



Mahishasur **A people's hero**

Edited by PRAMOD RANJAN

“People say that such a book will divide the country. If they say so believing what the book says is true but it is not the right time to say it, then I would say that their conscience is sullied and their mind weak. There is no auspicious time for revealing the truth. Whenever truth is revealed is auspicious. One who does not want to hear the truth is a sinner. One who believes that truth can divide, smothers justice ... When this book is published, the selfish oppressors, who have been making merry for hundreds, thousands of years by looting the Hindu community, will rant and rave and driven by rage, may try to inflict grief on the author. They may also harm the publisher and editor ... The author and publisher, etc, of this book are ready to welcome all those calamities.”

– Chandrika Prasad Jigyasu in his preface to Bhikku Bodhanand’s *Mul Bharatvasi Aur Arya* (1930)



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Contents

The power of a book	7
A cultural battle	11
Expression of different life values	13

Re-rendition

Who are the Bahujans really worshipping?	<i>Premkumar Mani</i>	17
Why this celebration of death?	<i>Premkumar Mani</i>	21
On Dussehra	<i>Premkumar Mani</i>	23
"I am proud to be an Asur!"	<i>Shibu Soren</i>	26
Durga the Santal Slayer	<i>Madhushree Mukerjee</i>	27
Asur traditions in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh	<i>Rajan Kumar</i>	32
Dalitbahujan perspective on the Mahishasur debate	<i>Braj Ranjan Mani</i>	35
Mahishasur: A linguistic view	<i>Dr Rajendra Prasad Singh</i>	46
The real Durga	<i>Nutan Malvi</i>	49
Mahishasur and Bali Pratipada	<i>Gail Omvedt</i>	55
Mahishasur, Ravan and Mahabali	<i>Ajay S. Sekher</i>	56

Cultural War

'Mahishasur's daughter' gets award from President	<i>Sanjeev Chandan</i>	68
Mahishasur's descendant Sushma	<i>Ashwini Kumar Pankaj</i>	72
'Pluralist democracy is an imperative'	<i>Misa Bharti</i>	76
Kannada intellectuals on Mahisha's side	<i>M.. Dileep Kumar</i>	79
Four years of a cultural movement	<i>Pramod Ranjan & Ravi Prakash</i>	81
'There is no stopping these cultural battles'	<i>Kancha Ilaiah</i>	89
Durga, Mahishasur and caste politics	<i>Ram Puniyani</i>	92
Understand India, Modi ji	<i>Premkumar Mani</i>	95
Mahishasur via the Hindi media	<i>Karmanand Arya</i>	103
The truth about a myth	<i>Suresh Pandit</i>	118
Satiating your curiosities		122
About the contributors		125

Mahishasur, Ravan and Mahabali

The hegemonic genealogies of demonization
discourses and narratives in India

AJAY S. SEKHER

The rhetoric that renders god as demon

And demon as god by Brahmanism is terrorizing ...

- Sahodaran Ayyappan

66 Mahishasur: A people's fiend

The disparaging references to Sri Lanka in the Hindu epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have to do with it being a Buddhist country – which it has been from the time of Asoka or earlier. No wonder, Ravan, the Buddhist Lankan chief who fought Hindu imperialism from the mainland, was fashioned into a demon or Asura. It was Mahinda and Sanghamitra, the children of the Mauryan emperor Asoka, who proselytized Ceylon peacefully and democratically in the third century BC. Mahavamsa, the Buddhist chronicle of Ceylon, also talks about Buddha himself coming to Lanka and delivering a few of his 65,000 sermons there. Asoka might have built his viharas, stupas and pillars – with lion capitals signifying Dhamma – in locations where the Buddha had actually taught (Thapar 1998: 68). Nineteen of these great Asokan pillars are in China today (Chen 1973: 14).

Even in Kerala's Vanchi (or Kodungallur or Muziris), there was a ruined pillar at the place where Sakya Muni once delivered his speech, wrote Xuan Zang (602-664), the Chinese pilgrim, traveller, scholar and translator (Panikasery 2001: 61). According to local historians, this ancient Asokan pillar was demolished in early 8th century by Hindu hooligans and Saivite Kapalikas – who were turned against Buddhists by cunning Brahmanism – and the column of the pillar was