

12. Ravana's Proficiency In The Vedas Was Of No Avail Because Of His Bad Practices

When a sinner finds prosperity coming his way, he feels like challenging even the Lord. But when his prosperity disappears, he will become humble and will begin to see the truth.

Prema Swarupas:

If an individual wants to become an important person in this world, he should have three good qualities. The first is to have firm and unwavering faith in the need for being good. The second is to be free from hatred, jealousy and ego. The third is to be able to appreciate and enjoy when he sees another individual or the society around him doing good work. It is through these three qualities that a person's greatness will come to be known.

The ancient traditions of Bharatha have always been recognising and proclaiming the greatness of these three qualities in an individual. Not only does the individual's importance get established through these three qualities, but even the country's reputation will become known through the individual citizens who possess these three qualities. When we want the country to become great and the greatness of the country to be known and recognised outside the country, it is necessary that the rulers of the country also possess these three qualities.

Unfortunately today, people who cannot recognise the truth in our ancient culture have been proclaiming that such good qualities are not essential. Such people, who are unable to recognise the values in our culture, keep on saying that our traditions are shackles to our progress and they act as a hindrance to the freedom of one's own mind.

They keep on saying that pilgrimages are unnecessary and to visit great saints is only a sign of mental weakness. All of you may not be aware that such statements are merely platform speeches made by persons who are in a position of authority and power. Sometimes, they are also politically motivated. Such words are uttered very superficially, without any depth of investigation or thought behind them.

Young people should not pay much attention to such superficial statements but should recognise the value of the truth that is contained in our ancient culture and follow the same. Wise people do not become slaves to their desires and do not, without thinking, accept the material path which science and technology have provided for fulfilling their desires. The individuals who have succeeded in harnessing atomic power are beginning to think that even their discriminating power is being swallowed up by their own inventions. They are unable to recognise the truth that the very machines they have created and the very weapons which they have constructed are going to swallow their very lives. They are thinking that to spend their lives and resources in pursuing matters which have no relation to their real well-being is right. They do not realise that in so doing, they are wasting their lives.

Prema Swarupas:

In order to recognise man's divinity, we must learn to respect service. Man's duty is to serve the society of which he is a part. It appears today that all our ideas and thoughts have been borrowed from others. They appear to be all transient. It looks as if there are no permanent values at all.

It is true that today Westerners have made considerable progress in science and are acquiring mastery over the material world. In spite of all that, they are not able to give any reply to the challenges posed by the sacred texts like the *Upanishads*. Because we have such total belief in worldly experience and things that are based on such experience, we are unable to know ourselves. Every individual thinks that he has achieved some great things, and such achievements are used for the purpose of proclaiming his own greatness and enhancing his own reputation. Truly, without using our strength and our intelligence in the right path, we want to use them for the purpose of selfishly proclaiming our own greatness. We should undertake to promote the total good, the good of the community in a selfless manner with love and *prema*.

Today, people who are giving support to various things which science produces are themselves confused whether all those things are for the good of the people or whether they are going to cause hurt and harm to them. It is only when one has complete control over one's own mind and one's own intelligence and when one believes in the truth that divinity is present in every human being can this scientific knowledge be of some use to him. One may possess considerable amount of strength in the material sense of the word, but if he does not have the *adhyatmic* or the spiritual power, there is every chance of losing all that he has. Ravana did possess a considerable amount of worldly power and even moral power,

and was a devotee of God. Yet, he fell to the lowest depths because of some of his bad qualities like jealousy and anger.

It is a sacred quality for one to be able to enjoy and appreciate the good in other people. Even greater than this is the quality by which we get rid of selfishness and spend all our resources for the purpose of doing good to others. Truly, people like Hiranyaksha, Hiranyakasapa and Ravana had many great qualities and considerable amount of courage. But there was something lacking in the type of devotion and faith they had. So they suffered.

Whatever learning and education one may acquire, it is only when one can recognise that all learning is to enable us to earn the grace of God that our education becomes useful. What is the use of learning several branches of knowledge? Is it possible for any one to change the destiny which has been given to him? When bad ideas fill your head, your thoughts and your intelligence will become blunt. Because Ravana had the three bad qualities of jealousy, anger and ego filling his head, he was deprived of all chances of success, although he had several powers. For one who is suffering from ego, the power to discriminate between what is transient and what is permanent will be missing. One who develops jealousy will lose kindness and the ability to give freely. One who develops anger will lose all opportunity for reaching the heights of glory, and his own possessions will disappear. His reputation and his strength will disappear at the moment when they are most needed. Those who are near to him will become distant from him. For one who develops pride, everything will become bad. Those who suffer from anger cannot achieve any result. They will also feel ashamed at the crucial time.

Ravana was ruling over a kingdom and his capital city would compare well with heaven. But because of his bad qualities, he lost his own happiness, his kingdom, and everything that he had. In fact, he destroyed his own dynasty and family. He knew all the codes of conduct of a king, and he knew everything, and yet he was behaving like a monkey. He knew several things but because he was not putting his knowledge into practice, he became worse than one who has no knowledge at all.

When Hanuman entered Lanka, as Rama's ambassador, and spoke to Sita, Ravana came to know of this and he ordered that Hanuman be punished. This is quite contrary to the accepted code of conduct of a king. To kill an ambassador or to punish one who has come as a messenger on behalf of someone else is not the right code of conduct for a king of the country. Vibhishana tried to explain to Ravana this principle by which he should not punish one who has brought a message and Vibhishana tried to get Hanuman released. Ravana, in fact, had so many other bad qualities and bad ideas in him, and he often undertook to do things which he should not have done. Many times, he made attempts to kill even Sita. Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, tried to teach Ravana that to kill a woman is very wrong, and that he was committing a great sin. The bad qualities that were in him made him take always the wrong path and subjected him to many difficulties. On one occasion Mandodari went to her husband and asked him, "You know all the *dharma*, and all the codes of right conduct. With all your wisdom, why is it that you are doing wrong things? What is the matter? How can you explain? What is the inner meaning of your behaviour? Not only this, you have all the capacity and you have all the strength to assume any form that you like. On the day when you brought Sita to Lanka, you were in the form of a *sanyasi* and you deceived her. Why are you taking all this

trouble in order to win over the sacred Sita? If only you assume the form of Ramachandra, then Sita would be yours. Why did you not adopt that path?"

Then Ravana replied that Ramachandra's form was a sacred and divine one. If he really took that form, how will he have bad qualities at all? This means Ravana knew very well that the qualities which one will have should be appropriate to his form. Because he had the form of a *rakshasa*, the qualities of a *rakshasa* were showing up. Today, people have a human form. They appear like human beings but behave like *rakshasas*. There is some contradiction in this situation. Since we have taken the human form, sacred qualities which are appropriate to a human being should thrive within us. In words we may say that we are human beings, that we are devotees, that God in the form of *Atma* is present in us, but to put these statements into practice has become very rare. The first thing we should do in this context is to correct our practice. Through our efforts, we can achieve any great thing. The kind of conduct which we accept and go through in our daily life will only be reflected by our life.

There is a small story. There used to be a music scholar. Daily he used to gather a few children and teach them music. In his house there used to be a good custom. This was that his wife would not eat until he came into the house. And after he came to the house, they would eat together. But as the examinations came near, he used to spend more time in teaching music to the students and giving them practice lessons. The teacher who normally would come back at 2 o'clock did not turn up till 4 o'clock on one day. The wife was hungry. However, she would not like to break their usual tradition. In this process she also got a little excited. By about 4:00 o'clock, as the husband returned home, she kept a little

water and soap, a bowl and a bucket and asked him to have a quick wash and come so that they could eat food together as usual. In the hurry which the wife was indicating, he took a pot of water, washed his face and put the soap on his face. When he put soap on his face and without knowing put the pot into the well, the pot slipped and fell into the well. Somehow he cleaned his face and opened his eyes and found that the pot and the rope were both in the well. As soon as the pot and the rope fell into the well, he began to sing, and appeal to the Lord by saying, "Oh Lord, the responsibility to look after me is Yours." The wife went there to remind him that he should come quickly and he continued to sing without paying any attention to the wife, again saying, "Oh Lord, the responsibility to look after me is Yours." When the wife saw that the pot and the rope were both in the well, she reprimanded the husband and said, "If you keep on singing in this manner, without making any effort to retrieve the rope and the pot but putting the entire responsibility on the Lord, how is the pot going to come out? You must make your effort to get the pot out of the well." Although man has got certain types of strength and abilities in him, he should not depend solely on worldly power and strength. He should make his attempts and seek to strengthen his attempts by winning God's grace for himself.

Ravana knew all *dharma*, but without putting them into practice what is the use of having known them simply through the texts? All *dharma*, which is not put into practice, is just as bad as *adharma*, so also all knowledge which is not put into practice is as bad as ignorance. Today, many young people know what good work is, and they have to make an effort and participate in it. They do not make any effort. The first thing we should do is to put into practice the good things which we believe are good. By simply believing that something is good,

by having faith in being good and yet not putting into practice, how can one get any result in that manner.

Divya Atma Swarupas:

Ravana had expertise in all the branches of learning. He also knew very thoroughly the four *Vedas*. He was fully aware of the contents of the six *Sastras*. His knowledge of the six *Sastras* and his knowledge of the four *Vedas* (together ten) is the inner meaning of the belief that Ravana had ten heads. It is a symbolic way of saying that he was an expert in all the ten branches of knowledge. Ignoring this inner meaning, if we simply keep on saying that Ravana had ten heads, in ordinary daily parlance, we have to ask how he is going to sleep with those ten heads? How is he going to do his daily duties with those ten heads? This is the shortcut to making things appear ridiculous. The writers and the historians may simply have described him as a person having ten heads, but the inner meaning of such a description is that Ravana was having such knowledge and deep wisdom. He, with all this strength and knowledge, was not minding the people's security and people's happiness. To him, his own enjoyment, his own safety, his own pleasure were all that mattered. We should note here that, in spite of all great and good qualities, he was behaving in a bad manner. Towards the end of his life, he realised that all that he did was sin; and the paths he had adopted were bad paths, and that whatever Vibhishana had told him was right, and that he could not follow the advice given to him by his wife Mandodari.

However much we may repent towards the end of our life, it is very difficult for us to realise that such repentance comes to us in a manner in which it cannot atone for our sins. After indulging in sins and doing bad things all through one's life, even if one repents towards the very end, that repentance

is not of much value. It is not correct to keep on repenting and thinking that repentance will redeem us from all our sins. Alas, repentance always comes much after the event and too late to do any good to any one.

Many people in the world today are in this situation. They commit sin, commit wrong and ask for pardon and then again commit sin, commit wrong and again ask for pardon. In this way, if you add and subtract, add and subtract all your life, how are you going to reach your destination with any credit balance in your favour?

Sacred-minded young people,

Once you understand and recognise that a certain thing is wrong, that it is a sin, then you should never knowingly go and commit a sin for a second time. Only when you can conduct your lives along a path where there is discrimination between right and wrong, will your life take a purposeful course.

During the last fifteen days, you have been listening to all the good things that are contained in the individual characters of the story of the *Ramayana*. We should believe that Rama signifies the divinity that is established within our own hearts. We should think that our own minds symbolise Lakshmana. Our intelligence and our *chitta* should be identified with Sita. The bad qualities which lead us to commit sin should be identified with Ravana. Anger, jealousy and hatred, are the qualities from which sin starts. They constitute the birthplace for sins. We should make an attempt, by using *sathya*, *dharma*, *shanthi* and *prema* to destroy the Ravana in us exemplified by the bad qualities.

When we give room to jealousy, anger and ego, we become a Ravana. When we follow the path of truth and the path of *dharma*, we become a Ramachandra. Good and bad are results only of the way we conduct ourselves. Rama and Ravana are not separate people. They are in us and they make us look like one or the other according to our deeds. It is in this context that it has been said that both for good and for bad, our own mind is responsible. If we conduct ourselves badly, we will be like animals. If our conduct is good, we will be like a divine being. Young people should therefore, guide their conduct and daily behaviour along the right path.

Students:

You are the future citizens of Bharath. Whether it is a worthwhile example that you are seeking for your everyday life or whether it is an ideal that you are searching for in your heart and mind, if only you can introduce an amount of sacredness, then we can say that you are seeking *Yogakshema*. It is not a great thing to acquire good qualities, but real greatness lies in keeping and preserving the great, good qualities you acquire. Making a conscious effort in acquiring what you should acquire, namely good ideals and good thoughts, has been referred to as *yoga* and then a conscious effort to retain and use what you have acquired is called *Kshema*. This is *Yogakshema*. But today, we attach too much importance to our body. This body which is transient, which is uncertain, which is going to fall down one day or other, looms large in our view and we think that the good of such a body is *Yogakshema*. You may protect it as long as you like but when the time comes, this is going to drop down and die. It is better to live for three years or even for three days as a good person, rather than live a hundred years as a bad person. Do not be a crow and go about living for a long time. Be a swan and live for a short time.

Divya Atma Swarupas:

You must acquire good and *sathwik* qualities. You must also control and regulate the type of food you eat. The bad qualities and the bad nature which Ravana had can be traced to a large extent to the kind of food he ate. It is in the context of the food that one eats, that one's own conduct and daily life are determined. We should make an attempt to take in *sathwik* food only. What is *sathwik* food? Do fruit and milk constitute *sathwik* food? No, if you drink too much milk or too much curd, or eat too much fruit, *Thamo Guna* will increase and they cannot be described as *sathwik*.

Today it is difficult to define the true meaning of *sathwik* food. We talk of taking food. How do we take food? Amongst the five sensory organs the tongue is the one through which we taste and take our food. It is not enough if we take in *sathwik* food through one of the five organs, namely the tongue only. There are four other organs through which also we should take care to accept only *sathwik* food. With the help of our mouth, we may take only limited amounts of milk or fruit. There are other organs. What you see with your eyes must also be *sathwik*. We should not look at bad things. Bad vision will become bad intake through the eyes. There is a third organ, the ears. What goes inside through the ears is also food. We should listen to only good things. This kind of food should be rendered *sathwik* by restricting the ears to listen to only good sounds.

There is a nose as well. Through the nose, you should accept only good and clean air and not foul air. The latter constitutes bad food. There is the skin with which we touch other things. The skin should not be allowed to contact whomsoever and whatsoever it wants to. All these senses, the

sense of sound, the sense of touch, the sense of taste, of smell and of listening, should take in good food only. Only when all that you take in through these five organs is good, can you say that you are having *sathwik* food. If with the mouth alone you take good *sathwik* food like milk and curds, but you see bad things with your eyes, listen to bad things with your ears and touch unpleasant things with your skin, how can you then call yourself a *sathwik* person? If you take care in regard to all the intake, not only will this be called *sathwik* food, but it will also be good for health. There is one example. A good feature of *sathwik* food can be described by referring to the light manner in which we go and sit down to take food. After taking food, we should be able to get up in the same light manner. But today we call it *sathwik* food, we go light and sit for our meal. At the end of the meal when we get up, we are so heavy that we cannot get up easily. This will be called *thamasik* food.

You should eat only a limited amount of food. That will also be responsible for your good health. Limited amount of food gives us great ease. Unlimited food causes great trouble. In this world, there are many people who are continuously loading and unloading their physical system. They give no thought to enquire into the purpose of their life. Ravana belonged to this class of people. Not only this, towards the end of his life, when he was threatening Sita, he told her that he will give her two months time and if in that period she would not change her mind, he would cut her head, cook and eat the flesh out of her head. Ravana was one who did not at all understand what food meant. His food consisted of unsacred meat and drink.

Divya Atma Swarupas:

Since you are going to become the leaders and important persons, it is necessary for you to keep your health

in a proper condition through regulating your food habits. It is necessary that in order that we may do good work our body should be in a healthy condition.

This is the reason why it has been said that if you want to accept the four *Purusharthas: Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Moksha*, a healthy body is necessary. When you take care to see that what goes inside the body through your five sensory organs is good and *sathwik*, there is no room for bad ideas in you. If you want to get rid of all bad ideas, you must control your food to a large extent. This is a good lesson which the life story of Ravana should teach the people of the world.