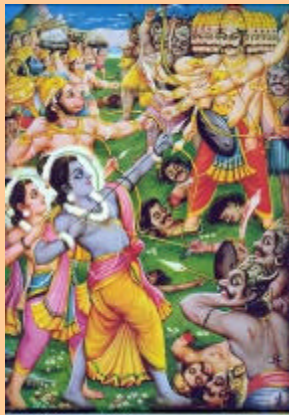


The Spiritual Scientist

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DESTROY THE RAVANA WITHIN



The basic storyline of Ramayana is very similar to that of a typical movie. Both feature a hero, a heroine and a villain; both depict the villain lusting for the heroine; both delineate an exciting confrontation between the hero and the villain, culminating in the destruction of the villain and re-union of the hero and the heroine. However, there is one vital difference – in the movie, the hero, the heroine and the villain are all actually villains.

Many people think of a villain as a person who enjoys by exploiting and harming others. Though not wrong, this conception of evil is incomplete and naïve as it ignores a fundamental reality: our supremely responsible and loving father God. Probably most of us never got spiritual education to realize that it is God who selflessly provides us our daily food. It is true that we have to work hard to earn our living, but our effort is secondary; its like the hard work of the birds searching for grains. Without God pre-providing the grains through nature, their search, no matter how painstaking, would be fruitless. Similarly without God pre-designing the miraculous mechanism of photosynthesis which transforms “mud into mangoes” (a feat far beyond the best scientist and the latest computer), we would never have any food, no matter how much we labored. All our other necessities - heat, light, air, water, health – are similarly fulfilled – primarily by divine arrangement, secondarily by human endeavor.

Unfortunately our education, media and culture preoccupy us with so many materialistic allurements that we become blinded to the fact of our dependence and obligation to God. Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, just as healthy fear of a loving father is necessary for a naughty restless child to become disciplined and responsible. And love of God is the culmination of wisdom, just as gratitude and love for a benevolent father shows the maturity of a grown-up son. Sadly however our society fosters neither love nor fear for God, but glamorizes godless selfish materialism instead. Consequently nowadays many people are extremely selfish in their relationship with God; they don't give even a few moments to the person who has given them their entire life. In a family, if a son doesn't care for his father, who is his connecting link with his brothers, very soon he will stop caring for them too. In fact he may even become malevolent toward them because they become his competitors for inheritance. Similarly selfishness towards God is the origin of all evil. We have all sown that evil seed in our own hearts and are now force-feeding each other its bitter fruits – terrorism, corruption, crime, exploitation – all due to fighting with each other for the world's resources, which are God's inheritance for us.

The Ramayana gives us a glimpse of true heroism, of selfless love and of selfish lust. Lord Rama and His consort Sita are the eternal hero and heroine. Hanuman, the godly hero, personifies the tendency to selflessly assist the Lord in His divine love, whereas Ravana, the godless villain, personifies the tendency to selfishly grab the Lord's property for our own

lust. The godly hero aspires to enjoy with God, whereas the godless villain wants to enjoy like God.

On the other hand, in a typical movie, all the protagonists – the hero, the heroine and the villain – have the same evil mentality of wanting to enjoy without caring for God. In the hero and heroine, that mindset is masked in the guise of romance, whereas in the villain, it is expressed without reservation. But they are all Ravana; the difference is merely in the shades of black. Our selfish attempts to be imitation heroes and heroines – whether in the movies or in real life – are intrinsically evil and they fuel and fan all the greater evils that we dread. Ultimately our evil boomerangs on us, for it perpetuates the illusion of our bodily misidentification and our body subjects us to the tortures of old age, disease, death and rebirth – again and again and again.

Of course we can all be heroes too – in service to the supreme hero, like Hanuman. Unfortunately our society portrays the Ravana tendency as heroic and the Hanuman propensity as obsolete. The festival of Dusserha commemorates the ultimate defeat of Ravana and reminds us of the destiny that awaits our society, if it continues in its godless selfishness.

But Dusserha is also a festival of hope and joy. The destruction of Ravana teaches us that the Lord is competent to destroy the evil within and without. The same Lord Rama who destroyed Ravana millennia ago has re-appeared as His Holy Name to destroy the Ravana within the hearts of people. The holy name offers us real happiness – not by imitating God, but by loving God. So this Dusserha let us not be content with burning lifeless effigies of Ravana; let us also burn with the purifying fire of the holy names the living Ravana in our own hearts.