

Rāvaṇa: A Great Scholar and Scientist

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Abstract

Rāvaṇa was the renowned personality in the folklore of Sri Lanka. He was not only a king of Lanka but also a great scientist and scholar. Pulastya and Malyavan, who were scientists, attributed to the parents of king Rāvaṇa. It is considered that Rāvaṇa had contributed much for the development of Ayurveda. *Arkaprakāśa*, *Nāḍiparīkṣā*, *Kaumāratantra* and *Marmavijñāna* are the work of Rāvaṇa on the subjects of Pharmacology, Clinical examination, Paediatrics and Surgery respectively.

Rāvaṇa is a world wide well - known name for his warriorship and as a scholar. He was the king of Lanka and fought a battle against Lord Rāma. History says "Although he was a great scholar and scientist his anti -heroic activities made him defamed in society".

In illustrations, personality of Rāvaṇa is projected as a ten-headed man. It is a symbolic portrait, which represents that Rāvaṇa had full command on ten subjects related to science and classics like Language, Politics, Legislation, Science and Technology, Spirituality, Philosophy, Music, Armament, Architecture and Medical science.

His father "Pulastya" was a great scholar and his maternal grand father "Malyavan" was also a great scientist. Therefore, the scholarship and scientific knowledge were gifts to Rāvaṇa in heredity. Rāvaṇa himself also encouraged the scholars and scientists in his court. He contributed a series of texts and scripts to the field of each subject but, at present, few books are available.

Rāvaṇa was a great physician and wrote a lot of books on the medical science (Ayurveda) in Sanskrit language. One of his Sanskrit poems "Śiva Tāṇḍava Stotram" is a very famous script in India and it worships Lord Śiva. According to Indian religious philosophy Lord "Brahma" is the creator of world, Lord Viṣṇu brings up this creation and Lord Śiva is the destroyer.

The Rākṣa culture was at its peak during the period of his birth. The followers of Rākṣa culture and worshipers of Lord Śiva were called Rākṣasa. Rāvaṇa was the great ruler of "Rākṣa" community. Rākṣasas were very brave and advanced in technology (*Māyāvee*) and in proof of their heroism, they fought against the gods (*Deva*). That was the time, when four kinds of cultures and communities were developed and were struggling for proving their superiority on the earth. They were Ārya, Yakṣa, Rākṣa and Gandharva communities. Ārya community used to believe in social boundations and was a follower of God. Yakṣas were the worthy and rich community. Gandharva was a community of dancers and singers. Rākṣasa were great warriors and cruel in nature. Being a Rākṣa, Rāvaṇa was a brave warrior but scholarship and scientific knowledge had been bestowed upon him.

Ayurveda is not only a system of medicine but also a life science. Being a great physician, Rāvaṇa wrote several books on various subjects of Ayurveda. The famous and available works on Ayurveda are *Arkaprakāśa*, *Nāḍiparīkṣā*, *Kaumāratantra*, *Vidhivaidyaka*, *Marmavijñāna*.

Arkaprakāśa is on the subject of *Dravyagunavijñāna* and *Rasa śāstra - Bhaiṣajja kalpanā* (Pharmacology and Pharmacy), which are available at present in India and published by *Kishan Lal Dwaraka Prasad, Bombai Bhushana Yantralaya, Mathura*. *Arka Prakāśa* is written in Sanskrit language in the form of conversation.

The contents of the text are divided into ten chapters consisting of hundred verses describing the Characteristics of Herbs, Method of preparation of their Tincture Extracts and Clinical uses of the Tincture extracts. In reply to the question "How can the community become free from diseases?" King *Rāvaṇa* answered his wife that there are five kinds of medicinal plants: *Latā* (Climbers), *Gulma* (Shrubs), *Śākhi* (Branched herbes), *Pādapa* (Trees), and *Prasara* (Creepers). The five kinds of medicinal preparations are made from these plants namely *Svarasa* (Expressed Juice), *Kalka* (Paste), *Cūrṇa* (Powder), *Taila* (Medicated oil) and *Arka* (Extracted Tinctures). *Rāvaṇa* has further pointed out the *Arkakalpanā* (Extracted tincture preparations) is the most effective preparation.

He has described a mathematical chart entitled as "*Āturodnāracakram*" for the diagnosis of diseases in the first chapter of the text. He has given detailed explanation on method of *Arka* preparation of plant and animal products, the clinical uses of *Arka* preparations and classification of medicinal plants. Finally, it describes some pharmaceutical processes of purification of minerals and removing the toxic effects of toxic plants. The entire work depicts the skills of *Rāvaṇa* in the field of pharmacology and pharmacy. The formulations of *Arka* preparations should be evaluated scientifically to prove their efficacy.

Nāḍiparīkṣā, which was written on the subject of *Roganirāna* (Pathology and Clinical Examination), was published by Choukhambha Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi with the commentary of Shri Brihma Shankar Mishra. *Rāvaṇa* advocates the eight parts of clinical examination as *Nāḍi* (Pulse), *Mūtra* (Urine), *Mala* (Stool), *Jihvā* (Tongue), *Śabda* (Locations of Sounds), *Sparsā* (Skin), *Netra* (Eye) and *Ākṛti* (Physical configurations). Various methods of examination of pulse have been described in connection with the diagnosis of diseases and he quoted the name of a great scholar *Nāḍivaidya Śri Nandi*, the inventor of this science. Further, he has mentioned "simply reading of the text is not sufficient and practical training is essential to be a skilled person of the subject"

Kaumāratantra of Rāvaṇa, published by Choukhambha Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi is on the subject of Pediatrics. The text *Kaumāratantra* mainly deals with post - natal care of new born child, feeding of child, main diseases of children and their management. Some formulations mentioned in this text are unique and recommended for different kinds of diseases. For improving lactation of mother, he advised the use of *Śatāvri* (*Asparagus recemosus*). *Dhātrī* (*Woodfordia fruticosa*) and *Gudhal* (*Hibiscus rosa senensis*). The seeds of opium also have been advocated for the management of infantile diarrhoea.

Vidhivaidyaka, another interesting work of *Rāvaṇa*, is on the subject of Jurisprudence. It was published by Khem Chandra, Vyankateshwar Steam Press, Mumbai in 1937. According to our observation, available literature is incomplete but the facts found in this text are remarkable. It provides the evidence for the advancement of the Jurisprudence of the era. It consists of Medical Ethics for the physicians, the role of physician in favour of administration and legislation, Methods of examination of deaths due to accidents and poisoning, Examination of poisoned foods.

Marmavijñāna, one damaged copy is available in *Saraswathi* Library of Udaipur and is a rare publication. Remainings of the work mention the authorship of *Rāvaṇa* and reveal that the subject is of Marma (Vital Points of the Human Body). According to *Suśruta*, the father of Surgery, the knowledge of Marmas is essential for the success of surgery. *Marmavijñāna of Rāvaṇa* gives a clue to mention that *Rāvaṇa* was not only a great physician but also a Surgeon.

In conclusion, all works of *Rāvaṇa* reveals his contribution for the advancement of Medicine and facilitation of the Human Life. Careful Revision on this works is essential and useful for the promotion of Health.