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VALMIKI'S RAMAYANA REVISITED : WORSHIP BY CONFRONTATION : VIDVESHA-BHAKTI

A. The Valmiki Revisited

The great Adikavi Valmiki, the inspired rishi of India's classic epic, the Ramayana, is the master storyteller of the famous tale of Rama come to deliver the world from Ravana, Lord of the Rakshasas.¹ So compelling is the tale that it has grounded no less than nine well-known Ramayanas each of which assumes a particular angle of vision and an esoteric emphasis of its own based on the richness of Valmiki's original.² Valmiki himself later composed the Maharamayana or Yoga Vasistha, a long metaphysical classic that assumes an authoritative rôle in the Indian tradition exploiting as it does the inner development of Rama as the Seventh Incarnation of Vishnu.³

A great virtue of the Ramayana is its intricate network of symbolic references which are systematic by the unity of the tale as well as by their inextricable linkage to the unified cosmology, metaphysics,

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1. Valmiki is traditionally the Adikavi or first of poets. The Ramayana is known as the Adikavya, or primeval poem. A work of very great antiquity, the Valmiki Ramayana is universally regarded by scholars as the work of a single poet. It is traditionally attributed to Valmiki, about whom numerous fairly consistent legends abound.
 2. Among the noteworthy Ramayanas in Sanskrit are the Adhyatma Ramayana, Ananda Ramayana and Agastya Ramayana; the Kamba Ramayana in Tamil; the Tulsidas Ramayana in Hindi; the Kirtivasi Ramayana in Bengali; and Ezuthachan's Adhyatma Ramayana in Malayalam. Gotswama Tulsidas' Ramayana in Hindi is widely read in the present day. Events and meanings of the tale are deeply embedded in Indian culture today to the extent that a festival is celebrated each year on the day traditionally set aside to commemorate the slaying of Ravana by Rama.
 3. Valmiki, *The Ramayana of Valmiki*, trans. Hari Prasad Shastri (London: Shantisadan Press, 1985). Vol I: Bala Kanda, Ch. 2. P. 10. "Grieving for the dying bird, I have recited this verse of four feet, each of equal syllables, which can be sung to the Vinal. Let it therefore be known as a 'Shloka,' arising, as it does, from my grief. May it bring me renown and may no ill be spoken of me on account of this." The Sanskrit tradition in which the Valmiki is preserved is the longest continuous tradition of literary transmission, much longer and anterior than either the Greek or Roman.

psychology and ethics of the Vedas and Upanishads. Much has also been written about the models of worship and service in the tale and it has become traditional to extrapolate and offer the ways of *jnana*, *karma* and *bhakti* as the principal paths to god.

It is our purpose, however, to focus on a less obvious but very real worship by Ravana, the archvillain of the tale, who from the time we first hear of him is already established as a great warrior, a titan with ten heads and arms, an enemy of all ascetics and ultimately an enemy of Rama in active combat. His conduct is not palatable to us as an authentic form of "worship." Still less is it easy to accept that he holds a useful secret about the norm of human nature and the difficulties with which all warriors struggle to attain liberated consciousness. More difficult again is it to imagine that he represents all warriors, male and female, great and small, in bold gestures as well as those of ordinary and obscure living.

Yet this is precisely his function in the tale. To Valmiki's later focus on the inner development of Rama in the *Yoga Vasistha* we must add the inner development of Ravana as the mirror of human nature, however unpleasant to accept. As a path, Ravana's form of worship laces through the other paths much as meditation is said to do. His conduct poses and answers important questions about the conditions necessary for a conversion from warrior to brahmin and is thus the occasion for considerable insight into the long tradition captured in Vedanta in which, paradoxically, God always appears in the context of the Kshatriya class, the class of warriors and administrators, among them Rama, Arjuna and the Buddha.

B. Vidvesha-Bhakti: Friends, Enemies, Warriors and Mystics

The principal characters of the Ramayana worship Rama (and Sita) as divine in the more traditional ways. Ravana in contrast worships Rama through the less obvious but known route of Vidvesha-Bhakti, the worship of God through devotional confrontation. To understand it we must expose the spectacular way in which Ravana's rage functions, much like meditation, to "fix" the idea of the holy in his mind so that gradually he becomes absorbed in God. Through constant attention and even obsession with Rama and Rama's spiritual and material possessions Ravana is always focussed on Rama. If he fails to fully recognize Rama it is not for want of intelligence but because

his ego, vanity, pride and anger act as *koshas* obscuring his discriminate vision. Yet, as we shall see in the tale, Ravana's anger serves him well, better than friends, relatives, ministers and even his own considerable mental austerities and accomplishments, for he has attained some of the supernormal powers of consciousness enumerated elsewhere by Patañjali. In a real sense, Ravana's anger has become his "friend" as well as his "enemy."

The Ramayana gives subtle esoteric importance to the dimensions of "friend" and "enemy." Not all friends and enemies are people but may in the allegory be emotions, habits, deeds, accomplishments and attitudes. Who among us will not be reluctant to give up any of these familiars, regardless of their effects, for they have become friends and allies in our systematic coping with the world. To let them go requires courage, bravery and war within oneself until at last we come to closure with the enemies within as well as those outside. The perception of friends, enemies, confrontation and the bravery required for ultimate ascent into the powers of liberated consciousness is highly influenced by each character's personal perspective and level of development.

We detect the clear echo of the theme of friends and enemies in the later Bhagavad-Gita to whose parent work the Ramayana contributes only one scene but a general tone. In Krishna's words to Arjuna:

"Man's will is the only
Friend of the Atman.
His will is also
The Atman's enemy.

For when a man is self-controlled, his will is the Atman's friend. But the will of an uncontrolled man is hostile to the Atman like an enemy."⁴

Despite considerable merit, Ravana's will and senses are fundamentally uncontrolled. He is a prey to powerful passions, instantly and easily "lovelorn" at the sight of Sita, easily angered by even the hint of insub-

4. *The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita*, trans. Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood with an Introduction by Aldous Huxley (New York: New American Library, 1972), Ch. VI: "The Yoga of Meditation," P. 64. [Bhagavad-Gita, 6.5-6.7: The Yoga of Mysticism]. Expanding and deepening the theme of friends and enemies, see the articulate and insightful discussion of the theme of "relatives" in the Bhagavad-Gita in Swami Hariharananda Giri's succinct and penetrating book, *Each Human Body is a Bhagavad-Gita*, listed in the Bibliography.

ordination in his kingdom, reacting with hostility to sound advice that runs counter to his passions, ever quick to rise to the challenge of competition. Only in anger is he stabilized.

Yet we do not dare view Ravana as merely an enemy of Rama without also viewing the dramatic and persistent "friendship" of Rama, the ever merciful and compassionate warrior of vastly superior skill whose compassion endures for Ravana right up to the moment he slays him, thereby in Rama's view ending all enmity between them.

For it is never the case that Rama lacks a certain admiration for Ravana, and it is certainly the case that Rama can slay Ravana much earlier in the tale indeed if not outright. If he does not do so it is by choice, and for the sake of lessons learned in the unravelling of the tale. If many such lessons are dearly bought it is to punctuate their merit for the forgetful and stubborn, tamasic individuals in the tale, of which Ravana is the most tamasic.

We should not forget that the tamasic guna may take the form in personality of strong-mindedness and even the staying power of courage, and that these brought to excess become stubborn, blinding and vainglorious. Ravana's example illustrates fierce perseverance, a stark absence of compassion and a profound destabilization in *dharma* which together bring his strong-mindedness and courage easily to excess, both of pleasure and of wrath. Excessive pleasure, rule by fear, wrathful protectionism of possessions and ego are precisely the characteristics of Lanka, Ravana's city.

Nevertheless, we have Rama's words to Bibishana in preparation for Ravana's funeral:

"Though unjust and wicked, this night ranger was ever energetic, valiant and courageous in war... He was magnanimous and powerful, this oppressor of the worlds. Death brings enmity to an end; we have accomplished our purpose, let us perform the obsequies; it is meet for me as well as for thee to do so."⁵

6. *Ibid.*, *The Valmiki*, Vol. III : Yuddha Kanda, Ch. 113, "The Lamentations of Mandodari: Ravana's Funeral Rites," P. 326.

In the Adhyatma Ramayana, we have it that "a brilliance equal to the sun" emerges from the slain Ravana and enters directly into Rama on the battlefield and for the first time the adjective "high-souled" is added to the catalogue of adjectives and titles applied to Ravana:

"Look at the good fortune of the high-souled Ravana. Even we, virtuous persons like Devas, who are special objects of Mahavishnu's mercy, are immersed in Samsara characterized by fear and sorrow. But see how this Rakshasa who is noted for his cruelty, who abducts other peoples' women, who kills ascetics, who is antagonistic to Vishnu, who is characterized by intense Tamas—how even he has entered into Rama in the sight of all."⁶

Rama's compassionate and merciful nature tempers his anger and mediates the harsh application of *dharma* while yet preserving it. In the unfolding drama we must ask if it is ever really possible to be an "enemy" of Rama in any but the illusory sense. For if all characters in the Ramayana and elsewhere instantly receive what they deserve, without mercy or intervening lesson, none could be saved. Even the best of the Ramayana's characters was never at one time without blemish, including Guru Visvamitra and noble King Dasaratha, and we are given to understand that there are a number of processes by which characters become purified, and that these can be duplicated, but not without perseverance and challenge.

Visvamitra has undergone thousands of measureless years in penance, becoming penance incarnate, to expiate his anger and to control his senses as also to atone for his attempt to steal Shabala from the Brahamarishi Vasistha, the purest of spiritual preceptors. Dasaratha consciously suffers and dies from the grief of losing Rama to the forest, knowing it to result from the laws of cause and effect in *dharma* occasioned by his inadvertent yet careless slaying of a young ascetic. For in his youth Dasaratha used to direct his arrows by sound alone and mistook the kindly young man for an elephant or a buffalo come to drink water at a river in the dark. Dasaratha gives us one of many examples in the tale of overzealous and indiscriminate application of warrior skill.

6. *Adhyatma Ramayana: Original Sanskrit with English Translation*, trans. Swami Tapasyananda (Madras, India: Sri Ramakrishna Math Printing Press, 1985), Yuddha Kandam, Ch. II, "Destruction of Ravana." Pp. 77-89 and "Ravana's Salvation Through Confrontation," P. 329. The direct esoteric interpretation of Ravana's status at death is characteristic of the Adhyatma Ramayana. This Ramayana is an intentional elaboration of the spiritual meanings of Valmiki's original.

There is more testimony on the necessity of compassion from no less than the Lords of Justice and Death. Both are severely challenged in unprovoked combat by Ravana. Justice wishes to let a glance of natural law fall on him, the power of which alone is enough to destroy him, but is restrained by Yama, Lord of Death, who wishes himself to strike Ravana down for his effrontery. Both are restrained by Brahma, to whom Ravana has become dear by austerities of consciousness. Brahma's words should not surprise us. They are an instruction to administer justice and mercy within the context of longevity. Without such mercy, justice and death would claim everyone, even the best. Valmiki gives us these words of Brahma:

"That terrible weapon, if loosed in anger, will strike down all beings irrespective if they are dear to me or no. Inevitable destruction and death to all follows on that Rod of Death of immeasurable splendour created by me! Undoubtedly, My Friend, thou shouldst not let it fall on Ravana's head, for once it falls none will survive even for an instant."⁷

C. Ravana as a Trait of Human Consciousness

As an enemy, we must reframe Ravana. To the details of Ravana's enemy status we must add the questions of who, what and where. Who is Ravana? What is Ravana? and Where is he? Is it the case that his magnificent city of Lanka, reached by crossing an ocean, is ancient Ceylon or contemporary Sri Lanka? Or is it more properly a profound metaphor in the allegory for crossing the Vedic Ocean of Consciousness from God's attributeless side to the human side arriving at ego, magnificent ego, on Ravana's shore?

Ravana as Lord of the Rakshasas is magnified and articulated to the extreme all the better that we may see the traits of standard human nature in full flower, not so that we may dismiss either them or him as foreign to that nature. If he has ten heads and arms which when severed grow back, then he has ego, skill and resources magnified ten times. Only Rama with particular Celestial Weapons can sever his heads and arms permanently leaving him with only one head and filling him at the last with anxiety even though he yet remains with characteristic perseverance on the field of combat, ever a warrior.

7. *Ibid.*, *The Valmiki*, Vol. III: Uttara Kanda, Ch. 22, "The Duel Between Ravana and Yama; Brahma Intervenes," P. 435.

The severing of Ravana's heads is a highly significant fact. No one can live without a head. If anyone can sever his own head, cut off pride in his ability and live only with Rama's head, looking out with Rama's eyes full of compassion and justice, then he would have no ego, only the appearance of a head in the company of an attitude of service in the world, but never of the world. He would attain Vedic detachment. No one will cut off his own head easily.

We have it that originally Ravana attempted to cut off his heads and together with his brothers performed great austerities and pious observances. Kumbhakarna put his whole titan strength into duty. The virtuous Bibishana, who later joins Rama in battle against Ravana and to whom the Kingdom of Lanka reverts, devoted himself to duty and pure soul. To this end Bibishana stood on one leg for 5000 years and stood another 5000 years facing the sun, so great and long was his perseverance and devotion to these goals!

During the same amount of time Ravana deprived himself of nourishment, which we know to be an inferior but effective way of weakening the senses, and each 1000 years he sacrificed one of his heads to the God of Fire. That is, through deepest meditation he progressively burned the images and latencies (but not the seeds) of his own considerable ego. After 9000 years nine of his fantastic heads were gone, burned clean we may say in the Fire of the concentrated mind. As he was about to sacrifice his tenth head, he was approached by a vision of Brahma, or God the Creator, who tempts him with a boon. This event is an index of a purified psychic state which Patañjali has warned against: our own vices under the guise of friendly visions tempt us. They lurk under the mindstuff which covers them with imagery much as the on-screen "shell" in a computer covers the computer language resident beneath it.

Against Patañjali's caution, Ravana succumbs to one final lure of subtle desire. The boon he requests is immortality based on his assessment that everyone is afraid to die. He thus fails to die to himself and fails to become a "refugee" in Rama. Brahma tells him that no one can receive the boon of immortality. Instead, he grants Ravana extreme longevity and invulnerability to lesser celestials, or we may say, to lesser internal visions representative of the lower planes of consciousness.

Ravana for all his austerity fails to conquer clinging and attachment to the ephemeral but dazzling and glamorous life of becoming and

perishing. His immediate reaction to the double boon, despite its ultimately ephemeral promise, is excessive pride. He now more than ever thinks man to be of no account, having conquered so many realms of mental austerity, that he does not think it important to be insulated from man. This is his intimate and fatal flaw.⁸ If Rama later appears in human form it is as much to cure Ravana of his astigmatism about human ego as it is to show to all characters the proper way across the ocean of consciousness.

Immediately on receiving the boon Ravana's other nine heads grow back. His mother, disturbed, exhorts him to emulate his brother, Bibishana, subdued in senses, and his blood brother Vaishravana, the Lord of Wealth (Kuvera) already seated in the marvellous Pushpaka Chariot. Ravana's reaction is bitterness and arrogance. In a classic and immature response to hurt ego, he overpowers Kuvera and steals both Lanka and the Aerial Chariot, receiving Kuvera's apt curse, one of many to his credit:

"He is perverse . . . and the boons he has received have so intoxicated him that he can no longer discriminate between what is just and unjust."⁹

Failing to overcome fear of death, still clinging and valuing the ephemeral but glamorous and dazzling *prkrti*, and in possession of stolen wealth, we may say that Ravana has failed to recognize that the only wealth that can be taken out of the world is in consciousness, the true fruit of lessons well and finally learned.

Moreover, the traits we see in Ravana are present in all characters, even in the ascetics. Ravana is able to devour them in the Dandaka forest only because he remains rooted in their consciousness, attacking them valiantly from within in subtle manifestation notably during the practice of the Fire Sacrifice, a metaphor for the burning of the latencies and seeds of restless consciousness. More than a person, Ravana is a

8. *Ibid., The Valmiki*, Vol. III : Uttara Kanda, Ch. 10. "Concerning the Penance Practiced by Dashagriva and His Brothers," P. 401. The Uttara Kanda is the flashback Kanda in the sense it occurs after the death of Ravana in the form of a discourse between Rama and Agastya that attempts to account for the many events that have taken place thus far.

9. *Ibid., The Valmiki*, Vol. III : Uttara Kanda, Ch. 11. "Danada Cedes Lanka to Dashagriva," P. 406.

complex trait encountered along the progressive trajectory leading to the purification of consciousness that is depicted in the psychology of the Vedas. Slaying Ravana is a paradigm of redemption from ego kosha and illusion. Its demise represents the peeling away of an important veil.

Highly intelligent, extremely courageous, persistent, shrewd and eminently capable, a student of the Vedas and the son of a Brahmarshi, Ravana is seldom afraid. We may say he comes from a good family. He is a leader. When others flee a battlefield, which we may read as confrontation generally, he remains and rallies them as often through marvellous displays of prowess as by threats of retribution and the distribution of favours. He is thus generous with his friends, who are all those who facilitate his reckless conduct and are seduced by it. He is fierce in duty toward kingdom and family, again provided he is acceded to. Wise ministers and family as well as those who are less scrupulous, such as his exceedingly ugly and vain monster sister, Shurpanakha, carefully weave their words and appeals to him through the circuit of his ego, which cannot be bypassed. One is either unscrupulous or diplomatic with Ravana, but never insubordinate for he is a force to be reckoned with.

He is likable and exudes charm under favorable circumstances at home in Lanka, a Kingdom which sparkles with the veneer of prosperity and wealth. It is with difficulty that people pry themselves from him and come ultimately to closure with the power of his many lures and seductions. The picture Valmiki paints and sings of Ravana is highly transportable to other centuries. At the last, however, even the mighty Ravana fails to rally the Rakshasa army who flee in utter terror at their losses and at the vision of Rama, now in full splendour of battle. Only Ravana remains admirably on the field.

D. Great Birds, Monkeys, Chariots and Illusions in the Ocean of Consciousness

Ravana is gradually disturbed by the portents and cumulative losses that attend him in the final battle with Rama. Among them, a vulture perches on his standard. It is significant that among Rama's allies are the great Eagle Jatayu and his brother, Sampati, King of Vultures. Why indeed should God ally with vultures who prey on the dead unless to give over to them for their support what the spirit is leaving behind,

with the justice of nature. Rama, the support of the Three Worlds and all creatures, creates and animates through *prkrti*. Vultures by creative permission devour only the dead, the inert, the spent aspects of God's *prkrti*. All that is *prkrti* is ultimately maya or "illusion."

Like the ascetics, Ravana performs austerities and sacrifices, but his spiritual preceptor is Marichi whose name in Sanskrit means "mirage" or "visionary illusion." Marichi is a magician and master of illusion. Like Ravana he can assume any form at will. For this we are given many notorious examples of Marichi's and Ravana's activities in the tale, including Marichi assuming the form of a fantastic, jewelled-skinned deer to capture Sita's admiration and to assist Ravana, now in the form of an ascetic clothed in tree bark, to abduct her. For one year we have it that Ravana also studied 100 forms of magic with the Nivatakavachas, the sons of Varuna who live in the watery hell said to be at sea bottom, becoming proficient in one form.

Exploring this hell he discovered the Great cow, Surabha, from whom milk ever flows which forms the Kshiroda Ocean and under whom the holy rishis take refuge by subsisting on the froth of its Nectar of Immortality, an unmistakable reference to the froth on the Upanishads, the cream of the Vedas. It is also a reference to the oxygen or internal air available in the deepest trance of karmic sleep in which the body kosha is arrested between heartbeats and no respiration is apparent. Man cannot breathe under water and so it is fitting that one of the images of karmic sleep occurs as a refuge in the hell at sea bottom.

Though Ravana does not subsist on this froth, he is intelligent enough and sufficiently enamored of the notion of immortality it represents that he circumambulates the Cow and makes no challenge to a duel. He then continues on his customary way of challenging. Ravana is captivated by his own skill in what is in effect a hell of temporary ego, illusion and unprovoked challenges.

The study of magic pertains strictly to illusion or maya. It is a profound manipulation of *prkrti*. Through these notorious examples we learn by analogy to the Vedas that all that distracts attention through the senses is "mirage," a part of the magical maya of *prkrti* viewed as the manifest but temporary universe. All maya is susceptible of three predicates: there is a time in which it is, a time in which it was not, and a time in

which it will be no more. The lures that Ravana and Marichi create are primarily internal psychological illusions projected to other minds, but they are also an attempt to traffic with God's *prakṛti* as a counterfeit creator and imply a fluency with the veneers of true wealth.

Of the specific supranormal powers and operations of mind discovered by Ravana in austerity and elaborated by Patañjali in the Yoga Sutras, Ravana neglects that among such "tricks" of consciousness as may become manifest, the greatest trick is not to use them.

Events in the tale confirm that Ravana is himself a phenomenon within the mindstuff (*citta*), a monster of an illusion. Unlike Arjuna who is able to step into the Cosmic Vision and survive, we are told that Ravana may not do this. He is neither sufficiently humble nor wise nor patient enough to ask and receive permission.

Rama reminds us that he has taken an army of monkeys, crossed the ocean and built a bridge over it for the monkeys to follow. Only Hanuman, the great monkey general, may leap across the ocean without a bridge, and he is of divine parentage. Hanuman, also able to change his size and assume any form, does so with justice, finally leaping to Lanka by becoming the size of a thumb, the standard measure throughout the Vedas for the measure of the size of soul. For the others, Rama is the bridge or way across the waters.

By temporarily felling Lakshmana, who ever stands in front of Rama in devoted assistance, his "sign" or mark in the world, Ravana in effect places himself within range of the Cosmic Vision of All in All, unshielded, without permission and insufficiently purified. He is about to be burned clean in the Fire of Rama's glance. With Lakshmana down, though they have met in battle many times before, for the first time Rama tells us:

"... that wretch today has come within my range of vision and shall therefore cease to live. Appearing before me, Ravana cannot survive... Be tranquil witnesses of my combat with Ravana, O Invincible Ones, Foremost of the Monkeys; seat yourselves on the brow of the mountain."¹⁰

10. *Ibid.*, *The Valmiki*, Vol. III: Yuddha Kanda, Ch. 101, "Ravana Flees From Rama," P. 293.

The monkeys, that is, are now to follow the procedure outlined elsewhere by Patañjali in the Yoga Sutras for attaining the supernormal powers of mind that precede and lead to liberation and the extinction of illusory consciousness. This is the true bridge that Rama builds over the ocean. It is a bridge of method. Those who wish to cross over must somehow remain on the bridge even in a tempest when the waters are mightily churned and sea serpents assume all sizes commensurate with our manoeuvres. Such is Hanuman's ordeal, when he suddenly shrinks his great size to the size of a thumb, and passes through the sea monster, a notorious image for a mental apparition. As an image it is a stroke of genius. Ask anyone to describe or draw a sea monster, and the account will vary from person to person, precisely because it is a creation of the mind.

The ceaselessly restless monkeys of the mind, and the analogy is apt, are now to become tranquil witnesses. No longer led astray by the senses or gunas they are to be silent witnesses beyond language of the mutations of mind and body that form in the ensuing battle. They can only do this by climbing to the brow, not the peak, of a great mountain of conscious impressions. Notably at the brow, or more properly at the root of the nose, is the third eye seated in the midbrain which becomes active in deep trance and which is ever vibrating on an ocean of cerebral fluid, auspiciously unattached. At the full quieting of the waves of the mind the midbrain may become quiescent, the ocean calm, and the vibrations of the gunas harmonically balanced to produce deep but living arrest, supra-conscious knowledge and vanishment of illusion.

At the brow the monkeys will remain fixed in this harmonic during the final battle. At this stage Patañjali writes that beyond the mass of mindstuff (*citta*), tranquility is first manifest as *dharana* (fixation of the mind), leading to *dhyana* (meditation), *Samadhi* (concentration) and *Samyama* (fixity, meditation and concentration simultaneously.) Patañjali further distinguishes *Samprajñata* or the one-pointedness which leads to *Samapatti*, or habitual engrossment of the mind, and then the way in which *Samapatti* leads to *Asamprajñata-yoga*, or the mutation onward of the fully arrested mind toward a seedless concentration.¹¹

11. Patañjali, *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali*, trans. Samkhya-yogacharya Swami Hariharananda Aranya, rendered into English by P.N. Mukerji, with complete text of the Yoga Sutras [Yoga Aphorisms], (Albany: SUNY Press, 1983), Pp. 249-263.

For this we have the adventure of the Great Birds Jatayu and Sampati, not accidentally named, who challenge each other in brotherly and affectionate competition, but in competition nonetheless.

The Great Birds decide one day to fly to the sun, a referent to the Cosmic Vision, to test who can reach the goal first. Seeing his younger brother exhausted in the heat and effort required and amazed at their great height, Sampati flies down to Jatayu, who was about to fall, and covers him with his wings. Jatayu, prostrate, falls to the earth in a spot unknown to Sampati, and lives to assist Rama later in the extremely valiant but unsuccessful attempt to stop Ravana in midair in his abduction of Sita.

By metaphor and insight we may say that this is not the first time, but the second time, that Jatayu has met Ravana, for has he not met him in extremely subtle form in his flight toward the sun in the form of affectionate pride? No matter. By sincerity, a dose of humility and service to Rama, Jatayu is liberated though destroyed as a Bird.

Sampati for his brotherly care loses his wings, scorched off in the Sun's heat, and falls to earth, unconscious, on the inaccessible Vidhya Mountain. So close is the *Samapatti* state of habitual engrossment to *Asamprajñata*, or the final mutation onward of the mind toward quiescent union, that we may imagine Sampati flying very close to the Sun, an unmistakable metaphor for the appearing God who veils the Formlessness of God under the Solar Veil of the Cosmic Vision. The Veil can vanish and with it its orange light of meditation. This is the so-called Solar Veil that rises as a transparency between Prkrti and Formlessness and whose mystery of "contact" Krishna exhorts Arjuna to contemplate in Bhagavad-Gita 9.4. Its explanation is only knowable beyond language and may not be said.

In a metaphor of patience and perseverance, Sampati spends 8000 years on Vindhya crawling and hopping painfully as a wingless and broken Bird, going slowly up and down the Vindhya in grief in search

[Yoga Sutras III.1 - III.12, "Spranormal Powers of Consciousness"]. Patanjali's Sutras, or short forms, are his commentary on the vast Sanskrit grammar of the great Panini, a grammar which today cannot be reconstructed without the aid of a computer.

of the sage Nishakara, whom he and Jatayu used to visit in kindness. In the dialogue with Nishikara Sampati owns his acts and recounts the "fearful, arduous and rash act" to the Sage admitting "pride in our power of flight." The kind Sage encourages him:

"Thy two wings with their feathers will grow again and thou wilt recover thy sight, thine energy and thy prowess . . . Wait for the time and place . . . I am able this very day to furnish thee with wings but by waiting here thou canst render a service to the worlds."¹²

Sampati is a lesson to all the great souls, crushed by ego and visited by the mercy of pain, who can persevere through recovery, emotional and physical, to soar anew on the wings of lessons learned.

Indeed this is just what happens in the tale. By busily searching for food for the voracious Sampati, it is Sampati's son who sees Sita being carried brutally through the sky by Ravana, and picks up her dropped jewels as a sign and a trace of her identity. It is Sampati who assists Hanuman to encourage the monkey army at a critical moment of despair on Vindhya. It is Sampati who locates Lanka for Hanuman through the mental powers attained by being at Samapatti beyond the pairs of opposites where clairvoyance is manifest, and Sampati who informs the monkeys of Sita's wellbeing. Immediately his wings grow back.

Not until Ravana's destruction as ego or latency of thought impression will the monkeys, ascetics, Great Birds or any characters whatever attain *Nirvija*, or seedless concentration leading to permanent union with God and the cessation of rebirth. In the vernacular of mental austerity, Ravana must become a "roasted seed", "fried" and burned off in consciousness, no longer capable of sprouting ego, vanity, pride and their attendant mental gunas or fluctuations. A roasted seed is a spent latency incapable of impeding the mutation onward of mind from *Samprajñata* stage through *Ekagrata-parinama*, *Samadhi-parinama* and *Nirodha-parinama*. Only in this way can *samyama* lead to full liberation *qua* a permanent cessation of the sequence of mutations in mindstuff resulting in a transcendence

12. *Ibid.*, *The Valmiki*, Vol II: Kishkinda Kanda, Ch. 60-61, "The Story of the Ascetic Nishikara" and "Sampati Tells His Story to the Sage Nishikara," Pp. 311-314.

of ego and a quiescent merging beyond the three gunas, or primary vibrations.

Aspirants weary and impatient after so long a journey and with the end in view may engage in "straining" toward the goal. Others about to enter the door suddenly know that final closure with worldly attachment must occur, for once one enters the abode of the other shore one cannot come out again. Both straining and reactions to final closure stir up fluctuations in the mindstuff. Straining is on a par with Ravana's stealing of the marvellous Aerial Chariot Pushpaka from Kuvera, Lord of Wealth¹³

This great Car goes anywhere at will with the swiftness of thought and is so magnificent that it resembles a fully adorned palace with many jewelled and golden rooms. An aerial chariot, it is metaphorically the vehicle of the purified mind with its jewels and encrustations representing attainments, colors and patterns of light available during trance. Its theft instructs us both that Ravana has some skill by which he is able to manoeuvre Pushpaka, but also that such wealth cannot be stolen before it is appropriate to receive it as a deserved gift.

At Ravana's death, the Chariot returns easily to Rama who is so omnipotent that during part of the final battle Rama fights Ravana on foot without any chariot. On the return to Ayodhya, Rama collects into the Chariot those who have assisted him and gently dismisses Pushpaka, returning it to Kuvera as a paradigm of ascent and redemption and to illustrate that the Chariot is ever at his disposal, not the disposal of others. Kuvera receives the Chariot as a trustee, not as an outright owner.

13. *Ibid.*, *The Valmiki*, Vol. III: Yuddha Kanda, Ch. 129, "Bharata Sets Out to Meet Rama," P. 365: "Now go hence and place thyself at Vaishravana's disposal. I give thee leave to depart." Vaishravana is Kuvera, the Lord of Wealth. In the Yuddha Kanda we have it thus: "Go now, O Pushpaka, wherever thou desirest but come again whenever I call thee to mind! Go by the path of the Siddhas, O Friend, and let no harm come to thee. Mayest thou not suffer any collision in thy fantastic journeys in space . . ." [Yuddha Kanda, Ch. 41, "Rama Dismisses the Pushpaka Chariot," P. 518.] It should be noted that both space and time are thus illusions, or temporary evolved modalities. This conception conforms perfectly to the status of individual space-time systems implied in post-Einsteinean process philosophy [Whitehead]. The Pushpaka is summoned by the purified minds as a fine and subtle "spatial" vehicle in mental "space."

At swift impact all that has been associated with Parasurama as we might have known him in the world vanishes, a temporary and precious illusion dispersed. Only pure consciousness fixed in Rama remains and Parasurama ceases to exist in plurality as formerly implied in the concept of "ascendancy," which is always "over others." Beyond plurality there is only quiescent unity.

Parasurama's destruction represents the final destruction of even the latency of pride and continues the work that must be done after the first Bow is strung. By the first Bow one attains twice-born status. By the second Bow one accomplishes the promise of twice-born status. Parasurama's role as a character keys this double process to the paradox of conversion from Warrior to Brahmin and marks the continuity of passage between the two forms of worship.

His example instructs us that the Warrior Way requires a science of confrontation, that confrontation joined to study of the Vedas leads to worship, that it requires intelligent discrimination of tests and fierce adherence to duty, that it is fed by mental austerity, and that it includes the danger of accumulating ego, pride and ascendancy even in the accomplishment of *dharma*.

The paradox that study fixes discrimination, discrimination fixes duty, duty fixes rage at injustice, accomplishment of duty fixes pride, pride fixes ego and the Vedas destroy ego accounts in part for the efficacy of warrior confrontation. But is sheer anger and Ravana's spectacular rage directed at a holy object that hold the pieces of the confrontation puzzle together in an internal and dynamic coherence, as we shall see.

F. Cultivation of the Real Identities of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana are divine, a fact which everyone knows but only some choose to remember. They are an inseparable triad of aspects which are logically, ethically and metaphysically indissoluble.

Peeking through the veil of illusions, Rama is an analogue of God the Formless now incarnate. Sita is God's magical *Māya* or higher *Prkṛti*, the literal Womb of the appearing universe in an articulation that is especially compatible with Sankara's concept of the evolute.

The world of appearance, a dazzling spectacle, grows out of this original and ideal primary quality or principle at the root of the evolution of Formlessness into gradations and complications of attribute or plurality through the vibration and recombinant effects of the three gunas in a field compatible picture with the best of post-Einsteinean process philosophy. It is for this reason that Sita is "wedded" to Rama.

Sita, ever in repose with Rama, always lying on his chest, providing a beautiful distraction in her amusements in the forest is candidly reminiscent of the familiar Vedanta image of pearls strung on Brahman in which the pearls *are* the appearing world, a world which God the Formless literally wears and sports. We may think of trees, stars, solar winds, rich soil, vegetation, waterways and indeed all nature and cosmos as veins, cells or growths of one kind or another within the literal interior of the "body" of God, the Cosmic Egg or Invisible Seed. Sita is the delicate and transparent lining of the Egg. Krishna's words to Arjuna in the Gita are again an echo of this powerful Vedic image:

Know this my Prkrti
 United with me:
 The womb of all beings.
 I am the birth of this cosmos:
 Its dissolution also.
 I am He who causes:
 No other beside me.
 Upon me these worlds are held
 Like pearls strung on a thread.¹⁹

It is no surprise, then, that Sita is born without parents of the stuff of the universe, named for the "furrow" of rich soil from which she springs. Essentially *Prkrti*, she remains guileless and totally dependent on Rama throughout as do all characters in the tale. A prime metaphysical point, *both* the Formless and *Prkrti* and divine, *both* are beginningless, endless and constitutive of the appearing world order. Sita provides deep contrast to the deceptive abuse of lower recombinant *prkrti* by Ravana and his preceptor, Marichi. Sita reminds us that in Nature at least there is justice. If she is beautiful and dazzling, did we expect creation to be otherwise at its Root?

19. *Ibid.*, *Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita*, Ch. VII: "Knowledge and Experience," Pp. 70-71. [Bhagavad-Gita 7.6 - 7.7: Jñana and Vijñana].

Lakshmana, Rama's younger brother, is the necessary "sign" or "mark" of the Formless in the world. It is for this reason that he is inseparable from Rama and remains faithfully at his service in total submission to Rama's will throughout.

Nagarjuna's much later clarification of "sign" or mark in relation to *Prkrti* in the Maha-prajña-paramita-sastra is instructive in this regard. Here Nagarjuna distinguishes between accidental and essential signs or marks noting that not all marks arise necessarily nor exclusively from the things they signify, nor do they do so immediately. To use his examples, smoke is the (distant) sign of fire, but it is neither the fire itself nor its immediate sign. Both brass and gold bear yellow marks. Some who perform austerities and worship later become wild, angry and treacherous much as Ravana. Nagarjuna's point is well taken. To assume exclusive necessity between marks and the *nature* of things is naïve.²⁰

Prkrti, on the other hand, is always the essential nature of a thing. *Prkrti* and *lakshana* are separated by distinctions of internal, external, proximate, distant, first appearance and later revelation. For Nagarjuna there is the additional term, *dhatu*, which in this peculiar context he uses to convey the idea of an essence (*Prkrit*) that is born or deepened by cumulative cultivation. Only the *lakshana* born of cumulative cultivation is an essential and necessary sign duly reflective of the essence (*Prkrti*). We may say then that between Rama and Sita there is strictly necessary cultivation. Lakshmana's permanent devotion to both Rama and Sita in the tale is a cumulative cultivation of God-Consciousness and *Dharma* in the world which results in a necessary relationship between the sign or mark in the world and the divine dyad of *Prkrti* and Formlessness.

For this we are given Rama's patient lessons to Lakshmana throughout, and are shown Lakshmana's instant bending to Rama's will *without*

20. K. Venkata Ramanan, *Nagarjuna's Philosophy As Presented in the Maha-Prajña-paramita-Sastra*, with a complete translation of the Maha-prajña-paramita-sastra by the author, New Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass Press and Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1987. passim and especially Pp. 75-81. The Sastra, lost in the original Sanskrit, recovered in Chinese and retranslated into Sanskrit is a commentary that is not without controversy traditionally attributed to Nagarjuna. It is an important text within the Madhyamika philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism, based on Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyakakarika* [Karika]. Nagarjuna's discussion of signs fits interestingly with aspects of the American pragmatist Charles Sanders Peirce's theory of semiotic. Peirce's understanding is surprisingly unforeign to the Vedanta semiotic.

any hesitation. Lakshmana must also serve and bend to Sita's will, and does so *whether or not he understands the dyadic necessity between Rama and Sita*, as during the scenes preceding the abduction when he must follow two apparently contradictory orders of Rama and Sita.

It is telling in this regard that it is ultimately impossible to abduct Sita. Sita is always brought back from that displacement which is improper, whether it be from Lanka, from ordeal by fire, from false accusation about virtue, or even from exile in the forest. Indeed Rama's perpetual concerns about how to bring Sita back from that place of displacement represents none other than a concern for the proper recovery *dharma* or divine measure in the universe.

There is a fundamental sense in which the real Sita is always hidden in Fire in Consciousness, difficult to really touch or penetrate, the invisible ground of the evolute process, as beginningless and endless as Brahman. We have this sense overtly in the Adhyatma Ramayana in which Rama tells Sita to construct her "double" in anticipation of the abduction. This tallies well with the distinction between higher and lower *prkrti*. As *Prkrti*, it is Sita, not Ravana, who is ultimately the master illusionist.

The abduction itself resembles Ravana's theft of the magnificent Pushpaka. Neither form of wealth can be stolen. Yet they are each such that they have been freely given to the world as to Ravana, but under the terms of longevity, justice, mercy, lessons and trusteeship. When the trust is broken the title to the rights for opportunity to work revert to their rightful owner as is the extralegal meaning of the term "trust."

G. Ravana's Spectacular Rage

Valmiki's psychological portrait of Ravana remains clinically accurate today. Ravana's anger is a response to the perception of hurt and loss and conforms to the contemporary analysis of the so-called "language" of feelings. We may also understand his reactions in the light of the physiology of feelings. The transposition of Ravana to a contemporary therapeutic setting brings his conduct to our doorstep and also reveals the inner dynamic that allows the strategy of Vidvesha-Bhakti to work.

The grammar and syntax of the language of feelings is captured as follows:

*Anxiety is the fear, real or imagined, of hurt or loss.
Hurt or loss results in anger.
Anger held in results in guilt.
Guilt held in results in depression.²¹*

The above schema captures the "anger-in" response which is typically unhelpful. Kept in and directed at the self rather than the external cause of the anger, the individual who is hurt harms himself further. There are varieties of reasons why people do not acknowledge anger,²² and there is often a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature and function of anger as beneficial and natural, a normal response to being hurt. In the anger-in response, the anger that is stored mutates within and against the individual, wearing down his energy reserves in the control required to suppress feelings. It often escapes unpredictably at the wrong targets in stored up levels that far exceed the gravity of the present moment. We shall see that Ravana's rage, though intense, is not typically an anger-in response.

The "anger-in" cycle is interrupted in "anger-out" where the angry response is handled appropriately by directing it at the cause of the hurt or loss as soon as possible and appropriate. Excessive reserves of anger do not develop internally. Anger is acknowledged as a feeling and does not lead to unwarranted guilt and depression. We are not here speaking of the warranted guilt that ought to occur when we have really and intentionally harmed someone or something.

The "language" implies organic growth and progression and not linear logic. It is a process invariant model.²³ The feelings that arise

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21. David Viscott, M.D., *The Language of Feelings*. (New York: Pocket Books 1976), particularly P. 32 and passim. I have restated with slight modification Dr. Viscott's excellent chart of statements on P. 32 according to information on the language cycles of feelings throughout the brief and perspicacious book. Dr. Viscott's book is a gem of accessibility for nontechnical readers and is also seriously faithful to the hard data. Dr. Viscott's approach is compatible with Vedanta psychology and is holistic.
22. Some reasons people do not acknowledge anger are that the cause of anger is unavailable, too threatening, or lost to them through years of suppression. Anger at someone for dying in the classic stages of the grieving process, for example, implies unavailability of the (dead) person. An example of a too threatening figure might be a parent or a boss with power to do further harm to the person. This is not exhaustive of the reasons.
23. Process invariant learning model. As a process model, learning is going on all the time and knowledge acquired at one stage may be used at a higher stage.

are felt as much in the body as in the mind. A mental appraisal (emotion) generates a physical feeling in the body. Physical feelings are picked up as a profound kinesthesia in the body accomplished by adrenaline, noradrenaline, endorphines, muscle and liver glycogens (sugars) and other observable chemico-physical changes. By virtue of the strong analogy between the mental and physical poles of an emotion, it becomes possible to revisit an emotional appraisal by focussing on the lingering physical affects of the powerful substances mentioned in the body environment. Reframing this in Vedic psychology, the emotional *guna* creates a physical *guna* and we become prey to both vibrations.²⁴

It is to be carefully noted that the *origin* and governance of an emotion is a *mental appraisal and not a physical feeling* no matter how strong the analogy between the two poles or how lingering the effect in the body environment. This is so despite the fact that it is possible to revisit an emotional appraisal by tapping into the lingering bodily effects through analogy. It is just as possible to interrupt this analogical response. The fact remains that the moment a person reflects he is in danger or that his life is being threatened, whether it is or not, outcome proportioned amounts of noradrenaline or adrenaline depending on whether he also appraises that he will stand and fight or run to safety. The origin is mental, as is the cessation of bodily mutation under the effects of emotion. To say that emotions are primarily conditioned by the body, or any more social environment, is among the fundamental and subtle errors of behaviorism leading to passivity.

In the psychology of the Vedas the poles of an emotion exist on a continuum of mutation of the three *gunas*. *Gunas*, as fundamental vibrations constitutive of the harmonics of *Maya*, subtle to gross, are capable of creating harmonic disturbance of the subtle mindstuff and the grosser bodystuff on the basis of appraisal. It is *appraisal* which holds

As invariant, the stages must evolve in order such that quantum leaps from a prior to a more final stage do not occur.

24. Technically, all ego, both so-called "healthy" and "unhealthy," are reframed in Vedic psychology. All attachment to ego is attachment to a temporary illusion and is to be surpassed through "detachment." Detachment is not equivalent to suppression or denial, but is an observing or witnessing from a supra-conscious vantage. Regarding the Sartrian and Structural matrices, ego or mindstuff is the locus of absolute freedom, role playing and superficial social structuring. However, Vedic psychology implies and addresses consciousness beyond mindstuff in ways the other two phenomenologies of mind fail to do.

the key to the quality of the mental disturbance and appraisal is none other than a derivative of *discrimination*.

On the heels of the appraisal of hurt or loss follows the appraisal of anger. Hurt and loss are experienced kinesthetically as a draining out or away of energy and come across in the language as "sadness" or a "down" physicomental feeling. Anger merely restores the balance created by the dislocation of sadness. The anger is neither bad nor good, just a guna which must be endured once it has been set in motion. It is an attempt to equilibrate a system dislocation *which is impossible without ego. For without ego there is nothing to subtract energy from.*

Ego, like the emotions which attend it, is as much in the mind as in the body through the agency and continuity of the gunas. When the Vedas advise that we detach from emotion, it is not an order to suppress but precisely to "watch" and "quiet" the mindstuff which after all is still can be allowed to vanish as an "object." It is as much a "sense" as the other five, albeit finer, subtle, not gross. The watching "witness" is supra to mind, or supraconscious, resident at the thumb measure of Soul in the midbrain, utterly beyond language.

Thus when Ravana mentally appraises that his life, or worse, his warrior reputation is in danger, his fear, real or imagined, creates fluctuations and mutations of mindstuff which cause powerful mutations in the body environment. This is the microscopic view of the continuity between the ego and body koshas, between mind and matter. Ravana's perception of hurt will be commensurate with the hurt or loss we might imagine in one who has ten heads rather than one to lose and quiet. Ravana's rage and transports of anger are intense not because they are suppressed, but because they must equilibrate a mighty ego.

We also know he is not engaged in anger-in because he is never guilty or depressed at home in Lanka. He typically disports himself amorously, has strong passions, is charming in the banquet halls and is extremely magnanimous and generous with his citizens whose adoration and praise he freely accepts. He creates leisure time for study and maintains an elevated aesthetic atmosphere throughout every detail of the magnificent City. Severely depressed individuals typically reject praise and help as part of the syndrome whereby they have suppressed attention away from the true causes of their anger to retain the appraisal that they are worthless,

and therefore deserve the anger. They cease to take pride in personal appearance, lapse from grooming and become inactive. Ravana's conduct is quite different.

He strikes "out" rather than "in." He is in touch with his feelings rather than suppressed from them. He is quick to run amorously into passionate displays with any attractive woman or goddess he sees in the grandiose belief that she could do no better than ally herself with him. Seduced by the grandeur of his own mind, he fails to listen to others when they disagree and disallows as invalid the experiences and wishes of those who wish to go their own way.

So great is his charisma that most talented and endowed persons who meet him, male and female alike, are seduced and agree to ally with him. Mostly in the Ramayana we see the large print of those who are forewarned of him and who refuse to align with him, but we should not ignore that it is the majority who are seduced.

But the worm turns. With the advent of Rama in the forest, Ravana opens to a gradually escalating set of challenges which he is increasingly unable to resolve. For the first time, Ravana's rage becomes co-present with a growing level of anxiety. *It is the co-presence of rage and anxiety that cooperate to bring about confrontational worship.*

Ravana's gradually unfolding anxiety is a more sophisticated appraisal than simple fear, mentally and physically. Simple fear results in adrenaline secretion and flight, although in extended bouts it can result in the "freezing" of stage fright or battle terror. Anxiety adds noradrenaline secretion to the picture and is the appraisal of being afraid while wanting to stay and do something about it, exactly the bravery we would expect from Ravana.

In sum, emotional appraisals create chemical secretions to prepare the body *kosha* to act according to the appraisal. Provided an emotion issues in action, the chemical effects are dissipated and perspired without ongoing damage to the body system. While the "running" of fear-flight takes care of this, the "staying" of anxiety does not.

Barring an elaborate discussion of the chemistry of the emotions, suffice it to say here that anxiety manifests in the body *kosha* as "butterflies in the stomach," dilated pupils, elevated pulse and stroke

rate of the heart, elevated blood pressure, the presence of adrenaline and other powerful adrenal cortex hormones (noradrenaline), muscle and liver glycogens (sugars) in the blood, and in prolonged episodes, the breakdown of muscle glycogen by adrenaline into lactic acid which then inhibits the assimilation of glucose by the muscles and accounts for the remarkable exhaustion of those who suffer from chronic anxiety neurosis.

"Butterflies" are the flow of blood away from the solar plexis to the large, running muscles of the upper thigh. The staying of the muscles in anxiety is an effort to convert the feeling of powerlessness to the appraisal of mastery and fullness which is characteristic of anger. Anxiety is an attempt to control fear and convert it to anger in a recovery of the equilibrium of the ego system. Many people use anger habitually to "cover" and deny the painful feeling of emotions of hurt or loss. They fail to recognize that pain is neither good nor bad, just painful and indicative of the mutations occurring at the level of mental appraisals.

Extended contact in combat reveals to Ravana a more perfect appraisal of Rama's skill and identity but does not lessen his anger, which is an effort to cover and cope the fear of loss of ego and personal identity. The novel experience of failure heightens this fear and sets Ravana into a protective rage the size of his ego. Valmiki describes a combination of prolonged battle and growing anxiety that promotes the glycolysis reaction associated with adrenaline that would progressively break down Ravana's muscle glycogen into lactic acid and ultimately inhibit the utilization of glucose by muscle or other tissues. His own emotion gradually incapacitates him physically and mentally for serious action.

During prolonged anxiety attention is progressively centered and intensified on the threatening danger. In Ravana's case this implies increased centering on Rama, a divine object. The progressive weakening of the senses, appetites and distractions associated with anxiety parallel the course of meditation enabling a gradual *samyama* on Rama to take place.

Ravana's agitated worry also relates to the physiology of anger in that both are cholinergic reactions that place noradrenaline and related powerful hormones from the adrenal cortex into the bloodstream. Where as anxiety is laced with both adrenaline and noradrenaline, anger and aggression are closely associated with high levels of noradrenaline.

High levels of noradrenaline show themselves in the desire for revenge, hostility, sarcasm and extreme criticism of others. Unlike adrenaline, noradrenaline does not deplete muscles but prepares them for striking, tearing and short hitting, forearm, fist and hand movements.²⁵

In the Vedas it is common to note that the whole cosmos is remaining in man through a marvellous continuity of the gunas. If we carry this to its logical conclusion, we may note that to a certain extent the nature of some animals remains in the complex human psychology. With regard to aggression and noradrenaline, the medullas of predatory animals, such as the lion, contain 60% noradrenaline to 40% adrenaline. The relative proportions are reversed in nonpredators such as rabbits who have 85% to 100% adrenaline.²⁶ The animal nature of a primitive brain is in contrast to a complex structure that can coordinate the lobes of the brain with a midbrain. Only in human birth can God be realized, precisely through the domination and wise use of the midbrain.

Habitual anger promotes an enlargement of the adrenal cortex that in turn promotes the feeling of physical power. We may say that Ravana's habitual anger is a "sign" or mark of the cumulative cultivation of the *prkrti* of anger, power and warrior might in the ways discussed by Nagarjuna. It is thus fitting and incisive that Rama should direct his arrows at the anger in the warrior *prkrti* to claim his attention.

Extreme anger and rage lead physiologically and mentally to incoordination and favor gross movements over finely coordinated movement. It is well, therefore, that Ravana devotes himself in battle to the grand gestures of gigantic maces, clubs, axes, plumed arrows and other large weapons of combat that are manipulated more by titan strength than fine coordination.

But anxious angry war is qualitatively different from confident angry war. The simultaneous manifestation of rage and anxiety results in a modification of the outward symptoms such that along with progressive

25. Magda B. Arnold, *Emotion and Personality*, Vol. II (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), Ch 7: "The Psychological Effects of Emotion" Pp. 205-219, and especially Pp. 212-213. Magda Arnold's precise and thorough account is amplified and deepened by my many conversations with her student, Dr. Roger S. Arnold, D. Psy., DVM, Founder and Director of the Center for Human Development at Techny, Illinois. Dr. Arnold's experience and keen understanding of matters both theoretical and practical cannot be overemphasized.

26. *Ibid.*, *Emotion and Personality*, Vol. II: Pp. 222-225.

weakening and obsessive focussing on the perceived threat, something that is inimical may gradually appear threatening and may even arouse desperation.²⁷

Thus, not everything we are afraid of is dangerous, but we are afraid just the same. The compassionate Rama is not ultimately dangerous. Ravana's extreme fear of death and his fear of the level of hurt and loss he will sustain if he crushes his own ego usher in the progressive internal mutations of anxiety. He uses his extreme rage to cover his fundamental fear at the loss of the warrior self, or any self for that matter. Focussed on Rama in both anxiety and rage, the glycolysis process gradually takes over to weaken his senses so that only Rama, a holy object of contemplation, remains in his mind. The rest is a matter of time and mutation provided the *samyama* is not interrupted. The habitual cultivation of perseverance by Ravana takes care of this, for again in Nagarjuna's vocabulary, we may say that he has cultivated the *prkrti* of perseverance and is its "sign" or mark in the world.

Valmiki is most careful to inform us that during the entire elaborate process of the final terrible and hair raising battle, Rama manifests *neither agitation nor emotion*. Ravana, by contrast, is *overcome with prostration and exhaustion*, precisely the effects of prolonged anxiety in the presence of rage.²⁸ Ravana's Charioteer, a master at knowing when to advance, when to halt, retreat, retire or gauge the portents on the field of battle, withdraws Ravana's Chariot from the combat to allow him to recuperate. The Charioteer estimates more accurately than Ravana his "prostration" and the "exhaustion" of his steeds and his "terrible fatigue."²⁹ Ravana's confusion and disorientation indicate exactly the mixed physiological picture of agitated worry in the setting of sustained rage.

During combat, Rama cuts off more than 100 heads, which all regrow on Ravana.³⁰ Unable to seize these opportunities to sever attachment to extreme ego, Ravana's agitated worry combined with his

27. *Ibid.*, *Emotion and Personality*, Vol. II: P. 225.

28. *Ibid.*, *The Valmiki*, Vol. III: Yuddha Kanda, Ch. 109, "The Duel Continues," P. 312.

29. *Ibid.*, *The Valmiki*, Vol. III: Yuddha Kanda, Ch. 105, "Ravana Reproaches His Charioteer," P. 305.

30. *Ibid.*, *The Valmiki*, Vol. III: Yuddha Kanda, Ch. 109, "The Duel Continues," P. 313.

extreme hurt and rage conspire to draw his attention with ever sharpening focus to Rama, the object of his holy terror. His rage is a cry for help fed by his deep fear of what is implied by overcoming the self with the Self. Though certainly not "straining" at this moment, may we not say he is appraising with much anxiety what it means to come to final closure with the world? The weakening of all his senses by the progressive effects of chronic anxiety makes him increasingly unable to absorb and utilize the noradrenaline for angry, aggressive muscle movement. In such a great and extended battle as this, there is probably also a near total depletion of muscle and liver glycogen to deliver to the system since Rama gives him little respite from attack.

We may surmise that the brief respite provided by the Charioteer is allowed by Rama and provides Ravana with just enough energy to stay standing for the final blow. Ravana knows this. There is absolutely no doubt in the Valmiki that Ravana knows he will somehow die to himself in this hair raising battle. In careful words, Valmiki tells us:

... both Raghava and Ravana, steady, resolute and full of anger, fought with determined courage. 'I shall triumph' reflected Kakutstha. 'I must die' thought Ravana and both displayed their full strength with assurance in the encounter.³¹

This is not the image of pure evil. It is the image of a warrior using the only resources at his disposal to stay standing in holy confrontation before a merciful God, resolute, fearful, confused, anxious, fatigued, stayed by anger and finally prostrate before what has always been the object of his study. Unable to overcome his own fear, Rama overcomes it for him in a strategy uniquely adapted to the psychology of his devotee. Unable to bow with humility and thus bend and string the Second Great Bow, Rama shows Ravana the only way he can understand to "prostrate" himself before him. The clear focus and utter prostration of anxiety and rage are Ravana's salvation.

And so we have it even Biblically that God visits suffering on his favorite people. Ravana simply needs more than others to die to the self and to rise to the Self within.

31. *Ibid*; *The Valmiki*, Vol. III; Yuddha Kanda, "The Fluctuations of Combat," P. 310.

Rama, who hears the prayers and lamentations of all, allows Mandodari, Ravana's wise widow, and Bibishana, his pure brother, to express their grief and consoles them with these words of justice:

Nay, this hero has not succumbed on account of his lack of prowess! Endowed with burning courage in battle, having displayed the greatest energy, he fell without yielding. One should not mourn for those who, firm in their duty as warriors, for the sake of renown fall on the field of battle. It is not the time to weep for this brave warrior . . . now that he lies under the sway of death; no one is always victorious in war . . . This path followed by Ravana was taught to us by the Sages and the warrior class hold it in great honor. The warrior who is slayed in battle, should not be mourned, this is the law.³²

Ravana is following an established path. He is not a remote warrior. The Ramayana fundamentally reframes the notion of warrior and penetrates the language of human feelings to expose the inner workings of confrontation, pride and ego in the context of real worship. That warriors are men as well as women, that the warrior class is diffuse throughout the walks of life, and that battles are not all fought in the distance but very close by is a central metaphorical message of Valmiki's classic.

H. Conclusion: The Ramayana As Elaborate Psychodrama

Allegorically, there is only one character in the Ramayana who remains scattered throughout a cast of thousands in the elaborate tale. The paths of warriors, ascetics, brahmins, householders, villains, animals and humans are caught in the net of one personage with Rama ever present and available as its holy, indwelling core.

This integrated character is both divine and human, as feminine as masculine, as human as animal, distracted and recollected, as much a friend as an enemy to its own unification and purification. The soul is neither masculine nor feminine, being beyond and grounding both these two as merely aspects of a texture of experience. While each apparent character is an emphasis, all emphases are possible in each. Ravana is an emphasis larger than life so that we will not overlook him and think him of no account.

32. *Ibid.*, *The Valmiki*, Vol III: Yuddha Kanda, Ch. 111. "The Lamentations of Bibishana," P. 317. [Read Vivishana for Bibishana in other translations].

As aspirants we would prefer to be Rama or Sita, Agastya, Vasistha, or even to soar in daring and justice as Jatayu. But until we become completely our friend and cut off our own head, in the language of the tale, we shall remain Ravana, too. We will either string the Second Great Bow or receive the administration of its terrible dart by holy action.

In a word, the Ramayana is a vast psychodrama in which the "parts" of the complex human character are fractured and artificially displayed as if separate on the stage of Valmiki's classic. They remain in intimate dialogue and aim at coming to closure with the negative "parts" to dismiss them from the internal characterization until only the purified Soul remains. The difference between ordinary psychodrama and Valmiki's rendition is that the Valmiki substitutes a Cosmic Consciousness to unify the "parts" for the narrow personal ego of contemporary psychology.

The world of characters, possibilities, paths and events is a unified globe, and the globe represents each individual in particular. By the boon of longevity, but not immortality, the globe is permitted to turn and pulse on its axis through a life of experience, action and reflection creating the harmonics of an internal evolution.

The message is philosophical and timely. Waste not the moment, for by all accounts surely the unreflected upon life is a sleepwalk in illusion.