

## Vibhisana

Vibhisana was one of the *Raksasas* [demons] and the brother of Ravana in the Hinduism epic the *Ramayana*. Vibhisana was the son of Visravas and Malini and was Ravana's younger half brother. Ravana was the ten-headed demon king from the Hindu epic *Ramayana*. Vibhisana also had a half sister named Surpanakha who was the demoness who tried to seduce Rama in the epic *Ramayana* (Garret 707). Initially, Vibhisana followed his brother, Ravana. Vibhisana and his other half brother, Kumbhakarna, went to devote themselves to Dharma under the leadership of Ravana. They showed complete devotion, which earned them boons from Brahma (Garret 707). Vibhisana did this by eating withered leaves for a thousand years and by continuously engaging in religious practices. When Brahma came to the brothers to give them a boon, Vibhisana asked that his boon be that he always acted righteously. Brahma also granted Vibhisana immortality because of his great dedication (Scharf 259). Once the brothers had received their boons, they returned to their positions under the leadership of Ravana. Ravana took over leadership of Lanka from Kubera, the current ruler. In Lanka, Ravana attacked and killed demons and gods. These acts gave him the name Ravana meaning "he who makes others cry" (Parmeshwaranand 1360). They defeated Kubera enabling Ravana to become the leader of Lanka. Vibhisana stayed with his brother in Lanka and married Sarala, who was the daughter of Sailusa (Parmeshwaranand 1360).

While living in Lanka, Vibhisana and his brother had several altercations. The first occurred when Ravana ordered Hanuman to be put to death because Hanuman said that Ravana could not be saved from Rama. Vibhisana told his brother not to kill

Hanuman because he was an ambassador and they were to be protected. The next altercation was because Vibhisana did not seem to be able to understand what Ravana wanted. Ravana asked Vibhisana to go retrieve Sita. However, there was confusion over whether she was to be bathed. Vibhisana made her bathe, which was not correct. Sita returned with Vibhisana, Ravana became angry at both of them (Richman 209). The final altercation led to Vibhisana leaving Lanka because he wanted Ravana to give back Sita to her husband. This fight is further described in the epic *Ramayana* (Garret 707). This is the epic where Vibhisana was depicted although its main focus was on Rama.

The Ramayana began in a kingdom ruled by the king, Dasaratha. He had three wives, but had no children. He used a horse sacrifice [*asvamedha*] in order to have a son. From this ritual, all of his wives became pregnant. Kausalya, the most senior wife had a son named Rama, who would be the heir to the throne. When Rama is almost a man, a *rsi* came and insisted that Rama come with him to kill a demoness named Raksasi. Rama went with the *rsi* and successfully killed Raksasi. On their way back to the kingdom, they stopped at a *svayamvara* [the event where she chose her life partner] for a princess named Sita. This was where Rama won her hand in marriage. The queen was happy that Rama was selected until her servant persuaded her into thinking Bharata should be king instead. The Queen used a boon given to her from Dasaratha. She asked that Rama be exiled for 14 years. Both Sita and Rama's brother, Laksmana, went with him into exile. One day in the forest, a demoness [Vibhisana's half sister, Surpanakha] tried to seduce Rama, but he would not allow it because he was married to Sita. The demoness was so angry, she threatened Sita, which caused Laksmana to cut

off her nose, ears, and breasts. The demoness wanted revenge, so she went to get help from the powerful ten-headed King Ravana, her half brother. Hearing of Sita's beauty, Ravana decided to abduct Sita because he wanted her for himself (Rodrigues 218-227).

Vibhisana wanted Ravana to return Sita back to her husband. He did not want a war to occur between Rama and Ravana's armies (Parmeshwaranand 1360). His brother was extremely angry at Vibhisana for saying such outrageous things and kicked Vibhisana from his chair. Vibhisana was so upset that he left Lanka. Vibhisana's mother tried to get Vibhisana to stay and take half of Lanka instead of leaving. Vibhisana's mother, Malini, described the beauty of Lanka to him through song. The song goes "The god of wind sweeps the floor here in Lanka, the rain god sprinkles cow-dung water to keep it clean, the fire god himself cooks in our kitchen, three hundred thirty three million gods take shovels and crowbars and work for us as slaves" (Richman 131). After Vibhisana left Lanka, he went to his brother Kevera's court. Siva was there and told Vibhisana he should follow Rama and leave his brother, Ravana. Meanwhile, Rama had just realized Sita had been taken (Rodrigues 218-227). Vibhisana was on his way over to the desert to join Rama's side. In order to get revenge on his brother, he told Rama all of Ravana's military plans to ensure that Rama had the upper hand in battle (Garret 707). He tells Rama to go over to Lanka and capture Ravana's ministers. Vibhisana leads the troops through the southern entrance of Lanka. They attack the monkey troops and they kill Ravana's ministers. During the combat, Vibhisana realizes that Rama and Laksmana are unconscious and he revives them using eye salve (Scharf 259). After Rama is revived, he kills Ravana. When Vibhisana sees that his brother is dead, he performs Ravana's death rituals. Both sides had many casualties with almost

every man from Ravana's family dead or dying (Mittal 246). However, Rama's armies won the war and took over Lanka. Rama gave Vibhisana Lanka and Vibhisana was crowned as king.

Vibhisana is still seen as the reason for the fall of Lanka (Parmeshwaranand 1361). Rama became the King of Ayodhya after he made Vibhisana king of Lanka. Vibhisana went on a trip to visit Rama at his kingdom, Ayodhya. On this trip, Vibhisana was given a golden chariot with the image of Raganatha on it. This image was to be worship back in Lanka. He was told that the image of Raganatha on the chariot should not touch the ground. However, on his journey back to Lanka, the image was too heavy and Vibhisana ended up having to put it down at Srirangam. After he put it down, he could not lift it back up. From then on the image faced south, instead of facing east, the way it should have (Rodrigues 360).

One day, while Vibhisana was king of Lanka, another battle took place. It began because Candragupta, who was a son of Ravana, abducted Vibhisana's daughter-in-law. Vibhisana went and told Rama about what had happened. Vibhisana, Rama, Laksmana, Sugriva, Hanuman, as well as their monkey allies, went to battle in the city of Sahasramukha over the abduction. The fighting lasted three days and ended in the death of all the *Raksasas* [demons] (Parmeshwaranand 1361).

In conclusion, at the beginning of his life Vibhisana was completely devoted to following under his brother, Ravana. He was so devoted that Brahma granted him boons. As the story progressed, Vibhisana eventually turned his back on his whole family. He betrayed his brother by leaving his leadership, and followed Rama instead. In

order to get revenge on his brother, he gave away Ravana's military secrets which led to the death of almost all of Ravana's family including Ravana himself (Parmeshwaranand 1361). The most interesting fact about Vibhisana is that the boon he asked for was that he never mediate any unrighteousness and yet his actions didn't seem very honorable. Perhaps the paradox of his boon was that his family's actions were not honorable and therefore, Vibhisana could not join them.

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## RELATED RESEARCH TOPICS

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