# Common Questions about Yoga and Ramayana

## How Does Ramayana Help Me Understand Yoga?

Ramayana is a story with characters, events, and locations, etc. The characters relate to each other like father-son, husband-wife, or hero-villain, etc. **We intuitively understand these characters and their relationships.**

Yoga has concepts like Energy, Consciousness, and Ahamkara (Ego) etc. We have to learn one concept at a time. **These concepts relate to each other in a specific way. We need to learn those relationships.** A student may make a mistake in understanding a concept or relating these concepts with each other. It could be a costly mistake.

**Sage Valmiki wrote Ramayana in such a way that he explains Yoga concepts and their relationships in a story.** His characters represent fundamental concepts of Yoga. For example, Shri Ram represents Higher Consciousness, Sita represents Energy, and Hanumana represents Prana, etc. We will put characters and their relations of Ramayana side by side to a Yoga concepts and their relationships. We see that we discover a hidden relationship between Yoga concepts. Let us take a few examples of these hidden relationships.

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| **Ramayana Character and Relationship** | **Yoga Concept and Relationship. Do Yoga Books Explain This Concept?** |
| Ravana abducts Sita. | Our Ahamkara controls the way we use the Energy. Yoga books explain this concept. |
| Hanumana finds Sita. | In Yoga, we learn that doing Pranayama releases the Energy. This is an example of the wrong relationship between Pranayama and the Energy. Paranaawakens the Energy and the Higher Consciousness releases it from control of Ahamkara. |
| Shri Ram kills Ravana. | Consciousness dissolves the Ahamkara into itself. Most Yoga books explain that we must irradiate Ahamkara. |
| Shri Ram rescues Sita. | When the Ahamkara dissolves into the Consciousness, it releases the Energy from control of Ahamkara. Yoga books do not explain this relationship. |
| Shri Ram and Sita separate according to His wish. | This is final status of the Energy and the Consciousness. Yoga books do not explain this relationship. |

As we can see, within five lines of reading Yoga and Ramayana side by side, we discovered three gaps in our understanding of Yoga! This is just a beginning. There are 10 to 15 important characters in Ramayana. Each one of them clarifies a critical concept in Yoga and explains the relationship with other concepts. Imagine the wealth of knowledge if we can map all the characters of Ramayana to Yoga concepts!

Ramayana is the work of an imaginative and an advanced Yogi – Sage Valmiki. Reading Ramayana as a document of Yoga needs an open mind. It it is challenging, partly because we do not have sound knowledge of Samkhya, Yoga, or Ramayana. If we do this hard work, the reward is beyond any measurements.

**Ramayana teaches us about our Consciousness. Shri Ram is one of many names of the Consciousness. Similarly, Yoga also teaches us about the Consciousness. Thus, they are two different ways to learn about the Consciousness.**

## How Yoga And Ramayana Are Related?

Sage Patanjali wrote Yoga Sutra almost thousand years after sage Valmiki. He relied on Samkhya as a foundation for Yoga. Using his eight steps, he set the goal of Yogi to be in Samadhi, in which Yogi experiences the Universal Consciousness. The first verse of Yoga Sutra teaches about the Consciousness. In the last verse, it teaches us about the Universal Consciousness. Thus, Yoga is a path that takes us to the experience of Universal Consciousness. Sage Patanjali used word Yoga for the eight-step path, which includes Pranayama. Hence, we will use the word Yoga the way he used it.

When we see Ramayana from the angle of Yoga, we see it teaches us about the goal of Yoga – the experience of Universal Consciousness. It explains the complex concepts of Yoga like the Prana, Kundalini (Energy) and the Consciousness using a story. **It warns a Yogi about the difficulties on a path of Yoga. It offers valuable advice to reach to the end goal of Yoga.** Let us see how it helps us learn Yoga.

In this book, we see that Shri Ram represents Consciousness and the Universal Consciousness. Shri Ram is the seventh avatar of Lord Vishnu. Sanskrit word “Vishnu” means “One who is present everywhere”. Thus, Lord Vishnu represents Universal Consciousness.

At the end of Ramayana, Shri Ram takes the form of Lord Vishnu. Hence, Shri Ram represents the Consciousness and the Universal Consciousness. **Thus, both Yoga and Ramayana lead us towards the Consciousness and the Universal Consciousness.**

Looking for Yoga in Ramayana is like searching for salt in the sea water. Once you know the taste of salt in a drop of sea water, you know the entire sea is salty. Similarly, once you know how to relate Yoga to Ramayana, entire Ramayana unfolds in front of you as an expression of Yoga!

## What Benefit Will I get by Learning about Shri Ram?

Who does not want to live a better life? Everyone cares about his life. Everyone wants to live as long as he can. No one wants pain and misery. As per Yoga, learning about your Consciousness can lead us to a better life.

**The Consciousness is the difference between a living person in this moment and his dead body in the next moment.** Indian culture gave several names to the Consciousness. Shri Ram is one such a name. From birth to death, we tied His name to every occasion in life. Even after death, people take His name while taking the dead body for cremation.

What is the use of taking His name when a person is dead? However, if a person spends just a few hours of his time in learning about Ramayana, then he can relate himself to Shri Ram. Besides, you already know the story of Ramayana. We can easily relate the story to the Yoga. Building a relationship with Shri Ram is neither about Ramayana nor about Yoga. **It is about knowing your Consciousness.** It will be very useful to learn about it, as it can help to live our life much better. Possibly, it may be useful even in the moments before death.

## Why Are You Trying to Read Yoga in Ramayana?

Ramayana translates to ‘Advance or movements of Shri Ram’. It refers to the journey of Shri Ram. It mentions nothing about Yoga. These statements are correct. However, let us look at them from a different angle.

We know Shri Ram represents Universal Consciousness. Universal means “One that is everywhere”. **When there is no place without Him, how can He move from place to place?** We need to re-think the meaning of word Ramayana.

We can see a similar pattern of use of word “Ayana” in Daxinayana and Uttarayana, meaning, southern and northern solstices. They mean the Sun is passing to the southern and northern side of the equator. We know Sun does not change its position. The earth is tilted on its axis. Therefore, it appears to the earthlings that the Sun is changing its position.

Now we know that the word “Ayana” in Ramayana means a movement. But the question is, who is moving? Our common experience is when we are sitting in a train in the station and the train on the next track move, we feel that our train is moving. According to Einstein’s theory of relativity, the movement is always relative. When object A and object B are coming close to each other, we cannot tell which an object is moving. From the perspective of object A, the object B is coming closer, but in principle, the object B may be stationary, while object A may move towards object B.

Sage Valmiki knows Shri Ram represents the Universal Consciousness. He is everywhere. He has no place to go anywhere. Thus, He is not advancing, moving, or traveling anywhere. Yet, sage Valmiki added “Ayana” or the movement in the word Ramayana. We know that the movement is relative. **If Shri Ram is not moving, then we, as a reader of Ramayana, must move towards Him!**

When we read Ramayana carefully, our views about Him change. Thus, we advance towards Shri Ram. The word “Ayana” shows this movement or advance. **Ramayana leads us, the readers, toward Shri Ram, the Universal Consciousness.** We can agree that this is one of the many meanings of word Ramayana.

Now, let us see how Ramayana explains Yoga. Here, we are using Yoga as it is defined by sage Patanjali. We also know the key concepts of Yoga come from Samkhya. Those concepts are Consciousness, Energy, and Ahamkara, etc.

Sage Valmiki took each of the key concept from Samkhya and created a character from it. Shri Ram represents the Higher Consciousness. Sita represents the Energy – we see she is not born naturally and did not die naturally. Hanumana represents Prana – when we breathe, we take Prana from air. In Ramayana, the Hanumana is a son of Air God (Vayu). Laxmana is a brother of Shri Ram. Sanskrit word “Laxya” means “Focus or Devotion” and “mana” is mind. Thus, Laxmana translates to “Devoted Mind”.

Now, let us see how Ramayana helps us find the Consciousness. **Sage Valmiki knows we know nothing about Shri Ram or the Consciousness. We cannot relate with Him. Hence, sage Valmiki gave us indirect ways to find Him and relate to Him.**

Look at any image or idol of Shri Ram. Three people always surround him. Sita and Lakshmana on his sides and Hanumana at his feet. This image is a beautiful depiction of the secret message given to us through Ramayana. If we figure out just this image, following the entire Ramayana will be simple. When we put the names of characters with their Yoga names, we see the following picture:

* If we find the Energy (Sita), the Consciousness (Shri Ram) will come searching for the Energy, and we will find the Consciousness.
* If we have a devoted mind (Laxmana) on the Consciousness, it will lead us directly to the Consciousness.
* Optionally, we can find the Prana by doing breathing techniques called Pranayama. The Prana (Hanumana) will find the Energy (Sita) and we will then find the Energy within our body. When the Consciousness finds the Energy, it will reveal itself to us automatically.

**Trying to find the Energy or the Consciousness directly within ourselves might be challenging. Hence, the other two options – focused mind and breathing techniques of Pranayama become important.**