The Innocent Cowherd

Ravana has gotten some very unfair press for himself. If you look at his life, he was a wonderful person by himself. It is just that out of his own foolishness and egoistic nature, he was unable to benefit from what he had.

Ravana was a great devotee of Shiva and he worshipped Shiva from down South, where his kingdom was. Then, after sometime he thought, “Why don’t I bring Kailash closer to my home.” So he walked all the way from Sri Lanka to Kailash and started lifting the mountain. This made Parvati very angry and she told Shiva, “It does not matter how dear he is to you, you cannot allow him to take Kailash to the South. That is not possible.” Shiva also got angry with Ravana’s egoistic nature and so he pressed the mountain down, trapping Ravana’s hands beneath Kailash. Ravana struggled in pain but Shiva refused to release him.

Then Ravana with his hand stuck beneath Kailash, started pouring out his love for Shiva in various beautiful hymns. After he had formed 1001 hymns of utter love and surrender, Shiva released him and said, “You can have a boon. Ask me what you want.” Once again Ravana’s aura nature manifested itself and he said, “I want to marry Parvati.” Shiva said “Okay. She is at Manasarovar Lake. You can go and marry her.”

All the gandhas who were around Shiva got excited and wondered, “How can it be? How can Ravana ever touch Parvati? This is not possible.” They all ran to Parvati at Manasarovar Lake and told her, “Ravana is coming. Shiva has given him permission to marry you.” Then Parvati called Manduka, the queen of the frogs and converted this frog into a beautiful woman. Ravana had never set eyes on Parvati. When he saw the woman Manduka, he was attracted to her and married her. That woman was Manduka.

After this, Ravana did a very powerful yagna and received a powerful Jyothirlinga from Shiva himself. Shiva does not care whether something is socially approved of or not. He falls in love with anything that happens genuinely. Shiva told Ravana to carry the Jyothirlinga to his land and that wherever Ravana placed the Jyothirlinga, it would remain there forever. The one condition was that Ravana could not keep the Jyothirlinga down anywhere else because then it would get established there.

Very carefully, Ravana carried the Jyothirlinga with great strength. The man was such a yogi that he held every aspect – he did not eat, he did not urinate, he did nothing that is compulsive for every human being. He walked almost 4000 kilometers from Kailash to a place called Gokarna in Karnataka. Because he walked without anything that a human being normally needs, he was feeling weak and he wanted to urinize. But he could not keep the lingam down and he would not relieve himself – something that he considered a very basic act – with the lingam on his body.

Then, he saw a very cute and innocent looking cowherd boy. He called him and said, “I will give you a jewel if you hold this in your hand for a few minutes while I relieve myself.” The boy agreed. This boy was actually Ganapati, who did not want Ravana to take the linga to Lanka because if he did, he would become absolutely super human. So, Ganapati place the lingam on the ground and it sank into the earth. Even today if you go to Gokarna, there is just a small hole in the rock through which you have to put your finger and feel the lingam because it has gone in.

Ravana got so angry that he knocked the boy on the head and that is why you will also find a Ganapati statue with a depression in his skull at Gokarna. Then, in anger Ravana took his turban and threw it in one direction. The turban went and fell at a place which became Murudeshwar. Then, he took his necklace and threw it in another direction; he took his earrings and threw them in a third direction. In this manner, he took five different things from his body and threw them in different directions and each one fell in a different place. Today there are temples at all these places. Ravana did not have the strength to walk back to Kailash and repeat everything and so in great dejection and anger he walked on to Sri Lanka. Similarly, irrespective of whether you are good or bad, if you are willing, divinity is always available to everyone. But, whether you make it a curse or a boon for yourself is left to what kind of nature you carry within yourself.

What kind of attitude and mind you cultivate within yourself determines how you make use of existence.

(Sadguru is a prominent spiritual leader.)