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RELG 213 – Hinduism

Response Paper 3 – On *Vali* (Ramayana)

R. K. Narayan writes of chapter 6, “Vali”*,* of the Ramayana, “this is one of the most controversial chapters” (90). And indeed, in my opinion, it was. In short, the chapter tells of Rama’s encounter with Sugreeva, of the giant monkey race. Sugreeva tells Rama his story, in which his brother, *Vali*, unfairly chases him away into exile. Rama is taken by the story and agrees to help Sugreeva vanquish his brother. In return, Sugreeva promises Rama an army to aid in the search for Sita.

For much of the Ramayana, Rama is presented as the ideal man. He is essentially perfection incarnate. In “The Grand Tormentor”, where Ravana takes Sita, the first sign of imperfection in Rama surfaces. Although he makes an honest mistake in ignoring his brother’s warning and falling for Ravana’s ruse, he blames himself fully. It is clear that the lesson here is that even gods, especially when in human form, are prone to err. In contrast, Rama’s actions in “Vali”, arguably, can be construed as dubious.