daśānana. Your goal is not the destruction of the universe...” He respectfully accepts the fatal arrow and gives up his life. He then becomes Shahi’s “exalted World-Emperor”.

Conclusion

Writing this paper has been like the final battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. Rāma cuts off Rāvaṇa’s head several times, but it reappears each time. Similarly, this author reached several points when he felt that he has collected all the information, only to have a new facet of Rāvaṇa’s personality pop up in front of him. It has not been possible in this piece to discuss the righteous but ever-suffering wife Mandōdarī, Vibhīṣaṇa who is either a pious soul or a traitor, Kumbhakarṇa who is either a terrifying giant or a good person on the wrong side, Śūrpaṅakhā with her multiple interpretations, and many others. Also left out is the Asura Cūrapatumaṅ from a different story, whose character bears strong influences of Rāvaṇa in the Rāmāyaṇa.

To do full justice to the proverbial ‘ten faces’ of Rāvaṇa, one would need to write books. However, the present work shows significant differences between his portrayals in epics and films, and a geographical variation in the film portrayals.

The name Daśānana, Ten-Face, though referring to ten physical heads of the Rākṣasa monarch in the epics, takes on a much broader meaning in film, in the sense that there are several Rāvaṇas: Ramanand Sagar’s Rāvaṇa who listens to nobody’s advice and whose head remains held high till the very end, the demon Rāvaṇa of *Vishnu Puran*, Zee TV’s shrewd yet ruthless cultural revolutionary whose every move is dedicated to the Rakṣa-Sanskṛti, *Siya ke Ram*’s outright villain who on his deathbed remembers his past as Viṣṇu’s divine guard... Indeed, this author sees far more variation across films in Rāvaṇa’s character than in Rāma’s.

The three Rāvaṇas portrayed in three different films by one actor (NTR) do not have the same personality. In *Seetharama Kalyanam*, Rāvaṇa is a romantic husband to Maṇḍōdari, but still forces himself on Rambhā. In *Bhookailas*, he hits and kicks Maṇḍōdari when he realizes that she is not Pārvatī, but soon realizes his folly, accepts her as his wife, and does *tapas* to please Śiva. However, in *Sri Rama Pattabhishekam*, we see an entirely different character: a great Dravidian leader, scholar and powerful emperor, whose life is summarized in song form by Maṇḍōdari just before Lakṣmaṇa arrives seeking knowledge. Just like Rajkumar’s Rāvaṇa in *Dashavathara*, he paves the way for his own end by officiating at the

ritual for Rāma's victory, and finally, gracefully accepts his demise and is worshipped as he dies.

The Tamil interpretation of Rāvaṇa as a master of the vīṇā—a 'divine' instrument—has had a great influence even in Hindi films such as Ramanand Sagar's *Ramayan* series, which includes his vīṇā flag prominently, and *Siya ke Ram* and *Mahadev*, which show him playing the instrument. The wide reach of this Kampa Rāmāyaṇam-derived image justifies the title of this article.

Telugu films have taken up two other Tamil influences from the Kampa Rāmāyaṇam. The first is his abduction of Sītā by lifting her with the piece of earth on which she stood, or simply without touching her.⁷⁴ The second is the "go today and come tomorrow" scene, which brings out the poignancy of his downfall. *Sri Rama Pattabhishekam* also shows his vīṇā flag. The form of address "Rāvaṇēśvara" ("Lord Rāvaṇa"), which mainly appears in Tamil films, although also in the Kannada film *Dashavathara*, is never found in Hindi films.

Hindi, Telugu and Kannada films may bring out Rāvaṇa's Brahmin character, with the Hindi narrative often making him demonic in spite of his Brahmin-ness, while Tamil films tend to portray him as a Tamil or Dravidian king with mastery over Tamil music, hinting at an influence of the anti-Rāma, pro-Rāvaṇa Dravidian politics of Periyar and others.⁷⁵ This influence is the most conspicuous in *Ilangeswaran*, where Rāvaṇa expresses unhappiness at how several Rāmāyaṇas have portrayed him, and criticizes the *Rāvaṇ-dahan* ritual. But out of

all the films watched for the present study, it is only *Sri Rama Pattabhishekam*—a Telugu film—that explicitly refers to “*mana Drāviḍa jāti*”, “our Dravidian race.” Moving further south into Sri Lanka, a recent Sinhala narrative on Derana TV seems to turn every Indian narrative on its head in a bid to establish Rāvaṇa as a national deity of sorts, in line with a political phenomenon known as Ravanisation.⁷⁶ It is noteworthy that Dravidian politics and Sinhala nationalism, which are against each other, both claim Rāvaṇa as an icon.⁷⁷ In any case, there is a stark difference between the Tamil narrative and other Indian narratives. In spite of this difference, the vīṇā aspect alone of the Tamil narrative has entered nearly every other narrative. An interesting observation is that while Periyar was strongly critical of Rāma and of Kampan’s epic, calling the poet “villainous,”⁷⁸ this very epic seemingly comes together with Periyar’s Dravidian ideology to produce a glorious image of Rāvaṇa as a scholarly, musical Tamil king – an image so powerful that it no longer remained limited to the Tamil sphere, eventually finding its way into Sagar’s Hindi (northern Indian) television series in the form of the vīṇā flag and the song of praise in his ‘Tamil-style’ court. The vīṇā-playing image of the Rākṣasa monarch persists in Hindi film to this day.

In spite of the exalted image, Tamil films do not condone Rāvaṇa’s wrongdoings. Even *Ilangeswaran*, whose narrative strongly points to an influence of Periyar, depicts Rāvaṇa’s behaviour with Vēdavatī as a sin. But still, his persona as a vīṇā-playing scholar is harped upon, so to speak, to a far greater extent in Tamil

films than in others. Just by virtue of its depiction in film, the rāga Kāmbhōjī, never once mentioned by Kampan, becomes inextricably linked to Rāvaṇa as the rāga that he played to impress the great god Śiva. This anecdote is another unique feature of Tamil depictions of Rāvaṇa. The musical aspects work to downplay his evil side. Though this happens in Telugu films too, the fact that Rāvaṇa is played by the superstar NTR in three Telugu films might itself contribute to Rāvaṇa's 'not-so-evil' image there.

Zee's Rāvaṇa is unique, not just among films from northern India, but in the entire 'Rāvaṇasphere.' His physical appearance itself differs from other films: tall and slim, with flowing hair and a long cape. Though there is great admiration of his scholarship, his music does not receive much mention except in the Kailāsa scene. He is a shrewd politician. He is a loving husband and father, and can be quite tender in some scenes. His kidnapping of Sītā is politically motivated, and not driven by lust. However, his brutality in scenes such as his killing of his sister's husband is much greater than even in Sagar's series. Of course, Rāvaṇa's establishment of the Rakṣa-Sanskṛti is unique to the Zee series. This one aspect sets Zee's Rāvaṇa apart from every other Rāvaṇa who has appeared on screen. This Rāvaṇa and the Tamil Rāvaṇa, while both having larger-than-life personalities, are thus very unlike one another. It is almost as though they are two distinct characters. Zee's Rāvaṇa is the protagonist of his tale, and tells his own story. While this is also true for the Tamil Rāvaṇa of *Ilangeswaran*, Zee's character becomes much more magnificent than

even this Rāvaṇa. This work speaks of Periyar's influence in *Ilangeswaran* in the form of the critique of *Rāvaṇ-dahan*, and of indirect influences of Dravidian politics in other Tamil depictions, but in spite of this, the argument is complicated by the fact that Zee's Rāvaṇa is the only one who explicitly criticizes the caste hierarchy that is prevalent in Aryanized society, and proposes intercaste marriages to end it. Thus, he becomes a hero in a sense, in spite of his largely cold personality. This is the only series where Rāvaṇa is not just a mythological character but also the representative of a school of thought.

Rāvaṇa's death in the Zee series comes very close to the corresponding scene in *Sri Rama Pattabhishekam* where he is played by NTR. While the specifics of the two scenes are different, both convey the same message: Rāvaṇa is a class apart from all other demon kings who have been killed in Hindu mythology. When he dies, the entire Universe takes notice.

The Rāmāyaṇa's sway is not limited to South Asia alone. Versions of the epic abound in South-East Asia too. It would be of interest to study whether differences between the sociopolitical atmosphere of Thailand or Cambodia and that of India or Sri Lanka result in a change in the film perception of Rāvaṇa.

Rāvaṇa is evil for some, grey for some, a great musician-scholar for others, and for still others, a national icon. No other Rākṣasa or Asura has been able to achieve his exalted status in popular culture including film. Is it due to his 'acceptance' as a 'Brahmin,' or to the influence of Dravidian politics? Is it just the

strength of his personality that holds people in awe? Whatever be the case, he is *advitīya*, ‘without a second.’ It is apt to end with a line that Sagar’s Rāvaṇa says to his mother before the war and that is quoted by his grandfather after his demise:

“I am the only one, there is no other like me. There never has been,
and there never will be.”

Ēkō ’ham, dvitīyō nāsti, na bhūtō, na bhaviṣyati.

Appendix: Filmography

Film	Language	Year	Medium
<u>Rāvāna-centric films</u>			
1. <i>Bhookailas/ Bhookailasa (The Earthly Kailāsa)</i>	Telugu/ Kannada (south Indian)	1958	Cinema
2. <i>Ilangeswaran (The Lord of Laṅkā)</i>	Tamil (south Indian)	1987	Cinema
3. <i>Raavan</i> (aired on Zee TV)	Hindi (northern Indian)	2006-2008	Television (105 episodes)
4. <i>Ravana</i> (aired on Derana TV, a Sri Lankan channel) <u>Season 1, Season 2</u>	Sinhala (Sri Lankan)	Since 2018 (season 3 expected)	Television (130 episodes so far)
<u>Rāmāyana</u>			
5. <i>Sampoarana Ramayanam (The Complete Rāmāyana)</i>	Tamil	1958	Cinema
6. <i>Sampoorna Ramayan (The Complete Rāmāyana)</i>	Hindi	1961	Cinema
7. <i>Sampoorna Ramayanam (The Complete Rāmāyana)</i>	Telugu	1971	Cinema
8. <i>Ramayan</i> (directed and produced by Ramanand Sagar)	Hindi	1987	Television (78 episodes, several featuring Rāvāḥa)

9. <u>Ramayanam</u>	Tamil	(unknown)	Television (131 short episodes on YouTube, several featuring Rāvaṇa)
10. <u>Ramayana – The Legend of Prince Rama</u> (Indo-Japanese collaboration)	English (pan-Indian)	1992	Cinema (anime)
11. The Rāmāyaṇa episodes of <i>Bharat Ek Khoj</i> (India – A Discovery), a series on Indian history and culture including mythology <u>Part 1</u> , <u>Part 2</u>	Hindi	1988-89	Television (total 53 episodes, 2 on Rāmāyaṇa)
12. <u>Siya ke Ram</u> (<i>Sītā's Rāma</i>)	Hindi	2015-16	Television (326 episodes, several featuring Rāvaṇa)
13. <u>Seetharama Kalyanam</u> (<i>The Wedding of Sītā and Rāma</i>)	Telugu	1960	Cinema
14. <u>Seetha Kalyanam</u> (<i>The Wedding of Sītā</i>)	Telugu	1976	Cinema
15. <u>Seetharama Vanavasam</u> (<i>The Forest Life of Sītā and Rāma</i>)	Telugu	1977	Cinema
16. <u>Sri Rama Pattabhishekam</u> (<i>The Coronation of Lord Rāma</i>)	Telugu	1978	Cinema

<u>The incarnations of Viṣṇu</u>			
17. <i><u>Dashavathara</u></i> (<i>The Ten Avatars</i>)	Kannada	1960	Cinema
18. <i><u>Dasavatharam</u></i> (<i>The Ten Avatars</i>)	Tamil	1976	Cinema
19. <i><u>Vishnu Puran</u></i> (<i>Tales of Viṣṇu</i>)	Hindi	2000-2002	Television (125 episodes, Rāvaṇa appears in 24 of them)
<u>Other themes</u>			
20. <i><u>Agathiyar</u></i> (<i>Agastya</i>)	Tamil	1972	Cinema
21. <i><u>Devon ke Dev ... Mahadev</u></i> (<i>Śiva, God of Gods</i>)	Hindi	2011-2014	Television (820 episodes, Rāvaṇa features in some)

Notes

¹ Laṅkā is widely though debatably identified with modern Sri Lanka, see Nagar, Malti, and S. C. Nanda, "Ethnographic Evidence for the Location of Ravana's Lanka", 1986, *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute* 45: 71-77. Ayōdhyā is identified by tradition with the city of Ayodhya in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh in modern India.

² This work does not use diacritics for the following: (a) names of people alive in the 19th, 20th and/or 21st centuries – e.g. Chatursen rather than *Caturasēna*, (b) names of modern geographical locations – e.g. Sri Lanka instead of *Śrī Laṅkā*, (c) names of movies, television series and channels, and (d) names of languages (Sanskrit, Tamil, Kannada, Bangla, Hindi, Sinhala – rather than *Samśkṛta*, *Tamiḷ*, *Kannaḍa*, *Bāṅlā*, *Hindī*, *Siṃhala*).

³ "Śrīmad Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa", 1969. Part I: 669, Part II: 112, 175, 197, 591. Gorakhpur: Gita Press. 7th edition 2004.

⁴ *Loka-rāvaṇa*, a pun on his name, since Rāvaṇa means the one who screams or cries. Gita Press 1969, Part I: 629, Part II: 170.

⁵ Gita Press 1969, Part I: 633, Part II: 31-47, 72-73, 75, 169.

⁶ Ancient scriptures believed to be the source of all knowledge.

⁷ There do exist depictions of another Śiva-worshipping 'demon', Bāṅāsura, playing musical instruments with his multiple hands, see Chandrakant, Kamala, *Aniruddha, Amar Chitra Katha*, 1974, edited by Anant Pai: India Book House (https://archive.org/details/scanned-document-81_202009), and Standage, Kevin, "National Museum, New Delhi – Paintings", 2020, *Kevin Standage: An Indian Travel Photography Blog* (blog), <https://kevinstandagephotography.wordpress.com/2020/10/24/national-museum-delhi-miniature-paintings/>. However, this does not receive the same emphasis as Rāvaṇa's music does, and the author has not seen it in film.

⁸ Flag emblems play a highly significant role in Hindu mythology. A flag emblem gives us important information about a character's personality. For example, Balarāma, a character from the other Hindu epic the Mahābhārata, has a *tāla* (palmyra) tree (*Borassus flabellifer*) on his flag, see Monier-Williams, Monier, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 1872, online edition: University of Cologne, <https://www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/MW72Scan/2014/web/webtc/servepdf.php?dict=mw72&page=0372>, which reflects his fondness for alcohol, see Apte, Vaman Shivram, *The practical Sanskrit-English dictionary*, 1957-1959, Pune: Prasad Prakashan, https://dsal.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/apte_query.py?page=1136 and https://dsal.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/app/apte_query.py?page=1155, since the palmyra tree is the source of an alcoholic drink.

⁹ Beeharry, Girish and Sushil D Sharma (transliteration, proofreading). 2018. "Shivatandavastotra by Ravana." Sanskrit Documents. Last Modified 2018. https://sanskritdocuments.org/doc_shiva/shivTAND.html and https://sanskritdocuments.org/doc_shiva/shivTAND_meaning.html.

Mahadevan, Shankar (singer). 2016. "Shiv Tandav Stotram." Times Music.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRhcTPKdmrk>.

¹⁰ Though there does exist work on a 2010 Tamil film, *Raavanan*, which is modern fiction rather than mythology, see Basole, Amit, "Subverting Our Epics: Mani Ratnam's Retelling of the Ramayana", July 2010, *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no. 29: 25, <https://www.epw.in/journal/2010/29/commentary/subverting-our-epics-mani-ratnams-retelling-ramayana.html#:~:text=Mani%20Ratnam's%20film%20Raavan%20depicts,stories%20of%20rape%20and%20conquest>, and Ghosh, Bishnupriya, "Sensate Outlaws: The Recursive Social Bandit in Indian Popular Cultures", pages 21-43 in *Figurations in Indian Film*, edited by Meheli Sen and Anustup Basu, 2013, London: Palgrave Macmillan, and on *Ra.One*, a superhero film whose antagonist is modelled on Rāvaṇa, see Vatsala, Pratyush and Neelu Raut, "Human Vision, Illusion and Disillusion: RA.ONE, A Super Hero in Cyberspace", pages 225-234 in *Navigating Cybercultures*, Brill, <https://brill.com/view/book/9781848881631/BP000022.xml?language=en>.

¹¹ Another step towards making him appear less demonic is as follows: While nearly every Indian Rāmāyaṇa describes Rāvaṇa with ten heads and twenty arms, films have mostly depicted him with one head and two arms. The additional heads or arms appear only in special scenarios.

¹² Gita Press 1969, Part II: 713-793.

¹³ Daśa 'ten' + grīvā 'neck'. Synonym: Daśānana, daśa + ānana 'face'

¹⁴ *Vānara* literally means 'monkey', but is used in the epics to refer to a race of humanoid monkeys.

¹⁵ Some say that Vēdavatī is an incarnation of Lakṣmī, the goddess of wealth and wife of Viṣṇu. Sītā is considered an incarnation of the same goddess.

¹⁶ Gita Press 1969, Part I.

¹⁷ Strictly speaking, Sumālī's brother Mālyavān is Rāvaṇa's great-uncle. But he has a close relationship with Rāvaṇa, and is a prominent member of his court.

¹⁸ Except for the Aśōka garden (since Sītā was there) and Vibhīṣaṇa's house (since he was pious).

¹⁹ Lahiri, Subimal (advisor). 1986. "Kṛttibāsa Biracita Sacitra Saptakāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa – Rāja Saṁskaraṇa." 390-393. Kolkata: Dey's Publishing.

²⁰ A *stōtram*, from the verb *stu* 'to praise', is a Sanskrit poem or hymn in praise of a deity. See Beeharry and Sharma 2018.

²¹ This work uses "the epics" to refer to the various versions of the Rāmāyaṇa.

²² Rāgas are melodies more complex than merely a musical mode, and are the basis of several Indian musical forms including Carnatic and Hindustani music.

²³ Gnanasambandan, A. S. 2004. Page 141 in "Kampa Rāmāyaṇam: Mūlamum Uraiyum". Volume 5 – Cuntara Kāṇṭam, 2004. Coimbatore: Kamban Trust.

https://archive.org/details/vrajeshkumar_gmail_061/05-சுந்தர%20காண்டம்

²⁴ Every Hindu deity rides on a particular animal or a chariot of a particular nature. This is known in Sanskrit as their *vāhanam* (literally ‘vehicle’). Śiva’s primary *vāhanam* is a bull, but his *utsava mūrti* (idol for religious festivals, which is distinct from the main idol permanently installed in the temple) may be taken out on a wide range of *vāhanam*-s, including Rāvaṇa himself. For the Rāvaṇa *vāhanam*, see:

- Ammal, Meenakshi. 2015a. "2015 Deepam Festival. Day Nine—Night: Kailasha (Ravana) Vahanam." *Arunachala Grace* (blog). <http://arunachalagrace.blogspot.com/2015/11/2015-deepam-festival-day-ninenight.html>.
- ---. 2015b. "Ravana Vahanam." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HWyPOKqNe3A>.
- Raju, C S G. 2010. "Festivals of Kapali." *Splendors of Indian Temples* (blog). <https://csgraju.wordpress.com/2010/03/>.
- Srisaila Devasthanam, 2018. "Ravana Vahana Seva." [http://www.srisailamonline.com/sri/upload/10.02.2018%20Ravana%20vahana%20seva%20\(1\).JPG](http://www.srisailamonline.com/sri/upload/10.02.2018%20Ravana%20vahana%20seva%20(1).JPG).
- Samarajiva, Indi. 2010. "Sri Ponnambalam Vanesar Kovil, a lovely austere Hindu temple built of South Indian granite." <https://www.flickr.com/photos/indi/4292507865/in/photostream/>.

²⁵ *Arakkaṇ* is the Tamil form of the Sanskrit word *rakṣas*, which is synonymous with *rākṣasa*. Strictly speaking, *rākṣasa* must become *irākkaṇ* in formal Tamil (*rātcasaṇ* in the spoken language). However, *arakkaṇ* is the more commonly-used term in Kampan’s epic and in the films. See Gnanasambandan 2004:

- Volume 3 – Āraṇya Kāṇṭam, pages 497, 570, 639. https://archive.org/details/vrajeshkumar_gmail_061/03-ஆரண்ய%20காண்டம்
- Volume 5 – Cuntara Kāṇṭam, page 63. https://archive.org/details/vrajeshkumar_gmail_061/05-சுந்தர%20காண்டம்
- Volume 6 - Yutta Kāṇṭam – Part 2, pages 590-591. https://archive.org/details/vrajeshkumar_gmail_061/06-2%20யுத்த%20காண்டம்
- Volume 6 – Yutta Kāṇṭam – Part 3, pages 8-12, 230, 273. https://archive.org/details/vrajeshkumar_gmail_061/06-3%20யுத்த%20காண்டம்

²⁶ Gnanasambandan 2004:

- Volume 3, pages 552, 589
- Volume 6 – Part 3, pages 266, 271

²⁷ Gnanasambandan 2004:

- Volume 3, page 498
- Volume 5, pages 141, 585
- Volume 6 – Part 1, page 717. https://archive.org/details/vrajeshkumar_gmail_061/06-1%20யுத்த%20காண்டம்/mode/2up

²⁸ This is found in the Kannada film *Dashavathara* (1960) too.

²⁹ The Śaiva faith is the Śiva-centric branch of what is now known as Hinduism. For the particular line of Māṅikkavācakar quoted here, see page 40, Pope, George Uglow 1900, *The Tiruvācagam, or 'Sacred Utterances' of the Tamil Poet, Saint and Sage Manikka-Vācagar*, Oxford, Clarendon Press. For Rāvaṇa's song, see Vega Tamil Movies, *Sampoorana Ramayanam Tamil Full Movie*, November 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEPtTWtKOOQ&t=7363s>. In the original Tamil, Māṅikkavācakar's words read as follows:

teṇṇāṭṭaiya Civaṇē pōrri
eṇṇāṭṭavarkkum iṇaivā pōrri

³⁰ The author could not find any information about when and on which television channel this series was originally screened. It can currently be found on a YouTube channel named Pyramid Glitz TV. For Māṅikkavācakar's words, see Pyramid Glitz TV, January 2018, *Ramayanam Tamil Serial | Episode 70 | Latest Tamil Serial | Pyramid Glitz TV*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7s6OLjN4QPY&t=401s>. For the reference to the Tamil language, see episode 69, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n32CRFZuU8k&t=469s>.

³¹ The word *yāl* is sometimes used synonymously with *vīṇā*. See Wrazen, Louise, "The Early History of the Vīṇā and Bīn in South and Southeast Asia", October 1986, *Asian Music*: 35-55, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/834157>. Also see Swami Vipulananda, *Yāl Nūl*, 1974, Thanjavur: Karanthai Tamil Sangam, <http://www.ibiblio.org/guruguha/MusicResearchLibrary/Books-Tam/BkTm-Vipulanandar-yAznUI-0054.pdf>.

³² Sastri, K A Nilakanta. 1958. "The Dawn of History: Aryanization." In *A History of South India from Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar*, 70. London: Oxford University Press.

³³ AP International. September 2020. Agathiyar Tamil Movie Songs | Ventriduven Unnai Video Song | TMS | Sirkazhi Govindarajan | API. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7VzRz931aU>

³⁴ *Maṇḍōdari* is a south Indian rendition of Mandōdarī. It would be written *Maṇḍōtari* [m̥ṇḍo:ḍ̥əri] in the Tamil script, and *Maṇḍōdari* in Kannada and Telugu. Tamil does not have separate characters for voiced consonants, and medial stop consonants are pronounced voiced when present singly (not geminate) or preceded by a nasal consonant.

³⁵ Vega Tamil Movies. February 2012. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0W46Q0sQ1XQ>

³⁶ In Tamil, this rāga is called *Kāmpōti* [ka:mbo:ḍ̥i].

³⁷ Parthasarathy, T S. 1978. "Music and Dance in Tamil Literature." *Indian Literature* 21, no. 4: 137-148. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24158234>. Gnanasambandan 2004 Vol. 5: pages 46, 141, 152, 377.

³⁸ The Tamil *paṇ* said to correspond to modern Kāmbhōjī is known as Takkēci. However, the author did not find either name in Kampan's descriptions of Rāvaṇa's encounter with Śiva. For details about Kāmbhōjī and its association with Takkēci, see:

- Ramanathan, Hema. 2004. "Kāmbhōjī/ Kāmbōjī/ Kāmōdī/ Kāmbōdī/ Kāmbōdhī." *Rāgalakṣaṇasaṅgraha (Collection of Rāga Descriptions) from Treatises on Music of the Mēla Period, with translation and notes*, 633-645. Chennai: N Ramanathan, MusicResearchLibrary. <http://musicresearchlibrary.net/omeka/items/show/2232>.

- Rajagopalan, Ravi, "The Mystery about Kambhoji", August 2009, guruguha.org, <https://guruguha.org/the-mystery-about-kambhoji-part-1/> and <https://guruguha.org/the-mystery-about-kambhoji-part-2/>
- Madras Music Academy, "Advisory Committee Meetings, 1992-93", page 44 in *The Journal of the Music Academy* 64: 20-46. <https://musicacademymadras.in/musicacademylibrary/index.php?page=2>
- Venkatasubramanian, T. K., page x in "Music as History in Tamilnadu", 2010, Delhi: Primus Books.
- https://books.google.co.in/books?redir_esc=y&id=pzurjF3AE4C&q=takkesi#v=snippet&q=takkesi&f=false

³⁹ "Inru pōy nālai vā", see page 714 in Gnanasambandan 2004, Volume 6 - Yutta Kāṇṭam - Part 1, https://archive.org/details/vrajeshkumar_gmail_061/06-1%20புத்த%20காண்டம்/page/n713/mode/2up. While Kampan's epic places this scene much earlier in the war, *SRI* puts it at the very end. See Vega Tamil Movies, *Sampoorna Ramayanam Tamil Full Movie*, November 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEPtTWTkOOQ&t=11397s>

⁴⁰ The animals mentioned here are eight gargantuan elephants, known in Sanskrit as *diggaja* (*dis* or *dik* 'direction' + *gaja* 'elephant'), who are fabled to hold up the earth at the eight cardinal points. See page 717 in Gnanasambandan 2004, Volume 6 – Part 1, https://archive.org/details/vrajeshkumar_gmail_061/06-1%20புத்த%20காண்டம்/page/n715/mode/2up.

⁴¹ Vega Tamil Movies: November 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEPtTWTkOOQ&t=11407s>, and March 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hI_dXGC2V20

⁴² R S Manohar, who played Rāvaṇa in the play *Ilangeswaran*, also played him in the film *Agathiyar*. See Ramakrishnan, Venkatesh, "Those were the days: Venerating villainy: Manohar's successful experiment on Tamil stage" *Dina Thanthi*, July 05, 2020, <https://www.dtnext.in/News/City/2020/07/05010301/1239463/Those-were-the-days-Venerating-villainy-Manohars-successful-.vpf>. See also SarathyOnline, "Nice depiction of Ravana in *Ilangeswaran*", August 2008, <http://sarathyonline.blogspot.com/2008/08/nice-depiction-of-ravana-in.html>, and Ashok Kumar, S.R., "Actor R.S. Manohar dead", *The Hindu*, Jan 11, 2006, <https://archive.is/cssC>.

⁴³ Shukla, Anita. "From Evil to Evil: Revisiting Ravana as a Tool for Community Building." Page 175 in *Villains and Villainy: Embodiments of Evil in Literature, Popular Culture and Media*, edited by Anna Fahraeus and Dikmen Yakalı-Çamoğlu, In *At the Interface / Probing the Boundaries*, 2011, Brill. <https://brill.com/view/title/27507>

⁴⁴ Richman, Paula. 1991. "E. V. Ramasami's Reading of the Rāmāyaṇa." *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*, edited by Paula Richman, 175-201. Berkeley: University of California Press. <https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft3j49n8h7&chunk.id=d0e9800&toc.depth=100&toc.id=d0e9800&brand=ucpress>. Ramasamy, E V. 1972. *The Ramayana: A True Reading*: Periyar Self-Respect Propaganda Institution Publications. <https://www.scribd.com/document/457579258/Ramayana-A-True-Reading>

⁴⁵ See the following:

- Dabas, Maninder. 2016. "Chennai Group Calls Ravan A Dravidian, Organises 'Ravan Leela' To Protest Against Burning Effigies." The Times of India. <https://www.indiatimes.com/news/chennai-group-calls-ravan-a-dravidian-organises-ravan-leela-to-protest-against-burning-effigies-263290.html>.
- Saradha, V. 2016. "Ravana Leela 1974: When Periyarists slayed Rama to protest Indira Gandhi's Ram Leela." The News Minute. <https://www.thenewsminute.com/article/ravana-leela-1974-when-periyarists-slayed-rama-protest-indira-gandhis-ram-leela-51454>.
- Govindarajan, Vinita. 2016. "Why a Dravidian fringe group burnt effigies of Ram and Sita in Chennai this year." Scroll. <https://scroll.in/article/818922/why-a-dravidian-fringe-group-burnt-effigies-of-ram-and-sita-in-chennai-this-year>.
- Suganya, K. 2018. "Contribution of Women Activists in the Self-Respect Movement of Tamil Nadu." *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science* 23, no. 8: 19-23. <http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol.%2023%20Issue8/Version-8/D2308081923.pdf>

⁴⁶ Singaravelu, S. 1982. "Sītā's Birth and Parentage in the Rāma Story." *Asian Folklore Studies* 41, no. 2: 235-243. <https://asianethnology.org/downloads/ae/pdf/a416.pdf>

⁴⁷ This is a story from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, a Vaiṣṇava text. Viṣṇu's two heavenly guards, Jaya and Vijaya, as a result of a curse, are born as demonic characters thrice, their second birth being as Rāvaṇa and Kumbhakarna. After being killed by Viṣṇu's incarnations each time, they attain salvation and return to Vaiṣṇava (Viṣṇu's heaven).

⁴⁸ *Raṅganātha Rāmāyaṇamu*, 1949. Kadapa: Rayalu and co. <https://archive.org/details/RanganathaRamayanamu/page/n1/mode/2up>.

⁴⁹ Kohli, Atul. 1988. "The NTR phenomenon in Andhra Pradesh: Political change in a South Indian state." *Asian Survey* 28, no. 10: 991-1017. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2644703>
Neuss, Juergen. 1998. "The NTR phenomenon reconsidered." *Internationales Asienforum* 29: 23-45. <https://crossasia-journals.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/index.php/iaf/article/view/578>.
Zarhani, Seyed Hossein. 2018. *Governance and Development in India: A Comparative Study on Andhra Pradesh and Bihar After Liberalization*. Routledge.

⁵⁰ NTR apparently ate vegetarian food when essaying 'divine' characters like Rāma or Kṛṣṇa, but included meat in his diet when playing 'negative' characters like Rāvaṇa or Duryōdhana. See pages 64, 76, 79, 85 in Narayan, S Venkat, 1983, "NTR, a Biography", Vikas Publishing House.

⁵¹ "Śrīmad Vālmīki-Rāmāyaṇa", 1969. Part II: 766-768. Gorakhpur: Gita Press.

⁵² He does this in a desperate move to please Śiva.

⁵³ The liṅgam is a phallic figurine, usually made from stone. Śiva is typically worshipped in this form by tradition, while other gods are generally worshipped as idols. For the Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa story, see pages 180-181 in Nagar, Shantilal, 2006, "Ānanda Rāmāyaṇa, attributed to the Great Sage Vālmīki", Parimal Publication.

⁵⁴ Rose Telugu Movies. February 2018. *Deva Deva Dhavalachala Video Song / Bhookailas Telugu Movie Song / Maha Shivaratri 2018 Special*.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_QDCTbTrvg&t=6s.

⁵⁵ Tamil: *Inru pōy nālai vā*, Telugu: *Nēḍu pōyi rēpu rammu*.

⁵⁶ Rāvaṇa's power is so great that he has enslaved the nine heavenly bodies who are believed in astrology to control the future, foremost among which is the Sun. His commanding the Sun to rise has a second significance: in Hindu mythology, battles typically begin at sunrise and are fought till sunset.

⁵⁷ Rajkumar plays Rāvaṇa in *Bhookailasa* (the Kannada version) too.

⁵⁸ This is the only south Indian film that depicts the episode of Rāvaṇa as a guru to Lakṣmaṇa.

⁵⁹ The Gaṅgā scene is absent from other Rāmāyaṇa films. In fact, it is a part of the last moments of a 'noble' character from the other prominent Hindu epic, the Mahābhārata. This is Bhīṣma, Gaṅgā's own son, who had been played by NTR much earlier, in the eponymous 1962 film (v9 Videos, *Bheeshma | Telugu Full Movie | NTR | Anjali Devi | Harinath | V9 Videos*, March 2018, accessed July 22, 2021,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L1fveQfIKyo>).

⁶⁰ Kohli, Atul. 1988. "The NTR phenomenon in Andhra Pradesh: Political change in a South Indian state." *Asian Survey* 28, no. 10: 991-1017. Neuss, Juergen. 1998. "The NTR phenomenon reconsidered." *Internationales Asienforum* 29: 23-45.

⁶¹ Bakker, Freek L. 2009. Page 98-99 in *The Challenge of the Silver Screen: An Analysis of the Cinematic Portraits of Jesus, Rama, Buddha and Muhammad*, Brill.

<https://brill.com/view/title/14746>,

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/299420797_The_Challenge_of_the_Silver_Screen_An_Analysis_of_the_Cinematic_Portraits_of_Jesus_Rama_Buddha_and_Muhammad

⁶² See the following:

- Basu, Anindita. 2014. "Ramanand Sagar's Ramayana: A Tool for Propaganda." *Global Media Journal* 5, no. 2.
- Cusack, Carole M. 2012. "The Gods on Television: Ramanand Sagar's Ramayan, Politics and Popular Piety in Late Twentieth-century India." Pages 279-297 in *Handbook of Hyper-real Religions*, edited by Adam Possamai, in Brill Handbooks on Contemporary Religion. Brill.
https://brill.com/view/book/edcoll/9789004226944/B9789004226944_016.xml
- Rajagopal, Arvind. 2001. *Politics after television: Hindu nationalism and the reshaping of the public in India*. Cambridge University Press.
https://books.google.co.in/books?id=PbgW2jTESKEC&printsec=frontcover&dq=Rajagopal,+Arvind,+2001,+Politics+after+television:+Hindu+nationalism+and+the+reshaping+of+the+public+in+India,+Cambridge+University+Press.&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_re_dir=0&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=ramanand%20sagar&f=false

⁶³ Tilak, YouTube channel. 2020. "Lankeshwar Rajeshwar Hey Dashanan Saadar Abhinandan."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QOrO8OSnTGQ>.

⁶⁴ Bakker 2009, Page 101. Lutgendorf, Philip. 1990, "Ramayan: The Video." *The Drama Review (TDR)* 34, no. 2: 127-176.

⁶⁵ A half-lion, half-elephant beast that often adorns temple pillars in south India.

⁶⁶ While south Indian depictions show the emblem as the Sarasvatī Vīṇā of the south, Sagar's series shows it as the Rudra-vīṇā of the north, most probably to bring out Rāvaṇa's devotion to Śiva, since Rudra is a name of Śiva. The vīṇā played by Rāvaṇa in later series such as *Devon ke Dev Mahadev* and *Siya ke Ram* is also like a Rudra-vīṇā in appearance.

⁶⁷ The Great God, a name of Śiva.

⁶⁸ Chaturseen, Acharya. *Vayam Rakṣāmah – Paurāṇika Pṛṣṭhabhūmi Para Ādhārita Upanyāsa*. 1951. 2020 edition: New Delhi: Bharat Pustak Bhandar. Shahi, Madanmohan Sharma. *Laṅkēśvar*. 1990 (first library ed.). New Delhi: Radhakrishna Prakashan.

⁶⁹ In Hindi: *sārvabhaum samrāṭ Rāvaṇ*. Shahi 1990, page 6

⁷⁰ Gita Press 1969, Part II, page 697.

⁷¹ *Rakṣa* is a Hindi rendition of the Sanskrit term *rakṣas* (nom. sing. *rakṣaḥ*), synonymous with *rākṣasa*, which may be translated in English as 'demon'. As for the second word, *sanskṛti* ('culture'), a more 'literal' transliteration would be *saṃskṛti*. But this work spells it with *n* rather than *m*, to be closer to its pronunciation in Hindi. The Rakṣa-Sanskṛti described in Chaturseen's book is brutal, and consists of the eating of human flesh. Shahi's Rakṣa-Sanskṛti, however, forbids this cannibalism. See Chaturseen 1951, page 15 and 98, and Shahi 1990, pages 19 and 59.

⁷² Gita Press 1969, Part II, page 755.

⁷³ The Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda has been attributed to Rāvaṇa in the Zee series. However, it is in reality unconnected to him, and is a part of the Yajurveda, one of the four canonical Vēdas. The adjective *kṛṣṇa*, meaning 'black'/'dark', refers to the obscure, un-organized nature of its compilation.

⁷⁴ The latter depiction is found in *Seetharama Vanavasam* (1977).

⁷⁵ See the following:

- Buchholz, Jonas. 2015/2016. "Countering Kampaṇ: C. N. Annadurai's Critique of the Rāmāyaṇa." *Zeitschrift für Indologie und Südasiastudien* 32/33: 203-232. https://www.academia.edu/28869743/Countering_Kampa%E1%B9%89_C_N_Annadurai_s_Critique_of_the_R%C4%81m%C4%81ya%E1%B9%87a
- Ganagatharam, A. 2002. "Epic, Episteme and Ethnicity: Re-Reading of the Ramayana in Modern Tamil Context." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 63, no. 877-888. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44158156>
- Hardgrave, Robert L (jr.). 1964. "The DMK and the politics of Tamil nationalism." *Pacific Affairs* 37, no. 4: 396-411. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2755132>

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- Lüthi, Damaris. 1993. "Krishna and catir nāccu: Feature film as a political medium." *Visual Anthropology* 5, no. 3-4: 271-284. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08949468.1993.9966593>

⁷⁶ The Derana series is not discussed in detail in this article, since there has been a hiatus after its second season. The story has not yet moved beyond the point where Rāvaṇa regains Laṅkā from his half-brother Kubēra. Shooting for the third season has begun only in 2021. For discussions of Ravanisation, see:

- De Koning, Deborah. 2018. "The Ritualizing of the Martial and Benevolent Side of Ravana in Two Annual Rituals at the Sri Devram Maha Viharaya in Pannipitiya, Sri Lanka." *Religions* 9, no. 9: 250. <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/9/9/250>
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⁷⁷ Yamunan, Sruthisagar. July 2019. "Why Sri Lanka named its first-ever satellite after Ravana." Scroll. <https://scroll.in/article/929015/why-sri-lanka-named-its-first-ever-satellite-after-ravana>.

⁷⁸ E. V. Ramasamy, 1972.

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